



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Leading, Teaching and Learning Together: Continuous Professional Development for school leaders and teachers

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Rwanda

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Lead: VVOB education for development

Partners:

- Ministry of Education in Rwanda
- Rwanda Basic Education Board
- University of Rwanda – College of Education
- National Examination and School Inspection Authority

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

Professional development of school leaders

Instructional leadership

Certified courses

Professional learning communities

Blended design

6. What makes it a best practice? *

In many countries worldwide, school leaders have minimal opportunities for pre- or in-service leadership training, although they play a vital role in creating the conditions for effective teaching and learning. School leadership has been shown to be the second most important in-school factor affecting learning, after classroom teaching, and is considered a low-cost strategy for improving learning outcomes. VVOB, together with its government partners in Rwanda, has developed two modalities for continuous professional development (CPD) of school leaders: certified courses for school leaders (a CPD diploma course on effective school leadership and a certificate course on educational mentorship & coaching) and Professional Learning Communities of school leaders. Close alignment with government policy, structures and resources has been key for the institutionalization and scaling of these CPD modalities. In 2018 and in 2019, the Government of Rwanda and VVOB received a recognition from the African Union, during the “Innovating Education in Africa Expo” for the approach to continuous professional development of school leaders. Next to this, VVOB also quickly started building an evidence base to demonstrate that the model works. To date, more than 5000 school leaders (district and sector education officials, head teachers, deputy head teachers, school-based mentors and school subject leaders) have participated in these CPD opportunities. The involvement of different educational leaders from the district to the school level reflects the distributed leadership and whole school approach, whereby leaders all have a shared responsibility for effective teaching, learning and monitoring. The recent regional initiative of establishing an African Centre for School Leadership is the culmination of more than a decade of VVOB’s focused investment in the professional development of Rwanda’s school leaders.

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

In the first half of the 2000s, the Rwandan Government embarked on an education reform that combined the ambition for rapid expansion of access to quality education with the decentralisation of management and implementation responsibilities to districts, sectors and schools. It became clear that effective school leadership was both a critical condition for the success of the reform as well as a critical challenge. (Deputy) Head teachers, who are the main source of leadership in their schools, have a direct impact on teachers' motivation, expectations and standards and have a significant, albeit indirect, effect on students' learning outcomes and wellbeing.

But the Rwandan education system lacked sufficient school leaders capable of initiating and implementing the various school improvement strategies necessary for the reform. For this, the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) set up a School Leadership and Management Unit in 2011, which was supported by VVOB from the outset. A major accomplishment of the Unit was the formulation and introduction of professional standards for effective school leadership, which were informed by the best available evidence on successful school leadership. They are still in use and provide a framework for recruitment, assessment and professional development.

With VVOB's support, REB subsequently developed two modalities for the continuous professional development (CPD) of school leaders:

- A diploma course on Effective School Leadership, aimed at equipping district and school leaders with the competences needed to fulfil their roles. The programme was offered as a 12-month course certified by the University of Rwanda – College of Education and is still ongoing. Since 2015, more than 1500 head teachers and deputy head teachers have participated. In 2017, a certificate training on Educational Mentoring and Coaching was also developed, reaching already more than 2700 district and sector education officials, school-based mentors and school subject leaders.
- Professional learning communities (PLCs) of school leaders organized at sector level, aiming at bridging the gap between the theory, policy and practice of effective school leadership, and at creating a forum for sharing good practices. Since 2014, about 400 sector education inspectors have been trained to facilitate these PLCs and coach the participating school leaders.

As of 2020, the Covid-19 pandemic escalated the transition of CPD into blended modalities and more than 5000 educational leaders were trained in digital literacy for online learning.

Building further on this CPD support system put in place for school leaders and the professional standards policy framework, a next step now is to regionally promote effective school leadership through the establishment of an African Centre for School Leadership.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation? *

VVOB started working with the Ministry of Education to support school leaders since 2003. The first decade focused on managerial skills and tools for school leaders in secondary schools, in view of effective and efficient leadership. As of 2013, a smart combination of multiple cycles of funding from the Belgian government, short-term innovation funding from the UK and a well-targeted boost to ICT-innovation and scaling from the Mastercard Foundation made the successful shift of interventions from school management support to school leadership support possible, to strengthen school leaders in their role to improve the quality of teaching at school.

