

URUNANA rw'Abarezi



ISSUE 13 - December 2021



**Remedial and Catch-up
programme for students at risk
of repetition and dropping out**

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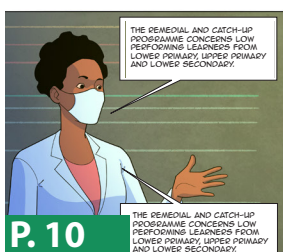
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Urunana rw'Abarezi is free of charge and is published twice a year. It is also available for download online: rwanda.vvob.org/publications or <https://www.reb.gov.rw/publications>

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FOREWORD

Dear Reader,

Welcome to the 13th edition of Urunana rw'Abarezi peer learning magazine, a platform for teachers, school leaders and education stakeholders to share experiences and good practices towards improving the quality of education for all learners in Rwanda.

This edition focusses on "Remedial and Catch-up programme for students at risk of repetition and dropping out".

The COVID 19 pandemic created a learning crisis with the closure of schools during the first term of 2020 school year. This created a need for the Government of Rwanda through the Ministry of Education to adopt "Remedial and Catch-up programme" to appropriately support learners at risk of repetition and/or dropout to attain the required learning level.

To respond to this need, the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) has developed a "General Guide to Remedial and Catch-up programme for Learners at risk of repetition and dropping out" and 12 subject based guides for teachers were developed for each of the following core subjects: Kinyarwanda, Mathematics and English for lower Primary; Kinyarwanda, Mathematics, English and Science and Elementary Technology (SET) for upper Primary; and Mathematics, Physics, Biology, Chemistry and English for lower Secondary.

The 13th edition of Urunana rw'Abarezi magazine explores how schools are implementing the Remedial and Catch-up programme, with a focus on the following aspects:

- Identification of learners who are at risk of repetition and/or dropout
- Training teachers and school leaders on the implementation of the programme
- Methodologies adopted to implement the programme
- Parents' involvement
- Successes of the programme
- Challenges faced and how they have been addressed

Undoubtedly, each school has implemented the Remedial and Catch-up programme to ensure that all learners achieve the expected learning outcomes. As you implement the programme at your school you may have faced some setbacks, but we believe that you have set strategies to overcome those challenges in one way or another.

Reading different stories in this edition of the magazine gives you an opportunity as a teacher or school leader to reflect on your own experiences on how you support learners at risk of repetition and/or dropout to attain the required learning level. Therefore, this magazine is a tool that allows to



learn from your counterparts who might have already found solutions to issues which you are still struggling with.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of VVOB in improving the quality of basic education through strengthening school leadership through mentoring and coaching, to support teachers and enable high quality instruction.

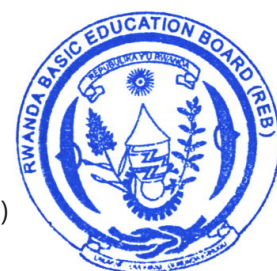
Through its five-year programme known as Umusemburo w'Ireme ry'Uburezi (Leading, Teaching and Learning Together—LTLT), and in partnership with REB and the University of Rwanda College of Education (UR-CE), with funding from the Mastercard Foundation and the Belgian government, VVOB has delivered a Certificate course in Educational Mentorship and Coaching, and a Diploma course in Effective School Leadership for system and school-based leaders while providing opportunities for school leaders to support one another in supportive professional learning communities.

I hope that you will enjoy reading this edition that offers teachers and school leaders the opportunity to learn from each other.

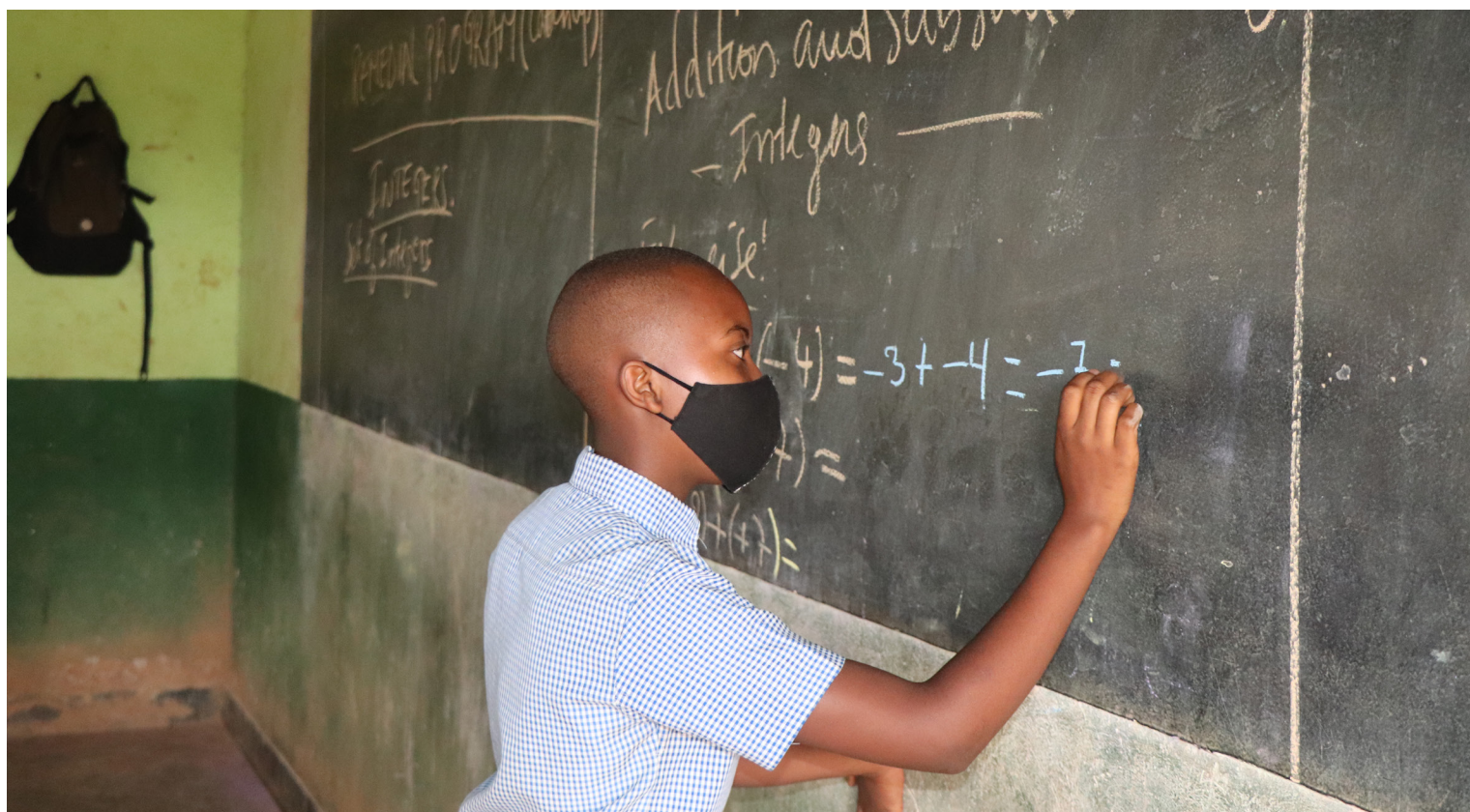
Dr. Nelson Mbarushimana,

Director General

Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB)



The remedial and catch-up programme in a nutshell



Why?

The COVID-19 outbreak in Rwanda, like elsewhere in the World, left many education activities disrupted. Schools were closed and this forced more than 4,087,339 children temporarily out of school. The pupils experienced unfinished learning and this loss can have long term effects on pupils' academics. The Remedial and catch-up programme for learners at risk of repetition and dropping out tries to close the learning gap between what a learner knows and what he/she is expected to know and do.

What?

