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## [Shared leadership, coaching and mentoring: Key ingredients to create a positive school environment in Rwanda](#)

### [Blog](#)

Training of educational planners and administrators

Teaching-learning strategies

*In 2017, net enrolment in primary education in Rwanda was 98%. At secondary level, enrolments have been on the rise too, yet drop out remains a challenge. By the age of 18, an average learner in Rwanda has completed only 6.5 years of schooling, which drops to 3.8 years if you factor in what that student will have actually learnt ([World Bank, 2018](#)).*

*To offset current learning deficits, [VVOB](#) – education for development partners with key education actors in Rwanda to provide innovative and relevant teacher and school leader continuing professional development (CPD). To measure the success of the CPD modalities, VVOB conducted an [Early Impact study](#), showing three key ingredients: shared leadership, coaching, and mentoring.*

## **Leading, teaching and learning together**

Effective teachers and school leaders have the greatest impact on the quality of equitable education. At VVOB, we believe government systems provide the best pathway to deliver professional development of teachers and school leaders at scale.

However, education officials lack critical capacity to implement effective CPD. VVOB has been working with the Rwanda Education Board and the University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE) to build capacity to establish, deliver, and monitor improved CPD services and support systems.

In the framework of VVOB's programme [Leading, Teaching and Learning Together](#), different CPD training programmes and modalities are offered, reaching more than 1,000 primary and secondary schools in 17 districts in Rwanda:

- Training programmes on Effective School Leadership for school leaders, district directors of education and district education officers
- Training programmes on Educational Mentorship and Coaching for sectors education

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- inspectors (SEIs), school-based mentors (SBMs) and school subject leaders (SSLs) in STEM
  - Professional learning communities (PLCs) for school leaders at the sector level and communities of practice (CoPs) for (new) teachers at the school level

## **The power of learner-centered facilitation**

To systematically assess our impact, VVOB makes use of the [New World Kirkpatrick evaluation of trainings framework](#) (2015). In addition to determining participants' satisfaction with the training and their deepened knowledge, we assess changes in behaviour and, ultimately, evaluate the impact on the overall school environment through focus group discussions, telephone, and in-depth interviews as well as surveys.

**The framework tells us that the capacity development trajectory is not only relevant and educational but also that behaviour changes and that a more positive school environment is evolving as a result of the programme.**

Participants showed high appreciation for the training programmes, were very satisfied with the active and learner-centered facilitation methods applied by the UR-CE trainers, and the usefulness of the training in supporting them to better fulfill their roles and responsibilities.

I can say that the facilitation and the way the activities are organised allow us to learn, because we are really involved, as a group, as peers. There is a dynamic in the classroom”, said an SBM from Rwamagana District in the anonymous evaluation.

## **Shared leadership**

During the training programmes and in the PLC sessions, participants are stimulated to reflect on their positions within the schools, sectors, and districts and are empowered to implement a form of shared leadership.

Indeed, a great majority of the school leaders and SEIs report more favourable attitudes about shared leadership after completing the training programme. School leaders are more willing to involve staff members in the development of School Improvement Plans and SEIs are more positive about letting school leaders facilitate PLC sessions and allowing schools to set their own goals.

As a school leader, I understand that to bring change to the community, I first need to change myself. I learnt how to collaborate with others in order to achieve an effective school vision that highlights where the school wants to go and what is required to get there”, a deputy headteacher from Rubavu district shared.

## **Building a cadre of coaches and mentors**

The evaluation also showed that participants got a much better understanding of their roles and

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responsibilities and noted consistent improvements in competences among participants. For instance, new skills were acquired such as facilitating CoPs and PLCs. CoPs and PLCs constitute ideal fora to learn from each other through sharing good practices and solving challenges.

New skills were also gained around coaching and mentoring. School-subject leaders in STEM, SBMs, and SEIs have all reported conducting more coaching and mentoring activities in their schools and sectors after taking part in the training programmes. They learned how to make use of planning (e.g. making a CPD plan), conduct lesson observations, deal with resistance to change and use feedback reports to support peers, and in particular new teachers as part of their induction trajectory.

Before the training, if a teacher was having difficulties, I would just tell them how to solve the problem. But today, I am helping them to find the right way to the solution through coaching and mentoring,” said an SBM from Rusizi district.

## **Effective school leader support**

In schools with trained school leaders, new teachers receive more CPD, especially on content and pedagogy, managing student behaviour, and managing the classroom. Promisingly, these same new teachers give their school leaders higher ratings when it comes to effective leadership.

School leaders also benefited from participating in PLCs. Monitoring reports of PLC sessions show that participation rates in PLC sessions are high with 95% of the school leaders participating in the sessions. Each PLC session brings around five school leaders together for about two hours. As a result, peer-learning among school leaders has increased. There have also been more school visits as a result of the training programme. Crucial to the success of these PLCs are the skills of SEIs. Indeed, the study showed a positive impact of their training on the establishment of PLCs.

After getting the training from VVOB and UR-CE, I have professionalized, and my way of supporting head teachers has also changed. For instance, I always encourage and help the head teachers to be educational leaders rather than educational managers,” said an SEI from Musanze district.

## **Collaborative learning**

Most Significant Change Stories collected from participants show improvements in collaborative learning among teaching staff. The stories also highlighted improvements in collaboration between the schools and parents/local communities through joint projects such as the building of girls’ rooms and better budgeting and financing.

After learning about promoting collaborative learning in the training programme on Effective School Leadership, I organized a staff meeting and encouraged the organization of CoPs...From then on, we set a timetable for CoPs, and everybody is eager to attend. Participants share experiences and help one another to boost teaching and learning activities. Lesson observation is also being carried out, school mentors are helping new teachers and

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there is frank collaboration among staff,” a headteacher from Karongi district shared.

To reach all targeted schools and optimize the delivery of the CPD training programmes, the different beneficiary groups are randomly assigned to one of three training cohorts. At the end of the programme about 2,000 school leaders and 3,000 SBMs and STEM SSLs will have benefited.

*Main picture: © Etienne Ntawigira*

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