



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.) *

Leadership for Learning - Building Learning Foundations

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Rwanda, Kenya

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) *

Education Development Trust, British Council, VSO

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

headteachers, teachers, collaborative leadership, communities of practice, maths and literacy, change agents, system leadership

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Uses collaboration to achieve improvements in learning outcomes; builds leadership and teaching systems, so is sustainable

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? *

i) Population:

All primary headteachers (HTs) in Rwanda, education system leaders (high performing headteachers who are trained to act as 'system' leaders to support peer headteachers), sector/district education officers and community leaders. Indirectly: primary level English and mathematics teachers, primary students (grade 1 to 5).

ii) Problem addressed:

In 2018 learning outcomes were not improving quickly enough: >75% pupils were below proficiency level in maths and English. The role of Rwandan HTs expanded significantly: from a largely managerial role to one with more responsibility for teacher PD and school performance. A set of professional standards now underpin their PD. In 2018 there was a significant gap between such raised expectations for HTs, and school capacity to lead teaching and learning improvement. In 2018 only 41% of school leaders met expected standards for leadership quality, and only 12% of English and 22% of maths teachers respectively met expected teaching benchmarks.

Many HTs were not aware of their role and few had received training as leaders of learning. Before 2018 there was no mechanism to bring schools together and share practices to support school-level CPD. Schools worked in isolation and there was a big variability in performance.

iii) Approach taken:

International evidence shows the power of leadership to turn around teaching and learning quality.

L4L uses international evidence to close the gap between policy and practice, freeing HTs from bureaucratic tasks and supporting them to lead the improvement of teaching and learning. It aims to transform school leadership in all 3200 Rwandan primaries, to ensure effective and inclusive grade 1-5 English and maths teaching. It is part of the government's Building Learning Foundations programme.

The initiative supports a culture of 'leadership for learning', shifting HTs' professional practices towards activities that improve teaching quality, learning and inclusion. It catalyses system-wide change by:

1. Creating a national network of 500 change agents or 'system leaders' by promoting high performing HTs to National or Local Leaders of Learning (NLLs, LLLs). These offer professional support to peer HTs.
2. Catalysing cross-school collaboration through Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) and coaching partnerships. HTs collaborate to find local solutions to challenges, facilitated by the N/LLLs.
3. A partnership with the University of Rwanda (UoR) to offer NLLs and LLLs high quality, accredited workplace-based professional development.

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?

*

i) Key activities

A national network of change agents

L4L harnesses the skills and motivation of the 480 highest performing HTs nationally, to benefit ALL Rwandan HTs. They are trained to take on new roles as Leaders of Learning (LLs), with a remit to reduce HT isolation, and act as change agents in their locality. This on-the-ground network means every HT in Rwanda accesses role-specific support from an expert peer leader. The LLs use their local experience to motivate peers, role model good practice and provide 1:1 coaching.

PLCs

The LLs bring local HTs together in a PLC where school data is discussed collaboratively, and strategies developed to reduce variability in performance. The PLC is also supports HTs to lead the improvement of English and maths teaching, including teacher communities of practice. HTs therefore experience collaborative learning and are fully equipped to lead powerful professional CPD teachers in their schools.

Accredited CPD

The LLs leaders complete CPD which leads to an accredited Uni Rwanda qualification in leadership. It emphasises the application of leadership competencies in the workplace, representing a wider shift to assessing leadership practices, rather than assessing knowledge of leadership theory.

ii) Dates

2017-ongoing

iii) Implement actors and collaborators

Education Development Trust, British Council, VSO.

Rwanda Basic Education Board

Sector Education Officers

A network of 476 system leaders (Local Leaders of Learning, and National Leaders of Learning)

A network of teachers in communities of practice (42,000 teachers)

iv) Funding FCDO

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? *

i) Impact on delivery arrangements:

* Teacher professional development and leadership development are delivered through networks in Rwanda.

* N/LLs have been pivotal as a delivery structure for Rwanda's Back to School campaign. The PLCs provided a resilient, flexible structure to convene HTs to plan for re-opening. They oversaw data collection of vulnerable pupils and led HTs through problem-solving discussion in PLCs on getting children back to school including 'hard cases'. They ensured targeted action in collaboration with school committees/parents. As a result in spring 2021 72% schools had a system for identifying children at drop out risk.