The programme targets basic skills such as reading, writing, basic mathematical skills or some basic scientific skills. Once foundation skills are achieved, depending on learners' level, each learner shall

be able to learn in regular classes without any difficulty. This will create a culture and habit to diagnose and help low performing learners on time, without waiting for the end of term or year examination.

Who?

The target group for this programme are all learners at risk of repetition and drop out. Teachers will assess learners in their own classes to identify who is at risk. These students are eligible for remediation.

How?

The remedial activities will be conducted in all grades of primary and lower secondary levels. For primary level literacy and numeracy skills are the priorities. This is because they are the foundational skills for further learning. In many cases, learners are removed from

their regular classroom and taught in another setting. Teachers will assess the learning levels of the identified learners to be able to offer support according to their abilities. Learners will be grouped according to their abilities in the remedial periods. Teachers provide instruction on targeted sub skills. In each group, learners get proper guidance, time and individualized support. It is important for teachers to regularly re-evaluate learners to assess how they are improving. It will help the teacher know how she/he should continuously adapt instruction to the child's evolving learning needs.

Further Reading:

Rwanda Basic Education Board, 2020. General guide to remedial and catch up program for learners at risk of repetition and dropping out.



Remedial and catch-up programme in practice: **G.S Munyinya - Muhanga District**



By Etienne Ntawigira,
Communications Advisor, VVOB in Rwanda

Protogène Ndindabahizi leads G.S Munyinya located in Muhanga District, Southern Province since. He has served as a head teacher for the last 12 years. Currently, this school has more than 1,500 students and 35 teachers both in primary and secondary education. Mr Ndindabahizi gives a picture of the Remedial and Catch-up programme for 2020-2021 school year.

When schools reopened

"When schools reopened after eight months of closure, students' interest to study had reduced. Most of them could not concentrate. We also realised that few students had managed to follow Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB)'s programmes on television and radio during school closure. Being a school located in a rural area, few parents encouraged their children to follow REB programmes when schools closed.

Remedial and Catch-up programme

According to Mr Ndindabahizi,

“ In the absence of the remedial and catch-up programme, we would even score much lower... We are happy that the outcomes are good.”

understanding the programme first was key. REB in partnership with different development partners trained school leaders, who in turn trained their teachers. "I organised meetings with teachers to explain the programme and discuss different modalities for its implementation."

"We also discussed the remedial programme with the School General Assembly committee since convening a general parents meeting was not allowed due to Covid-19 preventions measures. Based on the students' evaluation results for term 1, we grouped students and support them according to their needs. For primary students we agreed to implement the programme for two hours during the normal teaching hours, as well as in weekends. We are aware that children do some household activities in weekends, but we asked parents to let their children come to school. Regarding secondary students, we supported them during normal teaching hours only, for one hour (15h40-16h30) per subject per week," he said.

Why were secondary students not also considered in weekends?

"You can't find them in weekends. Most of them are busy doing some jobs to earn some money to support their education and/or their families. Some of them are heads of their households and have to take care of their siblings."

The school mainly encouraged students with 'serious' catch-up issues since managing a big number of students with few teachers would not be possible. "However, we made an exception in P6 and allowed all students to come as they were preparing for national exams. We put them in different groups depending on each student's level of performance. We would have groups of 25 students each, which made the programme more effective as a teacher would reach every student. Some parents were not very supportive, so we

decided to contact the ones whose children were not attending. The attendance was 78 per cent in general."

In weekends teachers would only come on Saturdays and on rotational basis. A teacher would come twice a month, and teaching was only done in the morning.

Teacher motivation

"Every teacher understood that low performance among learners was a problem. When I trained them on the remedial programme they also felt the needed to support students who had been at home for eight months. I am happy that our school has got committed teachers who care about the students."

Remedial programme outcomes

"Thanks to REB and MINEDUC that foresaw the issue and initiated the Remedial and Catch-up programme for students at risk of repetition and dropping out. If nothing was done, performance would be very low, and this would eventually lead to a high number of drop out and repetition rates. It's obvious that this programme played a big role in helping to maintain many students at school in general."

As shown in the table below, in primary education, repetition dropped from 16 per cent in 2019 to 12 per cent in 2021 because of the Remedial and Catch-up programme, while school dropout reduced by 2 per cent, from 4.1 per cent in 2019 to 2.1 per cent in 2021. In secondary education, repetition reduced by 1 per cent while dropout reduced by 0.2 per cent."

	Level	2019	2021
Repetition (%)	Primary	16	12
	Secondary	3.1	2
Dropout (%)	Primary	4.1	2.1
	Secondary	2.2	2

Regarding primary 6 national examination, the success rate was 83.7 per cent in 2021 while it was 96.1 in the previous school year before Covid-19. Regarding O'level, the success rate was 95.2 in 2021 when it was 96.4 per cent in 2019. These figures seem to have dropped compared with the previous year, however, Mr Ndindabahizi is happy with these figures. Why?

"In the absence of the Remedial and Catch-up programme, we would even

score much lower. Students had lost interest during eight months of school closure. In addition, three P6 teachers left in the middle of the year, and they were teaching subjects that are targeted in the national examinations. We had to merge three classes of P6

and intensify teaching in general. At the same time, we strengthened the implementation of the remedial programme to support students. We're happy that the outcomes are good."

Interview with Head Teacher Mukarindiro Marie Goretti of G.S Nyamata Catholique, in Bugesera District, Eastern Province

By Julius Sebuhalala,
Education Advisor VVOB in Rwanda

1. When have you started implementing the Remedial and Catch-up programme?

We started in the second term of 2020-2021 school year, and we implemented it in primary and lower secondary.

2. How many learners were identified (primary and secondary)?

In primary we selected 457 while in secondary we found 121 students that needed to be supported to improve different skills where they were lagging behind compared to other learners.

3. How did/do you help them?

We revised the lesson contents based on their level of performance. Teachers gave a lot of exercises so that learners could do more practices and improve their skills.

4. What methodologies have you used to support those learners?

We put more emphasis on individual learners based on his or her weakness or needs. Having the 'weak' learners in smaller groups makes it easier to follow up and support every learner. We also organise debates to encourage

learners to speak.

5. When do you support the learners?

We support them during the first hour, and from 8:00 to 12:00 on Saturdays.

6. How do learners in need of Remedial and Catch-up feel about the programme?

They like the programme because it helps them achieve expected learning outcomes while increasing their level of performance.

7. What major challenges have you faced and how do you address them?

There has been some misunderstanding among parents especially about sending their children to school in weekends. We addressed this by explaining the advantages of the programme.

9. What are the successes of the programme so far?

This programme reduced school dropout at our school. I can say that repetition and dropout were reduced to a great extent. Most students improved their performance and attained expected learning outcomes, hence promoted to the next grade.



Remedial and catch-up programme in practice: G.S Byimana - Ruhango District

By Etienne Ntawigira
Communications Advisor, VVOB in Rwanda

Marie Chantal Ujeneza is the deputy head teacher for G.S Byimana, a 12-Year Basic Education in Ruhango District, Southern Province. The school has about 1,900 students in total (1,300 in primary and 580 students in secondary education).

"Before Covid-19 the school already had different challenges as far as learning outcomes are concerned. During the last school year (2020 - 2021), students in upper primary were studying single shift. They would go to have lunch at home and some of them would come back one to two hours late, which eventually affected their performance," said Ms Ujeneza.

Absenteeism

"When schools reopened most of the students' minds were not ready nor motivated to stay in school. Some students had been working for money during school closure, so they would be absent and go to a nearby centre to work for money."

Overcrowded classrooms

In primary education the school had classes of more than 50 students each, while in secondary the number was a bit higher, between 55 and 60 per class. This was because the school had insufficient classrooms.

"With this number it was not easy for teachers to follow up all learners. In addition, we would promote students who had not done well in exams. For instance, students with 'U'

or unclassified grade in P6 national examination would be promoted to S1. Since students knew that they would be promoted even if they failed, some of them were not making efforts to perform well," Ms Ujeneza said.

