

Quality Teaching Framework: A focus on marginalised girls

Quality Teaching Framework

Introduction

The *Quality Teaching Framework* (QTF) outlines some of the factors that determine the quality of teaching for marginalised adolescent girls. It is a learning tool to help practitioners and policy makers working with marginalised girls to think through and adapt their approaches to teacher professional development (TPD). It aims to prompt and guide thinking on the different components of effective TPD programmes. The graphic below outlines three important areas of consideration for TPD: the organisation and delivery, the content and the support mechanisms. It also maps out some of the most important teacher competencies when working with marginalised adolescent girls. The content comprises key learning from the Girls' Education Challenge (GEC).

Continuous teacher professional development (TPD)

Gender responsive pedagogy

Promotion of safe classrooms

Student-centered methodologies

Inclusive education

Promotion of social emotional resilience and well-being

Subject knowledge and subject-specific methodologies

Formative assessment

Quality teaching for marginalised adolescent girls

Context

Adolescence can occur during primary and/or secondary school depending on the age a girl starts her education and how she progresses. For adolescent girls in the formal education system, the transition between primary and secondary is often precarious. Some girls may never have been to school, or may have dropped out early. There are many factors that constrain girls' capacity to learn to their fullest potential, including:

- poverty
- not being familiar with the language of instruction
- conflict
- being from a marginalised ethnic group
- having a disability
- heavy domestic chore burdens
- early marriage/pregnancy.

There are also systematic constraining factors such as few textbooks or teaching materials, or a lack of appropriate water and sanitation facilities. Additionally, if pedagogical approaches are not inclusive, girls may drop out, particularly those that are not accessing learning because they lack foundational skills. Inclusive teaching and learning approaches that teach at the right level, help ensure girls stay engaged and progress through school.

Why adolescent girls? What about boys?

While adolescent boys often face barriers to learning, adolescent girls face many additional challenges. For example, for adolescent girls, sexual maturation is closely interlinked with educational progress. An early pregnancy or marriage often denotes the end of a girl's education. In addition, even if girls do attain a similar level of education as boys, because of negative gender norms and a gap in labour force participation, they are typically less able to translate their education credentials into paid work. The gap in work participation is partly shaped by differences in aspirations and life choices between boys and girls which can in turn be influenced by teachers. Teachers' attitudes and behaviours, curriculum content, and the opportunities within schools for participation and leadership, are all major factors in the socialisation of adolescents and can potentially limit (or conversely expand) girls' visions for themselves and their futures.

The specific needs and barriers faced by adolescent girls – particularly the hardest to reach – mean that a tailored approach to TPD is required to ensure learning environments are:

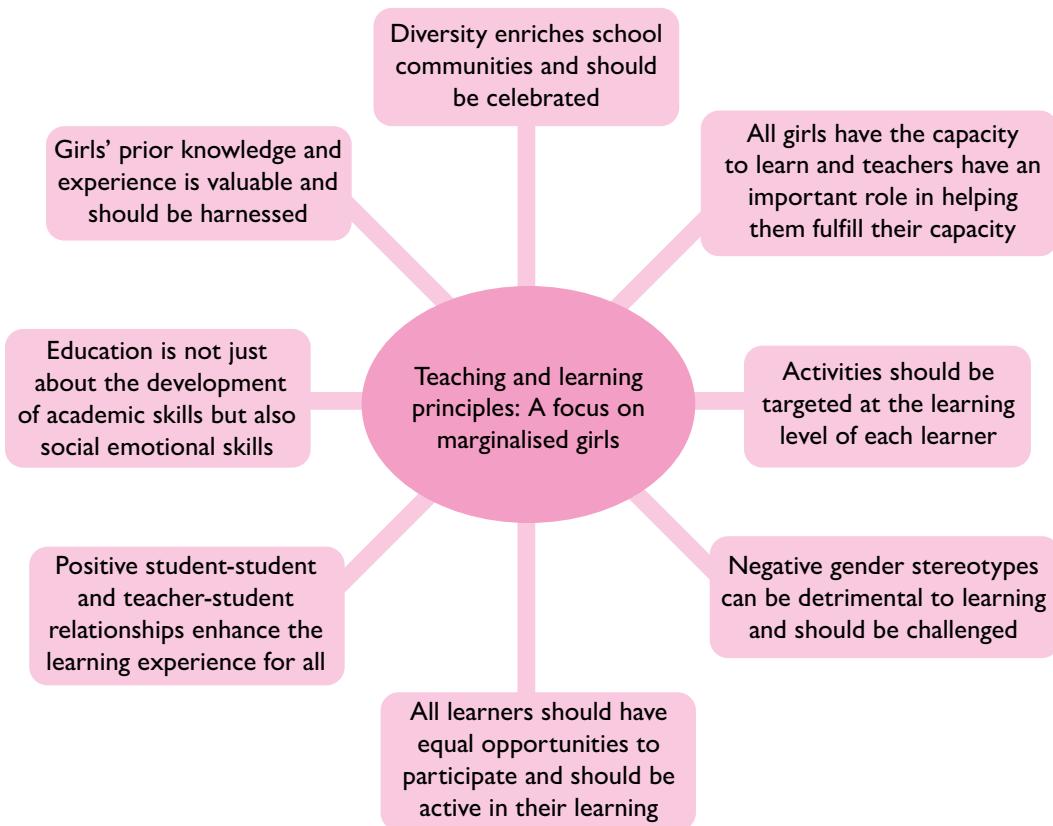
- safe
- inclusive
- conducive to learning
- empowering.