* Policy impact - the NLLs and LLL roles continue to be recognised and institutionalised. Each district has a District Selection Committee in charge of replacement planning, chaired by District Education Officer.

* PLC institutionalization – L4L has an advisor working with REB on this. Districts are taking ownership and in a process to recognise PLCs as a key mechanism for cascade.

* Accredited CPD for N/LLs institutionalised – a formal course listed by Uni Rwanda ensuring it can be offered into the future.

ii) Results

1. Professional collaboration increased, HTs are less isolated

3200 HTs reached. 400 PLCs active. 91% HTs collaborate regularly with peers in PLCs.

2. Schools have effective leadership of learning - data-informed, focused on equity, effective use of tech

98% HTs meet national leadership standards, promoting student learning (41% 2018)

98% schools have improvement plans meeting quality and inclusion criteria (68% 2019)

411 N/LLs graduated with diploma at UoR

3200 HTs have smart phones for online PLCs

3. Teacher CPD and quality improving

42000 English and maths teachers have HTs who support in-school CPD

>90% attend in-school communities of practice

% teachers meeting teaching quality benchmarks:

-English: increased to 89% in 2020 (12% 2019)

- Maths: increased to 63% in 2020 (22% 2019)

iii) Assessment is through four mechanisms:

1. Annual BLF process evaluation - commissioned internally to assess performance vs KPIs.

2. FCDO external BLF annual review - independent assessor.

Scored 'A' rating for the last 4 years.

District inspectors part of the team collecting HT performance data.

3. BLF project monitoring – Strategic Oversight Committee meeting is held quarterly, chaired by minister. 200 field staff use tablets with data collection software to collect monitoring data.

Provides real-time info for adaptations.

4. L4L commissions research and evaluations - in collaboration with REB and external partners, to generate insights for continuous improvement.

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? *

i) Improving learning is core to Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB)'s Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018-24. Improving school leadership and management is identified as a key priority.

ii) The fusion of international experience and innovation from EDT, together with the vision and contextual expertise of REB.

iii) Collaborative learning takes time to embed. Conditions of trust and sharing need to be established, so that teachers and headteachers feel comfortable sharing their expertise.

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)? *

The programme recognises that to achieve at scale support for teachers, school leaders are key. It recognises that if teachers are going to be supported and motivated to learn together in communities of practice, then school leaders need to experience and model this collaborative learning for themselves. And that they need new skills to promote and encourage teacher collaborative learning. This is the philosophy behind the L4L model.

It also recognises that brilliant leadership and teaching does not come from one-off training. Continuous PD, in the workplace, is needed. L4L showcases this paradigm shift, a constant process of changemaking and school improvement by leaders and teachers at all levels:

1 Every system has bright spots of good practice. The challenge is how to spread and scale the. In this model, the "best help the rest" - expert practitioners act as change agents to scale outstanding practice. They have unique credibility with peers.

2 Highly cost effective – collaborative networks and CPD are led by HTs themselves, not external experts.

3 Don't separate 'training' from school improvement. Here, the CPD and learning process is woven into the school quality improvement process, as professionals reflect on their practice, and learn together. On-the-job CPD is grounded in the live challenges HTs face.

4 The power of professional collaboration – investment in peer coaching and collaborative school networks.

5 A breakthrough Uni Rwanda accreditation model – of leadership competencies demonstrated at work. It emphasises the application of leadership competencies in the workplace, representing a wider shift to assessing leadership practices, rather than assessing knowledge of leadership theory.

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. *

1. The L4L initiative was selected as a case study in innovative education leadership practice in the Education Commission’s Transforming the Education Workforce report in 2019.
<https://educationcommission.org/transformingtheeducationworkforce/>

2. The impact of the L4L initiative during the C-19 school closures was profiled by WISE and the Education Commission, in a learning partnership with REB in 2021. <https://www.wise-qatar.org/rwanda-learning-partnership-report-covid19/>

3. The L4L initiative will be profiled as a case study chapter in an upcoming book by IIEP-UNESCO on innovative practices at the middle tier of education systems.
<http://www.iiep.unesco.org/en/meet-middle-tier-school-leaders-making-difference-during-covid-19-13934>