According to Ms Ujeneza, all these challenges contributed to having a big number of students who had not

met the expected learning outcomes.

"In general, in primary education, one student in four needed support to improve learning outcomes. For instance, in P4 we had 45 students out of 160 (28%) that needed to be supported. In secondary education the number of students that needed to be considered in the Remedial and Catch-up programme were at least 20 per cent."

Catch-up as a solution

"The Remedial Catch-up programme was undoubtedly a solution to the issue of low learning outcomes that our school was facing. Implementing this programme was somehow easier as it came when the problem of overcrowded classrooms had been resolved. Three neighbouring schools had received some of our students, so we had a manageable number of students in each class. We had maximum 45 students in primary while the highest number in secondary could not go beyond 40 students."

Support in weekends

"As a school we agreed to support weak learners in primary in weekends. However, only few learners would attend in the first two weeks, mainly because their parents had not yet understood the programme. We had to talk to the parents and explain the objective of the programme. The parents finally accepted to send their children on Saturdays from 7:30 to 12:00, so the attendance very much increased."

“One P5 student decided to join P3 after realising that she needed to improve her skills in understanding ibihekane (consonant clusters) in Kinyarwanda subject.”



Deputy Head Teacher Marie Chantal Ujeneza discusses with teachers on how to effectively support learners.

One hour support

For secondary students (lower secondary) that needed support, the school management decided to teach them for one hour every day, from 15:30 to 16:30. The initial decision was to also teach them in weekends, but this arrangement seemed unfavourable to most students.

“Some of the learners work for some cash during weekends to be able to buy scholastic materials or contribute to lunch at school. Others are orphans and have to take care of their relatives.”

Students' mindset changing

“When upper primary students closed for holidays, one P5 student decided to join P3 after realising that she needed to improve her skills in understanding ibihokane (consonant clusters) in Kinyarwanda subject. She first asked her parents if she could join P3 and they accepted. She studied for one month and was very excited about her great improvement in mastering the consonant clusters.”

“We were very excited about the achievements, and it is undoubtedly due the support through offered remedial and catch-up programme. We will continue to do even more to support our learners.”

Outcomes

For Ms Ujeneza, comparing the students' assessment results before the programme and after, you see great change.

“Most of the weak learners improved a lot. We evaluated the final year students based on the national examination results. When we started the remedial programme, we were very much worried about final year students. We thought they would perform poorly, but they did well, thanks to our teachers who tried their best to support all learners.”

The success rate in primary education for 2020 - 2021 was 93 per cent, while it was 91 per cent in secondary. Compared with the previous school year before Covid-19 (2019), the success rate was 85 per cent in primary, and 88 in secondary.

“We were very excited about this achievement, and it is undoubtedly due the support offered through the remedial and catch-up programme. We will continue to do even more to support our learners,” she said.



Remedial and catch-up programme in practice: G.S Ngabo and G.S Kivumu - Rutsiro District

By Nathalie Aziza
Education Advisor, VVOB in Rwanda

Jean Claude Habineza is head teacher of G.S Ngabo in Rutsiro District, Western Province. G.S Ngabo school has 120 children in nursery level, 1200 in primary and 320 students in ordinary level.

Methodologies used

We organised meetings with teachers and discussed methodologies to implement the remedial programme. First, we used the first 30 minutes in the morning for every key lesson. Additionally, we gave enough time to children to do exercises during weekends. We prepared students psychologically to attend the catch-up programme by explaining that it is a way of supporting them to continue learning and catch-up in lessons where they scored very low.

Interview with Pierre Celestin Ntabahwana, English teacher

"We had many learners including the ones that were performing well in class, while we wanted to focus on



low performing learners. We had to support all of them although it was a bit challenging," Mr Ntabahwana said.

Interview with Martin Musabyimana, Teacher of physics in O'Level

"After the first term assessment, we realised that many learners had failed. We selected those who failed for remedial catch-up. The performance

of learners was very low in science subjects compared with other subjects. This was due to the lack of appropriate materials of science. However, we used improvisation and our learners improved their skills. The performance in general improved from 35% to 56% in physics. Every morning we dedicated 40 minutes, while during the weekend we used between two and three hours." Mr Musabyimana said.

My name is Veronique Ahobanteze, I am the deputy head teacher of G.S Kivumu in Rutsiro District, Western Province. Our school has 1,570 Primary school students and 1,036 students in secondary.

How were they supported?

We first discussed with identified learners for a better understanding of the purpose and the benefits of joining the catch-up programme. We explained the importance of revising and getting special support from their teachers. We also made it clear that low performing learners are not able, rather this was one of the consequences of the Covid-19 lock down.

Students in the catch-up programme were required to stay at school after class for 30 minutes to catch-up. During weekends,

the catch-up programme was conducted for two hours. Teachers provided many exercises and supported the learners until they could understand the lessons and can do the exercises themselves. Regarding the support during normal teaching hours, the focus was put on revising all lessons learnt throughout the week as well as doing more practical exercises."

Addressing challenges

In rural areas, parents still believe that children should stay at home and do household tasks instead of going to school, especially during the weekends. Parents were reluctant in allowing their children to come to school for the catch-up programme. We had discussions with the parents, and finally understood that it is important to let their children attend the programme. They

were motivated by the fact that we did not ask them to pay for this extra time to support their children.

Success of the remedial

The performance of learners increased, and the repetition rate reduced from 30 per cent to 10 per cent. Before, some teachers could think of a programme to support weak students after class, but they felt it was not allowed. This programme removed such feeling because the government initiated the catch-up where teachers are allowed to provide extra support to learners.

The dropout rate also reduced from 5 per cent to 2 per cent because students are motivated by follow up and support provided by their teachers.

THE COVID 19 PANDEMIC CREATED A LEARNING CRISIS WITH THE CLOSURE OF SCHOOLS DURING THE FIRST TERM OF 2020 SCHOOL YEAR. THIS CREATED A NEED FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF RWANDA THROUGH THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION TO ADOPT "REMEDIAL AND CATCH-UP PROGRAMME" TO SUPPORT LEARNERS AT RISK OF REPETITION AND/OR DROPOUT TO ATTAIN THE REQUIRED LEARNING LEVEL.

HEAD TEACHER MULISA (AT A 12-YEAR BASIC EDUCATION SCHOOL) FACILITATES A MEETING WITH THE TEACHING STAFF ON HOW TO IMPLEMENT THE PROGRAMME.

HELLO EVERYONE! AS YOU KNOW THE SCHOOL CLOSURE AFFECTED OUR STUDENTS IN MANY WAYS. YOU'VE REALISED THAT SOME OF OUR LEARNERS LOST INTEREST OF STUDYING.

WE NEED TO DISCUSS HOW TO SUPPORT THEM THROUGH THE REMEDIAL AND CATCH-UP PROGRAMME. WHAT ARE YOUR INITIAL THOUGHTS ON THIS?

THANK YOU, MULISA. WHY DO WE NEED A REMEDIAL AND CATCH-UP PROGRAMME? I THINK WE CAN CONTINUE TEACHING AS USUAL, THEN ALL LEARNERS WILL JUST CATCH-UP.