Essentially, good teachers:

- really know their students
- really understand their content
- know how to teach it
- use a variety of instructional and assessment strategies to target learning for students
- understand how children learn
- believe that every child can learn
- have the skills to help every child learn.

Teachers must be adequately supported to use these skills and beliefs to help children learn. While all the usual aspects of teacher quality listed above have to be considered when teaching adolescent girls, there are additional considerations dependent on the marginalisation factors and barriers specific girls are facing. TPD programmes should focus not only on subject knowledge and pedagogy, but also on gender equality. TPD should develop attitudes of tolerance and respect for girls – and respect for the knowledge, skills and experiences girls bring to the classroom. In addition, TPD should be informed by the teaching and learning principles in the diagram on the next page.

Teaching and learning principles



Other factors that influence learning

Multiple factors beyond the teacher influence teaching and learning at the policy, school and community level. At the policy level issues such as planning, recruitment and retention, compensation and in-service training are important influencing factors on teacher motivation – as are contextual factors such as conflict or economic insecurity. At the school level, school governance, working conditions, availability of learning resources, and class sizes all impact on teachers' motivation and ability to deliver quality lessons. In addition, family support and community engagement are also important influencing factors.

In some instances, teaching and learning can be improved more effectively by focusing not just on the teachers, but on the wider eco-system. For instance, if the curriculum is outdated and needs reform, but activities focus on teachers and learner-centred instruction, then teacher training intervention is unlikely to be impactful. An accurate diagnosis of the root causes of poor learning outcomes is essential. Projects need to be mindful of these contextual issues which are often (though not always) outside their control. Many projects engage with such issues via their advocacy work.

The need for system reform

Despite investments in pre-service TPD systems in GEC country contexts in recent decades the results have often been disappointing and many teachers are still entering the profession ill prepared. New approaches to the delivery of teacher education are needed in many countries. GEC projects are working to embed positive shifts within schools and education systems. TPD programmes need to be well coordinated with the curriculum and government incentives to ensure headteachers and local government education officials are supportive. For effective TPD approaches to have the most impact, activities must:

- be gender-responsive and inclusive
- align with government policies
- pay close attention to the context
- integrate into local education systems.

This helps to ensure that positive impacts are sustained beyond the life cycle of single projects. In addition it is important to understand and create a link between pre-service and in-service trainings. If the quality of the pre-service training is low or insufficient that should inform the structure and content of project TPD programmes.

Organisation and delivery of TPD programmes

The organisation and delivery of TPD programmes are key determinants of their effectiveness. School-based programmes are proving to be more impactful than training only.

Lesson 1: Continuous school-based approaches are generally more impactful than centralised trainings or a cascade approach

Teachers change their teaching practices by trying out new methodologies, reflecting on what worked, and adapting further based on the needs of their learners. By locating TPD at school level, support can be tailored to the needs of the teacher and learners, and teachers can discuss what did and did not work with colleagues. In addition it enables school leadership and local government officials to understand and champion new approaches because they can see them working in practice.

Many GEC projects have shifted away from a cascade approach to a school-based approach to TPD. The cascade model relies on centralised training sessions and attendees are expected to cascade the knowledge to other teachers in their school. One issue is that the quality of the training may become diluted as training is cascaded from one group to the next.