- Promoting school leadership through Continuous Professional Development (CPD) of school leaders was initiated with funding of DFID as part of their "Innovations in Education" (2013-2015, £ 325,588). The innovation compared different CPD approaches: training, coaching (through PLCs), and a combination (compared to a control group which received no CPD). The experimental groups showed better results on head teacher and teacher performance. Initial concerns about potential cultural barriers to a coaching approach proved unfounded.

- After successfully testing the CPD approach at the level of 1 headteacher per sector in primary education (416 in total), the same approach was implemented in another intervention of VVOB with Belgian government funding (2014-2016, €2,500,568). For this, a partnership was established with the University of Rwanda – College of Education which expanded its operations of pre-service training of teachers to in-service professional development of teachers and school leaders.

- The combined approach was further scaled up to all primary schools in 6 districts (with Belgian government funding, 2017-2021, € 4,159,000) and all secondary schools in 14 districts (with Mastercard Foundation funding, 2018-2022, \$ 9,599,863) in VVOB Rwanda's Leading, Teaching and Learning Together (LT²) programme.

- While a shift to blended CPD was already foreseen in the framework of the LT² programme, the Covid pandemic pushed this shift up a gear since 2020. With funding from the Mastercard Foundation (2020-2021, \$4,658,067), CPD trajectories were redeveloped in line with the blended design and trainings in digital literacy skills for teachers and school leaders were offered. An e-tutoring course was also offered to trainers from UR-CE.

- A next step is taken at national level in the ongoing Learning through Assessment and Data (LEAD) programme (Belgian government, 2022-2026, € 4,840,000), which aims to provide targeted professional development to about 1500 (newly assigned) school leaders and involves a newly established government partner: the National Examination and School Inspection Authority.

With the establishment of the African Centre for School Leadership (as of 2022), lessons learned and findings from the CPD trajectories in Rwanda will be further scaled at regional level.

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

VVOB's school leadership CPD trajectories have been evidence informed starting with the development of professional standards for effective school leadership based on international literature and by testing CPD modalities with the DFID funded innovation projects. Next to this, external evaluations have highlighted the positive impact of the trajectories on the competences and motivation of key school actors and the overall school environment.

- Baseline findings from 2017 highlighted that school based CPD for teaching staff was limited and that there was an inequality in provision of CPD. At endline in 2021, despite meeting restrictions due to Covid-19, there was a demonstrated increase in access to CPD opportunities for teaching staff that previously had little access.

- Findings from the endline evaluation demonstrate a change in competences and efficacy of school leaders to lead and support CPD of teachers. Ultimately, one of the greatest changes as demonstrated through qualitative findings is the shift in behavior from simply fulfilling a requirement, or doing without understanding and intention, to meaningful behavior, where actions are undertaken with both knowledge and purpose.

- School leaders also report changes in how they engage staff, away from a top-down approach towards a distributed leadership approach that engages relevant stakeholders in decision making processes. In addition, school leaders understand better their roles as school leaders and better appreciate the roles that others can play in the management of the school and are more likely to delegate authority.

VVOB also developed a digital data ecosystem to internally monitor and evaluate the effects and impact of CPDs on school leadership at the level of trainees and schools, which goes beyond tracking reach numbers. Following the Kirkpatrick model, data is collected regarding the reaction of trainees (satisfaction), their learning and behaviour change. At the level of the schools, the impact on the teaching and learning culture in schools is measured. The model however still lacks the link between how school leadership CPD leads to improved student outcomes, through improved quality of teaching. This area of research will be further taken up in the research agenda of the current LEAD programme.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

The CPD trajectories are rolled out in iterative learning cycles based on the ADDIE model (analysis, design, development/redevelopment, implementation, and evaluation). The iterative learning cycles allow for continuous improvement of the intervention while at the same time improving cost-effectiveness of the intervention.

Another strategy to reduce the cost of the CPD trajectories, is the shift to online and blended delivery. However, it is clear that a balance needs to be found between quality and cost, while equity is a concern as well. Engagement and motivation of participants is also a key area which VWOB continuously assesses in order to find the right balance between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation of participants (e.g. certification, allowances, peer learning, active facilitation, accountability measures...). What we see as a way forward, is a more personalized CPD trajectory based on a standardized school leadership performance and needs assessment.