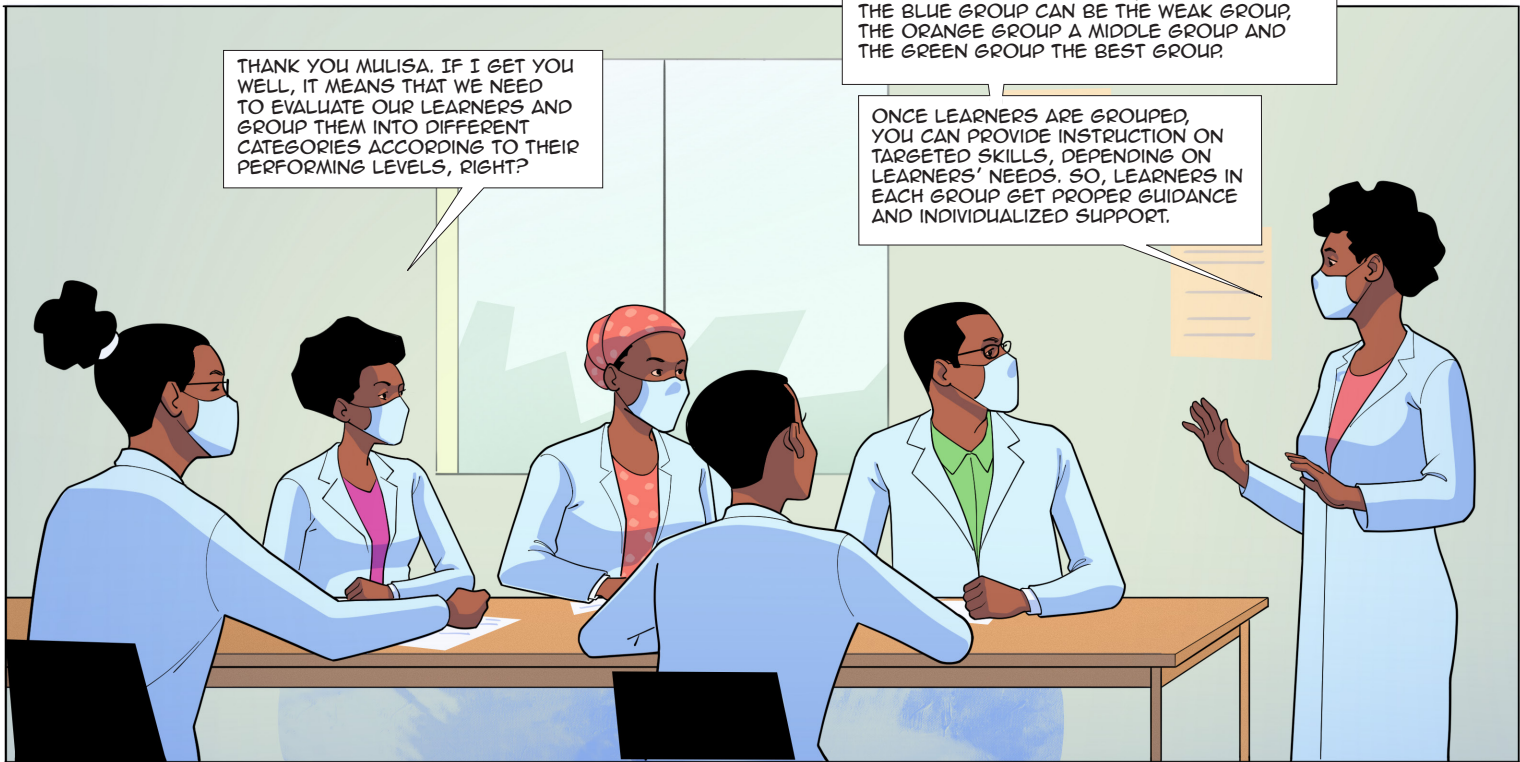
THANK YOU, KAMALI. WE WANT TO ENSURE THAT LOW PERFORMING LEARNERS WHO LAG BEHIND THEIR COUNTERPARTS CAN BE SUPPORTED AND BE ABLE TO CONTINUE LEARNING IN REGULAR CLASSES WITHOUT ANY DIFFICULTIES.



YOU'RE VERY RIGHT KEZA. WE NEED TO ASSESS THE LEARNERS THEN GROUP THEM ACCORDING TO THEIR ABILITIES. AFTER EVALUATING THE LEARNERS, WE WILL GROUP THEM IN THREE CATEGORIES, FOR EXAMPLE THE BLUE GROUP CAN BE THE WEAK GROUP, THE ORANGE GROUP A MIDDLE GROUP AND THE GREEN GROUP THE BEST GROUP.

THANK YOU MULISA. IF I GET YOU WELL, IT MEANS THAT WE NEED TO EVALUATE OUR LEARNERS AND GROUP THEM INTO DIFFERENT CATEGORIES ACCORDING TO THEIR PERFORMING LEVELS, RIGHT?

ONCE LEARNERS ARE GROUPED, YOU CAN PROVIDE INSTRUCTION ON TARGETED SKILLS, DEPENDING ON LEARNERS' NEEDS. SO, LEARNERS IN EACH GROUP GET PROPER GUIDANCE AND INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORT.



IT'S CLEARER NOW. ONCE WE GROUP THEM, SUPPORTING THEM BECOMES MUCH EASIER. HOWEVER, MY FIRST QUESTION IS, DOES THE PROGRAMME CONCERN ALL LEARNERS IN THE SCHOOL, BOTH IN PRIMARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION? SECONDLY, HOW DO WE COMBINE REMEDIAL AND CATCH-UP PROGRAMME WITH NORMAL TEACHING?

THE REMEDIAL AND CATCH-UP PROGRAMME CONCERNS LOW PERFORMING LEARNERS FROM LOWER PRIMARY, UPPER PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY.

THE REMEDIAL AND CATCH-UP PROGRAMME CONCERNS LOW PERFORMING LEARNERS FROM LOWER PRIMARY, UPPER PRIMARY AND LOWER SECONDARY.

HOW ABOUT THE SUBJECTS? ARE WE SUPPOSED TO SUPPORT THE LEARNERS IN ALL SUBJECTS?

THERE ARE 12 KEY SUBJECTS FOR THE REMEDIAL AND CATCH-UP PROGRAMME. THESE ARE KINYARWANDA, MATHEMATICS, ENGLISH FOR LOWER PRIMARY; KINYARWANDA, MATHEMATICS, ENGLISH AND SCIENCE AND ELEMENTARY TECHNOLOGY (SET).

FOR UPPER PRIMARY AND MATHEMATICS, PHYSICS, BIOLOGY, CHEMISTRY AND ENGLISH FOR LOWER SECONDARY.

I SUGGEST THAT WE ALSO SUPPORT OUR LEARNERS DURING WEEKENDS SO THAT THEY CAN CATCH-UP QUICKLY, AS THE SUCCESS OF OUR LEARNERS IS OUR PRIDE. WHAT DO YOU THINK?

I ALSO SUPPORT UWERA'S SUGGESTION. WE CAN ASK PARENTS TO SEND THE LEARNERS, ESPECIALLY THE MOST IN NEED AT LEAST ON SATURDAY MORNING TO GET ADDITIONAL SUPPORT.

THAT'S A GREAT IDEA AND THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR ACCEPTING TO SACRIFICE YOUR TIME IN WEEKENDS. LET'S FIRST DISCUSS THIS WITH PARENTS BEFORE WE TAKE A FINAL DECISION.

THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION. LET US CONTINUE TO SUPPORT OUR LEARNERS TO FULLY ACHIEVE EXPECTED LEARNING OUTCOMES.

#WhyTeach

“I support my colleagues to improve learning outcomes” - Teacher Iyamuremye

By Etienne Ntawigira
Communications Advisor, VVOB in Rwanda

Eric Iyamuremye has been a teacher for six years. He travels seven kilometres every day to G.S Gikaya, a 12-Year Basic education school in Kayonza District, Eastern Province, where he teaches mathematics. Mr Iyamuremye dreamed about becoming a teacher since he was a child. He scored as the best teacher in Eastern Province for 2021, mainly because of his commitment to support other teachers to improve learning outcomes.

The criteria for the best teacher set by the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) include excellence in integrating ICT in lesson preparation and teaching, ensuring effective implementation of competence-based curriculum, helping students to continue learning during the Covid-19 lockdown, working relationships, among others.