School-based approaches allow for:

- an individualised approach and to start from where teachers are in terms of their practice
- a focus on students' learning within a school context
- experimentation and reflection – again within the reality of teachers' own classroom settings
- instant and targeted feedback and support on teachers' own practice and practical advice from peers and mentors on how to adapt and improve.

Case study: Combining centralised training with school-based coaching

Like many GEC projects, the [Educate Girls, End Poverty](#) project's TPD model in Somalia combines centralised trainings with school-based coaching. Trainings are provided at two levels: at the cluster level twice a year and at a school level, the frequency of which is based on the needs of teachers. Coaches provide support to teachers at least twice a month. When interviewed, teachers and coaches felt that both coaching and training were necessary and one was not more important than the other. Trainings introduce teachers to new subject or pedagogical knowledge, but coaching can help guide teachers in introducing new concepts and methods into their everyday practice. As one teacher described, "You cannot have one without the other". When interviewed, the Director of

TPD at a Teacher Training Institute said that both training and coaching are necessary to complement each other, particularly for untrained teachers in rural areas. He further described that training allows teachers to become exposed to the content and coaching helps improve their delivery in the class. Teachers reported improvements in their teaching around protecting children, managing the classroom, and being more active in their teaching. Classroom observations revealed that teachers are using several of the strategies promoted by training and support such as: asking questions either to the large group or individually balancing between both girls and boys, clear communication, eye contact with students, linking to the previous lesson, calling students by name, praising students, moving around the classroom, providing real life examples, and checking students' work.

Lesson 2: Some of the most powerful learning happens when teachers come together to support each other and collaborate

Case study: Communities of Practice

The Communities of Practice (CoP) are a core part of TPD in schools supported by the [Excelling Against the Odds](#) project in Ethiopia. Schools organise the CoPs in slightly different ways to suit their needs and each has a clearly developed system that works best for them. For example, while all schools hold one main CoP meeting every month, some have chosen to hold additional, subject-specific CoP meetings. There is also a peer-to-peer component. All teachers organise into pair-groups and each pair carries out regular and ongoing peer observations, using an Observation Checklist Tool. Personal action plans are developed after each observation. Progress against the action plan is reviewed at the following observation. Common themes and issues emerging from the peer observations are discussed at the wider CoP meetings where solutions are developed further. The main, monthly CoP meeting is facilitated by a member of the CoP who is nominated by other members; often on a rotation basis, offering all members an opportunity to facilitate. Vice Principals in each school play a crucial role in the overall functioning and oversight of the CoP as part of the projects increased focus on leadership, but do not attend CoP meetings, as meetings are teacher led. Although it is difficult to identify any direct outcomes of the CoPs at this early stage of implementation, teachers have indicated that they like the fact that the CoPs are teacher led without managerial input, as it allows them to experiment and engage in open and honest discussions around teaching without fear of reprisal. They have also indicated that they have found the CoPs useful in helping and sharing practice on lesson planning and pedagogy, and on various student issues. In addition, there has been an interest in utilising the CoP model in non-project schools in the region.

Lesson 3: The professional development needs of teacher educators (coaches, mentors, master trainers, headteachers etc.) should be considered when designing or planning a TPD programme

When working with Teacher Educators it is important to think about:

- What is the capacity of the teacher educators to effectively support teachers' professional development?
- What are minimum competencies needed to be effective in providing professional development support to teachers?
- What are the professional development needs of the teacher educators and how can they be best supported?

Case study: Peer mentorship for headteachers

The [Let Our Girls Succeed](#) project, in Kenya, has a peer mentorship programme which is designed to harness the expertise of high-performing headteachers to build the leadership capacity of headteachers in all schools. Headteachers whose schools are performing exceptionally well are chosen to peer-mentor their colleagues with the aim of enhancing their leadership skills and driving improvement in other local schools, not just their own. The headteachers have been paired – mentor and mentee – taking into account the type of school, the profile of their learners, performance and geographical location. They received training with a particular focus on how to handle their mentor/mentee roles given the fact that they are all leaders learning from one another.

Lesson 4: TPD programmes should be tailored to meet teachers' needs and experience

TPD works best if it adjusts to different points in teachers' careers and their experience. For example, a teacher who has been teaching for 30 years should not be receiving the same professional development and support as a novice teacher. (Though of course this is not always clearcut. For example, a teacher who has been teaching the same way for 30 years may need additional support in implementing new approaches.)

