EdTech Hub

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Continuous professional development in Sierra Leone

Scoping phase overview

This document provides an overview of our findings from the scoping phase of the tech-supported continuous professional development (CPD) sandbox in Sierra Leone.

What factors contribute to effective CPD?

In our learning session, we identified the following principles for effective CPD:

- CPD must be practical, continuous and tailored to the needs of teachers
- Practice-oriented cycles of school-based CPD — learn, practice, reflect and more practice — can support teachers to improve the quality of their instruction
- School- or cluster-based, peer-facilitated sessions can address the limitations of cascade models, this can also be supported through tech tools
- CPD must focus on teaching practices that promote improved learning outcomes
- CPD must provide teachers with critical steps to develop skills and knowledge that they lack
- Headteachers need to provide sufficient time and space for CPD to take place in the school
- Programmes must include mechanisms for obtaining feedback and adapting, tech can be used to support this

How does CPD fit into national priorities?

The interview process and the document review allowed us to identify key priorities for CPD in Sierra Leone.

Sierra Leone has a need for more qualified teachers, especially qualified female teachers and qualified teachers outside of urban centres

- The number of qualified teachers in Sierra Leone is insufficient as almost one-third of the workforce is unqualified
- The primary-level pupil:qualified teacher (PQT) ratio is 69:1 although this figure varies across regions with Western Urban exhibiting the most favourable ratio
- The ratio fluctuates within regions as schools outside of urban areas have significantly higher PQT ratios (76:1) than those close to urban areas
- The gender balance of the teaching workforce is also a concern as men constitute 73% of all teachers

Continuous professional development is a central tenet of the government's agenda

- The MBSSE sees CPD as critical for systems strengthening and radical inclusion: a lack of qualified teachers underpins many of the challenges that the sector faces
- The TSC has developed professional standards that outline the specific skills and competencies that teachers must exhibit at each stage of their career path
- The TSC wants to develop policies and programmes to attract young people – and especially women – into the workforce.
- The TSC aims to use technology to improve the management and quality of the teaching workforce in Sierra Leone
- Yet, the Sensi Hub team noted that the local technology ecosystem is undeveloped: the majority of technology-supported programmes have depended on development agencies

Teachers should participate in cluster- and / or school-based sessions that reflects their needs, supports reflective practice and promotes inclusive forms of instruction

- Under the Free Education project, CPD must be cluster- and school-based
- TSC policy guidelines note that CPD must account for individual training needs and reflect the professional development plans of teachers, schools and clusters
- The TSC's harmonised policy guidelines emphasise that CPD should support teachers to become reflective practitioners through class-based approaches which are sustained over time
- Teachers should learn to teach – and to adapt teaching – in ways that are inclusive of all learners regardless of gender, disability, ethnicity and language
- CPD can take different forms depending on the needs of schools and clusters: study visits, communities of practice, coaching, mentoring and learning circles

The proposed CPD programme should track improved practices among teachers receiving project-related training

- Under the FREE Education project, funding disbursements will be linked to changes in behaviour and practice
- The *Teach* classroom observation tool was designed for use in primary schools across low- and middle-income countries
- The tool measures (a) time on task, (b) classroom culture (including supportive learning environment and positive behavioural expectations; (c) instruction (including lessons facilitation, checking for understanding, feedback and critical thinking; and, (d) socioemotional skills (including autonomy, collaborative skills, and perseverance
- The tool relies on observers who receive training prior to visiting schools to conduct observations
- *Teach* underwent a 2-year development and validation process in which the tool was piloted in 1,000 schools across Mozambique, the Philippines, Pakistan and Uruguay

What CPD models have been adopted in the past?

Programme	Description
COVID-19 emergency response (TSC)	• Since the start of the pandemic, the TSC has delivered content from a range of providers — ranging from local education providers to NGOs — on the radio and provided coaching to clusters of teachers over WhatsApp. • In some areas, teachers met in groups and listened to radio broadcasts together despite restrictions. • The TSC plans to expand this model to include educational television
Mentor preparation programme (TSC)	• This programme aims to prepare mentors to support new teachers throughout their practicum • School-based mentors are expected to design the practicum, including specific assignments and outputs • During the practicum, mentors are expected to model good teaching practices, evaluate the mentee's performance and support the mentee to prepare materials • The TSC has currently trained over 800 mentors
Workshops on performance management (TSC)	• The TSC delivered workshops on performance management to 6,000 school leaders and supervisors, aiming to promote performance-based evaluation of teachers as set out in the Professional Standards • School leaders need to know these standards and why they are important
On-demand CPD programme (TSC and European Union)	• The European Union worked with the TSC to pilot a series of micro-courses on Saturdays in March - May 2019. • Courses were hosted at Port Loko Teaching College, Eastern Polytechnic, Njala University and Northern Polytechnic. • Example courses include Teaching Reading and Writing in Primary Grades and Teaching Mathematics in Primary Grades.
REACH (TSC)	• The REACH programme used communities of practice to support teachers to deliver lessons in early grade reading and maths • Teachers meet in peer-facilitated, school-based learning circles on a weekly basis • In sessions, teachers reflect on the previous week' work, discuss problems, share strategies, practice new skills, write a journal, plan lessons and identify an area to work on over the next week • Each school forms part of a cluster with nearby schools which meet on a termly basis for a mini-workshop • The CoP approach is perceived as being more effective than a cascade model

Termly cluster-based PD sessions (Leh Wi Lan)	- Leh Wi Lan offers termly PD sessions to teacher on specific topics and in specific subjects - At first, clusters of JSS teachers from different districts would meet to learn how to use the lesson plans for English and maths - Afterwards, these sessions were expanded to SSS teachers - Yet, CPD sessions may be unable to address structural challenges - Even where teachers can use lesson plans, students may be a few grades behind the curriculum - Meanwhile, teachers tend to miss between 10 and 20 lessons at the backend of each term - Anecdotally, the Leh Wi Lan team ascribed this variation to the buy- in of school leaders and budgeting as after-schools sessions may need refreshments or transport
Tablet-based CPD (Leh Wi Lan)	- School supervisors use the Tangerine application to observe classroom practices and provide feedback to teachers - Separately, Leh Wi Lan has preloaded tablets with content (e.g., PDF copies of training materials and lesson plans) for teachers to use in the classroom and school - The team also produced short videos to support the professional development of teachers based on experience from Bangladesh and Nigeria - The team filmed examples of good instruction across the country that were introduced to teachers in face-to-face sessions - The general feedback indicated that teachers preferred SSOs and coaching to videos
Pupil remediation pilot (Leh Wi Lan)	- Leh Wi Lan are working on integrating school-level assessments into the CPD process - In a remediation pilot, they invited teachers to conduct Pratham-like assessments to assess the level of students entering JSS1 - In some schools, the assessments found all students required remediation with the greatest need in rural schools - Afterwards, teachers delivered remediation classes to students in ability-based groups - Pupil remediation support was found to minimise the gap between pupil and curriculum level and was perceived to be useful and easy-to-implement in schools