Helping students during the Covid-19 lockdown

Mr Iyamuremye is not an ICT person, but he likes ICT. “I have not received any formal training about ICT but I tried to learn by my own,” he said.

When the government closed all schools due to the Covid-19 pandemic, Mr Iyamuremye knew how to support his students remotely. “I created a Google Classroom dashboard, then collected parents’ email addresses so that I could send assignments to my S4 and S5 students. I could correct the assignments and give feedback online. At least 11 parents managed to help their children to follow lessons via Google classroom. I also used WhatsApp to send assignments to students through their parents’ cell phones,” Mr Iyamuremye said. In addition, Mr Iyamuremye could call and remind parents to facilitate their

children to follow REB programmes on radio and TV during the Covid-19 lockdown.

ICT After Class programme

In April 2021 Mr Iyamuremye attended a 12-day VVOB training on Digital Literacy for Online Learning (DLOL), which inspired him to start thinking about supporting his colleagues to improve ICT skills. The training was conducted both in person and online. It focused on the use of Microsoft Office Programs as well as Moodle Learning Management System (LMS) that will help ICT and science teachers pursue the Scratch 2050 Project training.

“Most of my colleagues at school were lacking basic ICT skills. I was already supporting some of them to create email addresses, use social media such as Facebook, and search teaching resources on Internet. This training made me think of helping my colleagues in a more structured way. I also shared this idea with other participants and promised to do it at their schools after the training. When I completed the training, I started an ICT After Class programme to help my colleagues improve their knowledge and skills in using ICT in teaching and learning. With the support of my two colleagues with whom I attended the DLOL training, we started organising a 40-minute after class session twice a week, first with 15 out of 35 primary teachers. We grouped them in three groups so that everyone has access to a computer—our school has six computers only.”

Outcomes so far

“Today all the trained teachers have got basic ICT skills. Each of them knows how to turn on a computer. We taught them basics in Microsoft Word, and plan to teach them Microsoft Excel during the next school year, and support other

teachers as well.”

To continue improving his ICT skills and earn some extra income, Mr Iyamuremye also decided to pay \$100 yearly subscription to use the Canva software, after a friend introduced it to him. “With this application I can earn additional income by designing certificates, service cards, wedding invitation cards, reports, prepare presentations for customers, among others. I do this during weekends or during holidays.”

Offering health care services

Mr Iyamuremye was trained in basic health care services by Partners in Health through the Ministry of Education to provide basic health care services at his school. “Given the skills I gained in basic health care, I also trained my colleagues and initiated a health club for teachers called Gira ubuzima bwiza munyeshuri, meaning healthy students. When a student gets injured, we can help with basic care such as bandaging him or her. We can also diagnose and treat malaria among students and teachers. In addition, our club promotes sexual reproductive education among students,” he said.

Promoting a saving culture among teachers

Mr Iyamuremye initiated a teacher Savings and Loan Association known as Ikimina cy’Abarimu for all 50 teachers at his school. “Our savings are currently 6.4 million Rwanda francs (\$6,400). Teachers can get small loans at a low interest rate of 5 per cent and pay it back over a period of two months,” he said.

Personal growth

When Mr Iyamuremye started teaching, he had a diploma in mathematics-education. “I used cash advance from Umwalimu SACCO, a Saving and Credit



Cooperative for teachers, and managed to pay tuition fees for my bachelor's degree at the University of Rwanda College of Education. I am very proud of such achievement."

Additionally, in February 2021, Mr Iyamuremye requested for a 1.4 million Rwanda francs (\$1400) cash advance from SACCO and started a passion fruit farming project. "I currently employ five vulnerable women, four of whom are widows, and were all in category 1

of Ubudehe ranking when I started the project. They all relied on government support for medical insurance as well as other support," he said.

Ubudehe is a social stratification programme depending on income among households. Category 1 consists of those who are the most vulnerable in the society. "For the first harvest I made about 500,000 Rwandan francs (\$500) profit and I paid 50 per cent of this amount to these ladies who regularly

work in the farm. I am proud that they can now pay medical insurance on their own and have improved their living conditions."

When Mr Iyamuremye was selected as the best teacher at provincial level, he also competed at national level but did not win. However, he was not discouraged. "I will keep my commitment and dedication to support my colleagues to contribute to improving learning outcomes. I will never give up."

“ I teach to help young people be successful in life. Coming across a student you taught and recognises you is very rewarding. I once boarded a bus and when I paid, the money collector refused my money but said to me instead: 'I will never forget that you were my teacher...'

Berthe Musabyeyezu, teacher at G.S Munyinya, Muhanga district. She has been a teacher for 32 years.



“ I feel so proud to teach learners so that they can contribute to the development of our country.

Clothilde Wihogora, teacher at G.S Bukure, Gicumbi District.



Focusing on students - Remedial and

By Innocent Hagenimana
Public Relations Officer, REB

Every student is unique with different levels of memorising or capturing whatever a teacher says. Some students have the capability of grabbing faster and memorise for long. Others have less picking capacity. Teachers are supposed to support every learner according to his/her ability.

According to Anastase Rukundo (pictured above), head teacher for G.S Muhoza in Musanze District, Northern Province, the selection process of students for the Remedial and Catch-up programme was simple as the school had already done Local Early Grade Assessment (LEGRA) even before REB introduced the remedial programme. "This assessment helped us a lot in identifying students who benefited from the programme. We selected students who were weak in specific subjects such as mathematics, Kinyarwanda, English and SET in primary," Mr Rukundo said.

Family poverty affects learners

"You realise that there are some challenges in certain families, to the extent that some parents cannot even afford food, nor scholastic materials such as notebooks, school uniform for their children. Some of strategies of handling these challenges were to provide food to learners when they come for remedial



Head Teacher Anastase Rukundo

programme in weekends, and providing school uniforms for the most vulnerable," he said.

Implementation strategies

"Some of the strategies to implement the remedial and catch-up programme were to provide more homeworks and putting learners in groups so that they can collaborate as much as possible. A teacher was there to facilitate. We also asked parents to provide more time at home so that students can revise their lessons. In addition, we considered the guidelines from the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) of using the first hour of every key subject."

"Adding the first hour to our existing '30-minute morning duty' was impactful especially for secondary students who use this time to revise lessons as part of the remedial programme."

Teacher Françoise Hategekimana teaches at G.S Muhoza in Musanze District. She highlighted that they focused on learner centred approach during the implementation of the remedial programme.

"We tried to make sure all learners are learning. We always pair or group both weak and 'better' learners especially when it comes to exercises so that they can help one another. This creates a good learning environment whereby everyone feels comfortable to learn and share with others freely. Participation was key to ensure learners improve learning outcomes. Every learner was stimulated and encouraged to participate. For instance, I could purposely ask every learner to respond to questions without necessarily waiting for the learners that raised their hands," Ms Hategekimana said.

Welcoming the programme

"The students were excited to catch-up and be on the same level as their counterparts. There was no major challenge or resistance on the side of learners, as far as implementing the programme is concerned," Mr Rukundo said.

"Students love this programme to the extent that even the students who were performing well (above the average) wanted to join the programme. Unfortunately, we didn't allow them as we wanted to focus on the most in need, but it was a good sign that they liked the programme," Mrs Hategekimana said.

More than 190 primary students and 310 students in secondary education participated in the remedial and catch-up programme at G.S Muhoza.



Teacher Françoise Hategekimana



and catch-up programme in practice



Jean Bosco Uwimana, a teacher at G.S Mukamira in Nyabihu district said that students were generally willing to join the programme. "You would see a learner who does not know how to write in letters or simple numbers in English, but I was very happy to see students being able to write letters and numbers, thanks to the remedial programme. Learners who scored less than 40 per cent improved and scored above 50. Repetition rate was also reduced by 90 per cent," he noted.

Clothilde Wihogora has been a teacher for 10 years. She currently teaches languages including Kinyarwanda language in P3 at G.S Bukure, a 12-Year Basic Education school in Gicumbi District.