Case study: The differentiation of TPD

In the [Kenya Equity in Education Project \(KEEP\)](#), classroom observations and post-training evaluations and debriefs found that teachers' needs and skills varied significantly depending on numerous factors including: teacher background, experience, qualifications, type of school, subject-matter, grade-level, and the needs and number of students in the classroom. For example, teachers in refugee schools, the majority of whom have received no training, were struggling to adopt new practices acquired in training. Trained teachers demonstrated a significantly higher level of pedagogical skills. Due to the wide variation of experience and skills, the project was challenged to identify, effectively respond to and track the diverse range of skills and needs. The project adapted by tailoring the training and approaches to specific groups of teachers based on similar experiences and needs rather than providing one uniform training and support approach for all.

Lesson 5: Distance teacher education programmes can be a good option to reach and train women while they remain in their communities

Female teachers are important role models and improve girls' participation in schools. Distance education is one strategy that eases the problem of a disproportionately low number of female teachers – particularly in rural areas.

Case study: Distance teacher training for women in rural areas.

The learning assistant (LA) component of the [Girls' Access to Education \(GATE\)](#) project in Sierra Leone has enabled young women to train as teachers in remote rural areas where schools are understaffed and there are few female teachers. The LA programme provides a pathway to teaching through guided distance study and in-school work experience. It enables young women who did not complete or continue their school education to follow a work/study pathway to teacher training. They first work as LAs in primary schools in their own communities four days each week, alongside studying modules in English and maths in preparation for taking the Teacher Training College entrance exam. LAs who pass the exam become student teachers and continue to work in their schools and to study the Teacher Training College distance programme, which includes regular residential courses, to become fully qualified teachers. Emergent findings from a study conducted by [The Open University](#) indicate that the presence of the female student teachers has led to positive cultural changes within the classroom. There is less corporal punishment, higher attendance, and learners feel safer, more relaxed and willing to participate. The study also found some shifts in classroom culture towards practice that is more interactive and learner focused.

Content of TPD programmes

Effective TPD programmes should build on teachers' skills and competencies in a way that matches the holistic needs of marginalised adolescent girls.

Lesson 1: Teacher competencies should be based on the needs and profile of the marginalised girls

The focus should be on pedagogical interventions that improve teachers' instructional practices in such a way that they match girls' learning needs.

Case study: TPD tailored to the needs of out-of-school adolescent girls

The *Every Adolescent Girl Empowered and Resilient (EAGER)* project in Sierra Leone is working with out-of-school girls aged 13 to 17 to build the practical, applied skills needed for their daily lives. *EAGER* outlines three important factors to consider when developing the TPD model.

- Base knowledge: While girls may have had no formal education, they do bring an array of skills and knowledge developed through their everyday life experiences. Teachers should build on and draw from their existing knowledge and experiences.
- Motivation: An out-of-school adolescent girl is likely to attend if the programme provides tangible benefits to her daily life. For example, economic security, self-confidence, improved health/nutrition, building connections with peers and an adult mentor.
- Teaching approach: Considering the above two factors, it is clear that the classroom experience for an out-of-school adolescent girl needs to be appropriate and will look different from a formal school. The teaching and learning approach is 'real-world' and 'problem based'; it encourages girls to reason, communicate, model and make connections to solve problems and develop skills relevant to their life.

Lesson 2: It is essential to meaningfully engage with teachers from the outset and to tailor TPD content to their needs and context

One of the best ways to ensure that the TPD content is relevant for teachers is to meaningfully engage them in a needs analysis. Teachers face diverse challenges and have various levels of experience and qualifications. Not consulting teachers risks pursuing a one-size-fits-all approach that fails to incorporate teachers' knowledge and voices.

Case study: Developing effective teacher competency frameworks

The *GEARR* project in Uganda aims to ensure that the teacher behaviours and skills it is targeting are those that will have the highest impact on their learners. It explored the needs and skills gaps of teachers through a needs assessment. Its research methodology included:

- an external literature review of the most up-to-date evidence
- an internal review of current teaching practice (classroom observations, focus group discussions with teachers, examination of the teacher's undergraduate test results)
- interview data from key informants including headteachers.

From this process, the top ten teaching practices were chosen. This informed the refreshment of the project's 'Great Teacher Rubric' which outlines the skills and behaviours the project predicts will have the highest impact on learning outcomes. TPD sessions are now geared towards building these competencies and the project monitors the impact of these sessions through learning walks and lesson observations.