The introduction of peer learning through professional learning communities was crucial, as experience showed that top-down strategies, such as building the capacity of those who provide professional development for head teachers, need to be complemented by strategies that involve school leaders themselves. The existence of multiple models for PLCs in Rwanda did however challenge its implementation. Consultations are now set up with different development and government partners to elaborate a standardized model based on best practices.

Next to the technical implementation of CPD trajectories together with our partners, we also invest in advocacy towards our government partners. While the 5 standards of effective school leadership provide an excellent policy framework for our interventions, we continue to work with the Ministry of Education to have a policy in place which makes training of school leaders a compulsory aspect of their career progression. An evidence-based policy brief on school leadership CPD is being developed as a tool for advocacy.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

Working in long-term partnership with ministries of education on system change is a fundamental approach of VVOB. Building the capacity of institutional actors of the system ensures that programmes are taken to scale by the actors themselves, with VVOB playing a supportive role to ensure that new knowledge is effectively practiced, shared and maintained. In Rwanda, VVOB collaborates with Rwanda Basic Education Board, the University of Rwanda – College of Education and now also the National Examination and School Inspection Authority, and has effectively reached more than 5000 school leaders that participated in CPD programmes on a nationwide scale, resulting in better performing school leaders and an improved culture of teaching and learning in schools.

VVOB has also invested heavily in collaboration with external learning and research partners to generate strong evidence to inform ongoing and future interventions. Over the years, VVOB carried out quasi-experimental and longitudinal research on the effects and impact of school leadership CPD and published several papers and reports on this (see overview in further readings). For example, a review of empirical research on school leadership in Africa by VVOB shows there is little evidence of government ‘ownership’, or ‘buy-in’ for large-scale school leadership CPD, across Africa. To overcome this challenge, the establishment of the African Centre for School Leadership has been initiated by VVOB and its partners. The Centre will support governments and governmental agencies in the education sector, to build supportive education leadership systems on the continent.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

<https://rwanda.vvob.org/publications>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uzBHDqP6wvA>

<https://www.vvob.org/en/programmes/rwanda-coaching-school-leadership-achieve-high-level-learning-outcomes>

<https://www.vvob.org/en/news/coaching-school-leaders-dfid-funded-research-rwanda-shows-what-works>

<https://www.vvob.org/en/programmes/rwanda-primary-education>

<https://www.vvob.org/en/programmes/rwanda-girls-mars>

<https://www.vvob.org/en/programmes/rwanda-leaders-teaching>

<https://www.vvob.org/en/programmes/rwanda-building-education-resilience-times-crises>

<https://www.vvob.org/en/downloads/technical-brief-1-school-leadership>

<https://rwanda.vvob.org/news/stakeholders-rely-new-african-centre-school-leadership-build-consensus-around-effective>

<https://www.reb.gov.rw/index.php?>

[eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=24532&token=85b514b98192b26aece17bfd8541ffe8b72602f4](https://www.reb.gov.rw/index.php?eID=dumpFile&t=f&f=24532&token=85b514b98192b26aece17bfd8541ffe8b72602f4)

https://rwanda.vvob.org/sites/rwanda/files/acsl_working_paper_v0.0_20220327.pdf

<https://rwanda.vvob.org/download/endline-evaluation-programme-mathematics-achievements-rwandan-schools-%E2%80%93-girls-mars-2017>

<https://rwanda.vvob.org/download/leading-teaching-and-learning-together-final-evaluation-secondary-education-program>

https://rwanda.vvob.org/sites/rwanda/files/school_leadership_baseline_report_cea_april_2021_final.pdf

<https://www.vvob.org/sites/belgium/files/2017-rwa-impact-of-plns-on-headteacher-and-teacher-intrinsic-motivation.pdf>

https://rwanda.vvob.org/sites/rwanda/files/20150318_ife_outcome_evaluations_report.pdf

https://rwanda.vvob.org/sites/rwanda/files/coaching_school_leadership_in_primary_education_in_rwanda.pdf

https://rwanda.vvob.org/sites/rwanda/files/vvob_ltit_midterm_evaluation_final_report_v0.0_2020_0727_0.pdf