Classifying students

"We gave different assessments to all learners then classified them in three categories. Category 1 consisted of students who had serious issues and had to learn some of the lessons of P1, so we could ask them to sit in one row. I realised that proceeding with P3 programme with this category of learners would not work, they needed to catch-up first. The

second category was made up of learners that needed support in P2 lessons, so I asked them to sit in another row. The third category was the group of better learners who were doing well compared with others. All the 50 students were grouped in category 1 and 2."

Students' performance motivates

"I'm glad that students in P6 performed well in Kinyarwanda—the success rate was 97 per cent in 2021 national examinations. I am not the only Kinyarwanda teacher, but I feel encouraged to see students I taught performing very well in my subject."

Protais Niyonteze leads G.S Nsinda, a Nine-year Basic Education in Rwamagana District.

"Students were first given tests to measure their levels of performance, then grouped according to the support they needed. The head teacher together with the teachers elaborated a timetable for the remedial and catch-up programme.

We agreed that every teacher groups his/her students according to their level of performance. At least three groups were identified. For example, we had Group A, B and C. We agreed to support the learners during the first hour for every target subject, once in a week. In addition, we agreed to support them on Saturdays morning.

Teachers come on rotational basis. A teacher comes at least one Saturday or two per month. However, the weekend programme was only possible for upper primary and lower secondary. "Lower primary students study in double shifts which means that their number doubles, and grouping them would require extra teachers. A group of lower primary students would have 80 learners or more in one class. Given the fact that we have to observe the Covid-19 prevention measures, it could not work at all".

Parents' involvement

Remedial and catch-up programme in practice



Dieudonne Kajiwabo, chair of the School General Assembly G.S Mukamira in Nyabihu district supports the school management's plans as far as parents' involvement is concerned. "We are planning to mobilise parents with the support of the local leaders. Collaboration between parents and teachers and school leaders is necessary. First of all, we, parents should take the lead as learners are our children, before even being students to the teachers," he said.

Parents' involvement

For Ms Wihogora, a teacher at G.S Bukure, a 12-Year Basic Education school in Gicumbi District, grouping learners according to their performing levels and supporting them during normal teaching hours was not enough.

"I discussed with the school management and decided to convene all parents of the 50 learners who had serious issues. I gave an invitation to every student to inform his/her parent. About 40 parents showed up. Some parents were touched and surprised to learn that their children were not performing well in school. This was generally the case for parents who do not follow up the education of their children. While other students were studying in single shift, I specifically asked these parents to let their children come both in the morning shift and afternoon shift instead of one (official) shift. All parents supported the idea. 'I won't ask my daughter to do household activities anymore, she must come to school and stay the whole day,' one parent said to me during the meeting."

"We also realised that almost all the 50 students that had issues in Kinyarwanda also had difficulties in other subjects. So, mastering Kinyarwanda remains key even for other subjects. Supporting them in Kinyarwanda also served as the foundation for other subjects."

According to Kamufosi Sebwaga, head teacher at G.S Mukamira in Nyabihu district, they realised that they didn't do enough to mobilise parents about the programme.

"This time we are starting to mobilise them more effectively. We are planning a School General Assembly soon and the remedial programme is one of the key topics to discuss," he said.

“If we involve parents more than we have been engaging them, things will keep changing positively.”

Kamufosi Sebwaga



Teachers' experiences

Remedial and catch-up programme in practice

Berthe Musabyeyezu is a teacher at G.S Munyinya in Muhanga District. She has been a teacher for 32 years.

"When schools reopened students were totally different. Some of them had developed unusual behaviours (abusive language, disobedience...). In addition, during the school closure some students started doing some small jobs and were earning little money. So, when schools reopened, these were still thinking about making money. We struggled to bring them back to normal."

Strategies

"We would spend one hour once in a week talking to students. We would listen to them and encourage them to positively change their behaviours. We would also contact their parents to discuss their children's education and behaviours in general. We're happy that the students changed their behaviours progressively. Later, we assessed them and grouped them in groups (advanced, middle, and low) and started helping them, based on their performance levels."

Increasing learner participation

"When students were grouped into smaller groups, we noticed a very big change. Learner participation improved very much. It was amazing to see shy students becoming very active and participative. It takes efforts and commitment to support low performing learners, but it's really motivating when they achieve expected learning outcomes."

Alice Dusabe is a teacher at G.S Byimana, in Ruhango District, southern Province. She has been a teacher for 19 years. Today she teaches English and French in secondary section. When she evaluated her learners in S2 and S3, about 40 per cent had scored below 50 per cent, and therefore needed support through the remedial and catch-up programme. Ms Dusabe shares her experience about implementing the remedial programme.

When we classified our learners and asked them to join their respective groups some of them showed resistance and disagreement. Low performing learners felt uncomfortable to be in a group of so called 'weak' learners. We had to sit with them and explain why they really needed to be grouped and get supported in lessons and skills where they did not reach the expected level.

Eventually, the learners understood the importance of the programme and joined, although few of them were somehow reluctant. However, when they attended the first few sessions they started enjoying the programme as they were improving in lessons which they had difficulties. So, some students couldn't keep the good news for themselves, they shared the experience with their counterparts who were not part of the group being supported. As a result, some learners also decided to join even if they were not the primary target.

The number increased beyond the classroom capacity, and I couldn't manage a big number of students. So, I could ask extra students to go out and let the ones with serious issues get supported as I needed to make sure I closely follow up every 'weak' learner. I could only allow between 30 and 35 students in a class for catch-up."



Teacher Alice Dusabe makes smaller groups based on their level of performance.

A good teacher knows the proper methods to teach and guide students in the right direction, as well as understanding the theoretical and conceptual knowledge of the subject they teach. That's the reason why teachers who implemented the remedial programme had to be trained

on how students should be supported.

Jean Bosco Uwimana, teaches at G.S Mukamira in Nyabihu district. According to him, the training for teachers was conducted, and it was necessary for them to be guided about the remedial programme.

"We had one-day training for all primary teachers, which was necessary to understand the way of supporting students in remedial programme. The only challenge was that the expected number of students did not turn up as some parents did not send their children," he said.

Teachers' experiences

By Etienne Ntawigira
Communications Advisor, VVOB in Rwanda

Placide Nsabimana is the head teacher of G.S Bukure 12 Year Basic Education school located in Gicumbi District. The school currently has about 1,300 students.

Before Covid-19, the school was already facing the issue of low learning outcomes especially in primary education. Some students would complete primary 6 without mastering reading, writing and numeracy.

Mr Nsabimana thinks that this was partly because they were promoting almost all students—only 5 per cent repetition was allowed as instructed by Rwanda Basic Education Board.

When school reopened in November 2020, we found that it was hard for students to sit in classroom and concentrate for long. Some of them had their minds elsewhere. Some had started making little money during the school closures, so it was hard to bring them back in learning mood. We also have a market close to our school (a kilometre from our school) so students attendance would drop considerably on market days.

Strategies to address the problem

We decided to work with parents and local leaders to address this issue. We already have at least one teacher living in each of the six out of seven villages in Bukure sector, and this was an added value as far as reaching learners is concerned. We nominated two focal teachers in each village.



These focal teachers were given a list of students with serious difficulties in achieving expected learning outcomes, as well as those who were not regularly attending classes. The teachers worked with the village leaders and visited the concerned learners. The objective was to discuss with their parents and identify factors of low performance and absenteeism of their children, then discuss way forward.

The identified causes include poverty in some families, ignorance of parents, children's discipline, among others.

Regarding poverty, we noticed that some parents could not afford scholastic materials for their children such as notebooks, pens. As a school we decided to support the most vulnerable students by providing the notebooks and pens so they could resume their studies as usual. We also exempted few families that could not afford contribution fees for their children's lunch at school.

I wrote an announcement and sent it to churches that we wanted to support them. In addition, I personally gave the message during community meetings at cell level. Parents understood the benefits of sending their children for Remedial and Catch-up programme and were very supportive. As a result, the attendance was higher (more than 90 per cent) than we would expect."

Students were also happy for the opportunity to catch-up during weekends and holidays. I would find some final year students supporting one another during weekends when a teacher was not able to come. I was so excited to see such commitment among students.

The students' commitment backed by the support by the teachers boosted learning outcomes. We realised that for one month they stayed at school, most students who would repeat they year reached the desired level and were promoted.

Motivating teachers

Placide Nsabimana is the head teacher of G.S Bukure 12 Year Basic Education school located in Gicumbi District.

"I told teachers that the best teacher would be recognised, and this boosted their commitment. Our maths teacher in senior 3 was the best teacher as his/her students performed

very well in national examinations - many of his students scored grade 1. We also have another teacher in lower primary who showed great commitment in supporting learners with difficulties to achieve expected outcomes (reading, writing and numeracy). These teachers will be acknowledged and awarded before their colleagues. I know that recognising a teacher in front of other teachers motivates him or her and is a way of encouraging other teachers to excel," he said.



Differentiation: Creating equitable access to learning for all

By Lieve Leroy, Strategic Education Advisor, VVOB in Rwanda

The pyramid of support

This magazine explains how The remedial and catch-up programme works and what the results are in improving learning outcomes for all learners, especially for those at risk. The programme is part of a bigger support system for learners.

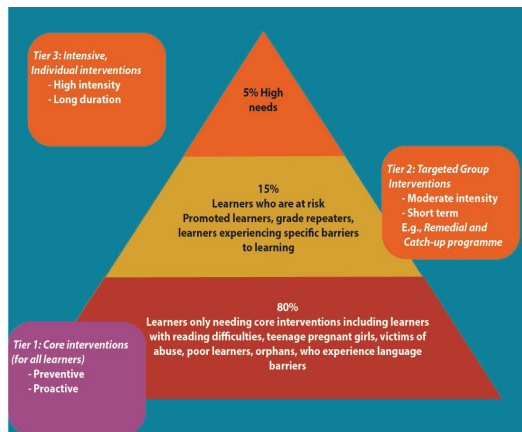


Figure 1 (left) shows how support in the education sector could look like. The majority of learners (80%) can be addressed by core interventions in daily teaching and learning practices (Tier 1). A much smaller group of learners (15%) need additional interventions because they are at risk. The Remedial and Catch-up programme, initiated by Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB), is an example of a targeted group intervention (Tier 2) that aims to help learners overcome the challenges at hand. Only 5%, a very small percentage, of learners need high level support (Tier 3) on a more individual and long-term base. The percentages reflected in Figure 1 are global averages. However, in times of crisis impacting the whole population, such as the long school closures due to COVID-19 mitigation measures, the percentages will shift, causing more learners that need targeted interventions. That is why the Remedial and Catch-up programme is needed. It wants to reduce the percentage of learners that are at risk.

Equitable access for all

Equitable access to learning for all is at the heart of the Remedial and Catch-up programme, but is it also at the heart of our day-to-day teaching and learning? Are we catering for all learners in all our education activities or are we rather creating learning gaps which then need remedial or catch-up activities? In this article we look at how we can make catering for all a standard practice. Referring to the Pyramid of Support, we will focus on Tier 1 or core interventions.

Creating equitable access to all learners, means that the school starts from the idea that every learner can learn. It also means that every learner is unique and has learning potential. But learners have different needs. It is important for schools to have high expectations for each individual learner. Only then, schools can address learners based on their individual needs. Being fair to students doesn't mean that we need to treat them equally.



Figure 3 A one size fits all pushes learners into the danger zone

A one size fits all approach will not work. On the contrary, a one size fits all approach, will push more learners into the danger zone (Figure 3), increasing the need for remedial interventions. Learners need different levels of support. Providing differentiation in every teaching and learning activity (Tier 1: Core interventions in Figure 1) will benefit all learners and will prevent learning gaps.

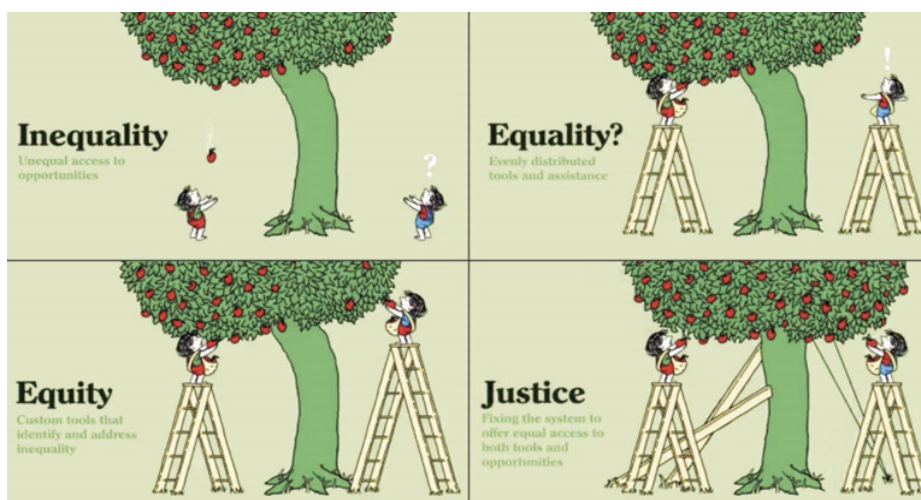


Figure 2

Differentiation

Differentiation is a key strategy to respond to diverse learning needs of learners. Not only does it cater for different ability levels, differentiation also considers different learning styles, interests, backgrounds, etc. Differentiation is a way of addressing diversity in the classroom. It can be done by modifying and adjusting content, teaching methods, learning environments and even assessment. Differentiation aims at creating learning opportunities for all learners with the ultimate expectation that it will help all learners to master the same key competencies.

Differentiation is	Differentiation is not
A mindset and approach to teaching that is always done, in every lesson or learning activity.	A set of strategies or activities
Learners are learning the same thing but in different ways	Individualised instruction
Presenting the same task in different ways and at different levels	One size fits all
Based on ongoing assessment of needs	Difficult questions for some and easy for others

Differentiation should happen both on input (the content of the lesson), the process (the way how learners acquire the content) and the output (the way learners show they have acquired the content) (see Figure 3).

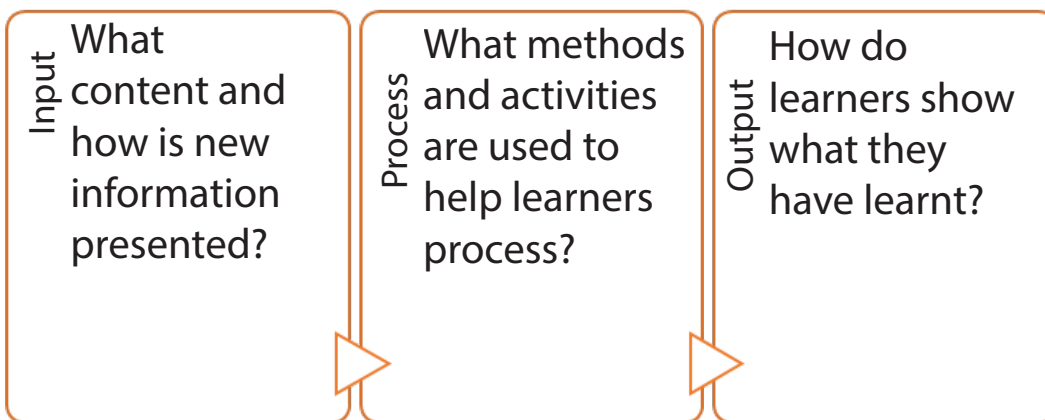


Figure 4 Differentiation is needed at all steps

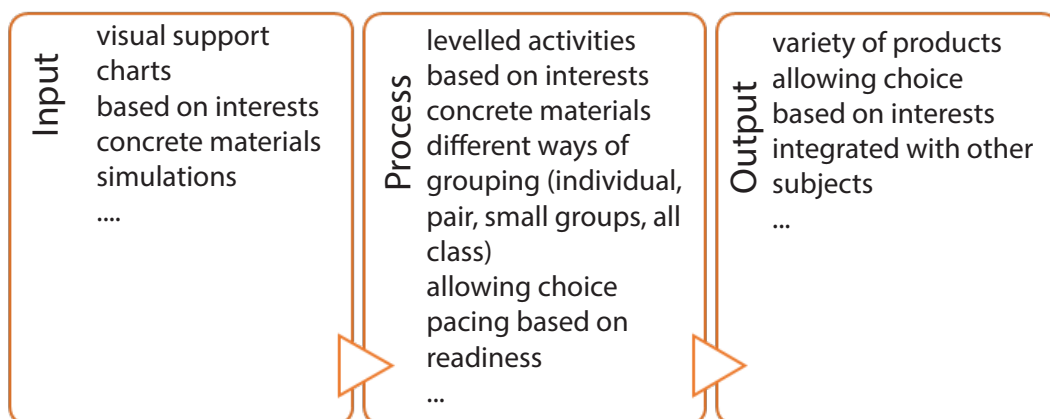


Figure 5 How to do differentiation at all levels

Differentiating means that you can adjust:

- the level of complexity
- the amount of structure and guidance you provide
- the pacing (slower or quicker)
- the support materials provided
- the way how students engage with the learning topic based on their interests
- the way how students engage with the learning topic based on their learning styles
- the grouping of students

Differentiation requires flexible grouping. This means that grouping helps students to be challenged at the right level. But the groups are not static or linked to any kind of labelling, to avoid the risk of having unequal expectations for different children. A learner might be in this group today but move to another one tomorrow based on interests, progress and subject.

How to get started?

Applying all of the above might be overwhelming at the beginning. So, why not start small?

Step 1:

Here are some key questions that get you going to bring the first elements of differentiation into your classroom. It all starts with the lesson plan or lesson preparation.

By answering the 4 power questions (figure 6) you will automatically bring in differentiation.

Step 2:

1. Start exploring variations in your teaching methods following the suggestions given in Figure 3 and Figure 4. Find out what works and doesn't work with your learners.
2. Get support from colleagues: get inspiration from colleagues on how they differentiate content, methods and assessment. Select this topic for your upcoming Community of Practice (COP) cycle and find solutions with your peers.

It is true that teachers need an extensive repertoire of evidence-based teaching methods, but most of all, teachers need to be able to think out of the box. Teachers continuously need to ask themselves:

- "What do my learners need right now to take the next learning step?" and
- "what should I do to make that happen?"

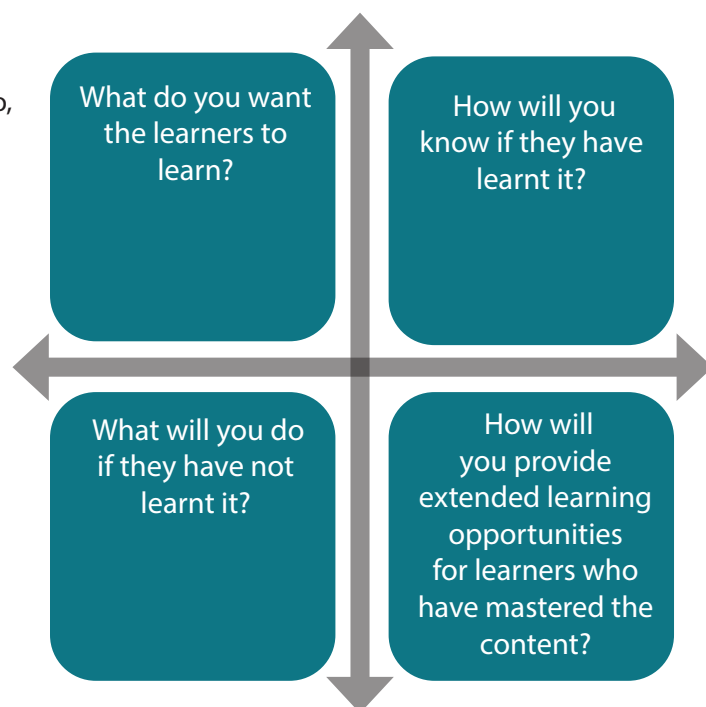


Figure 6: 4 power questions

How inclusive are you?

Providing quality education to all learners is also called inclusion. Inclusion is based on acknowledging and accepting differences between learners. This is not limited to learners with special needs or disabilities. One of the key strategies for responding to diversity in the classroom is differentiation as described above.

You can use the checklist below to check how inclusive you are:

- Do you value diversity?
- Do you support all learners?

Via answering the questions below, you will get a good idea of where you are in providing differentiation in your class or school. After completing the checklist you can identify points for improvement.

1. Valuing diversity

Statement	YES	YES, but	NO	?
I can explain the meaning of "inclusive" education and can give examples.				
All schools must provide quality education to all learners.				
All teachers should provide support to learners who experience barriers to learning and development.				
I believe it is 'normal to be different'.				
I believe learner diversity must be respected, valued and understood as a resource that enhances learning opportunities and adds value to schools, local communities and society.				
As a teacher, I should identify the most appropriate ways of responding to diversity in all situations.				
I believe that all children can learn, whatever their gender, race, wealth, home language or the presence of a disability.				
My expectations are high for all learners.				
I address and stimulate male and female learners equally.				

2. Supporting all learners

Statement	YES	YES, but	NO	?
I plan my lessons with all learners in mind.				
I make the curriculum accessible for all learners.				
I use a variety of teaching strategies responsive to all learners.				
I use a wide variety of (low cost) learning and teaching materials.				
I organise my classroom to accommodate differentiated teaching.				
I make my language accessible for all learners in my classroom.				
I assess the progress made by all learners in my classroom.				
In my class activities, I encourage all learners to communicate.				
In my class activities, I encourage all learners to participate.				
In my class activities, I encourage all learners to collaborate.				
I give continuous support when I observe the need with my learners.				
I create a classroom climate where learners can request continuous support.				
I develop independent and autonomous learners.				
In my class, learners can 'take risks' and even fail in a safe environment.				
I celebrate achievements of all learners (as compared to their own progress and abilities).				
I distribute my resources fairly to learners.				
In my class activities, I encourage learners to support each other.				

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TIPS FOR EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE REMEDIAL AND CATCH-UP PROGRAMME

The tips and tricks listed below were shared by head teachers, deputy head teachers and teachers from the schools visited for this edition of Urunana rw'abarezi, based on their experiences. You can also send your tips for effective inclusion practices to info.rwanda@vob.org.



To school leaders

- Work with parents, explain the importance of the remedial programme (e.g. during school general assemblies or community meetings)
- Involve local leaders to ensure all parents send children to school
- Explain/train your teachers about the programme
- Discuss with teachers the best time to implement the programme
- Support your teachers in the implementation of the programme
- Set targets/milestones
- Monitor and evaluate the implementation of the programme and make adjustments if needed
- Discuss with other school leaders and learn from each other



To teachers

- Listen to students and discuss the causes of low performance in class. This helps you to better support them
- Take time to explain to learners and make sure they understand they need catch-up
- If you plan to support students in weekends, first discuss this with the parents and learners
- Make individualised plans when needed
- Monitor the learners' progress (through regular assessments)
- Aim to reach a level where remedial and catch-up programme is no longer needed
- Discuss with your colleagues and share best practices
- Make differentiation a mindset, a standard practice done in every lesson



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