Lesson 3: TPD sessions should include time for discussion and practice with peers

Teachers, like learners, learn by doing and TPD is more effective when time is allocated for practice with peers.

Case study: Practice with peers

One of the key learnings of the *KEEP* project in Kenya is that teachers value seeing new methodologies modelled by experienced classroom practitioners and then having time to practice them themselves in small groups before trying them out in their own classroom. However, when there are time pressures, it is often the time for modelling or practice that gets squeezed out. The *KEEP* project has revised its training manuals by providing guidance, and allocating more time, for trainers to integrate modelling and practice into TPD sessions.

Lesson 4: Training teachers on subject-specific methodologies that are student-centred can improve learning outcomes

It is important that teachers have an in-depth knowledge of their subject, and know the best subject-specific methods to imbue learning. Different subjects may require different pedagogies so equipping teachers with subject-specific pedagogy is likely to make positive contributions to student learning.

Case study: Training teachers on subject-specific methodologies that are student-centred

STEM II's midline in Nepal is showing a positive increase in learning outcomes – particularly in numeracy for beneficiary girls. It is largely attributed to the extra learning time and teaching and learning methods in the girls' clubs. The after-school revision clubs are for girls in Grade 9 and Grade 10. They focus on maths, English, Nepali and science, as well as life skills. The major focus of TPD for teachers who facilitate the clubs is on student-centred teaching linked to specific subjects, for example problem-based learning in maths. In particular, the project emphasises group work, project work, presentations and discussions that ensure girls are active in their learning process.

The girls reported finding worksheets for maths activities particularly effective. The worksheets include numeracy questions with spaces for students to work through the problem together. Regular monitoring in schools showed that teachers are applying these student-centric methodologies not just in the clubs but also in their classroom teaching. For example, one maths teacher was using marbles to teach probability, while a Nepali teacher was getting learners to discuss ideas and complete tasks in groups.

Key findings from focus group discussion with girls:

- Girls get mostly theoretical knowledge in class, whereas in the girls' club they learn practical application which helps them to understand better.
- Teachers teach better at clubs. The teaching is targeted at students' learning levels, and uses group work and presentations.
- Students get the opportunity to speak, which is different from regular classes. Midline findings also show that girls are building their confidence and are better able to speak in front of others.
- The teachers in the girls' clubs encourage the use of the library, computer labs and the internet; they use projectors, external reading materials, science labs, chart papers and local resources for demonstrations. The girls find the use of these resources effective.
- Girls have started to enjoy studying more.

Lesson 5: TPD sessions should have a gendered approach and include content such as: gender, human rights, and gender-based violence

Gender-responsive pedagogy can make a significant difference to girls' experiences in the classroom. Gender-responsive teachers provide a safer environment in which girls can learn, and are more likely to challenge negative gender norms. TPD content should unpack the challenges adolescent girls face and the impact these have on their learning, transition and livelihood. Content should also explore why it is important to be gender responsive.

Case study: Gender-responsive pedagogy

The KEEP project in Kenya has seen a positive shift on gender-related indicators in its midline evaluation. While there are factors to consider around seating arrangements and girls and boys having equal opportunities to participate, TPD sessions push teachers further by focusing on:

- Examples of gender stereotyping in teaching and learning materials. Teachers critically analyse examples and develop strategies for challenging these stereotypes in the classroom.
- Exploring gender-sensitive language in the classroom. If language is not gender sensitive, the teacher risks perpetuating gender inequality and negative gender roles and norms. If the teacher is careful and conscious of the language they choose, it can be a powerful way of promoting gender equality and shifting gender stereotypes.
- Reflection on their own biases and beliefs, how these affect the way they teach, and how they influence their learners. This is the starting point to changing behaviours in the classroom.

Support mechanisms for TPD programmes including coaching and peer support

Effective support measures are essential for quality TPD.

Lesson 1: Select teacher educators with the relevant profile and skills (including on gender) and invest in their professional development

Selecting teacher educators who have the relevant expertise and skills to promote gender equality is crucial. Projects have found it beneficial to create opportunities for coaches to regularly meet and collaborate (for example, in learning circles or cluster meetings). Often these are monthly or bi-weekly.

“Coaches value the hub meetings as an important platform to share experiences, identify common challenges, and problem-solve together how to address the challenges. Hub meetings are also a great means for helping teams to modify training or the programme.”

(Project report)

Case study: The limitations of using non-education specialists to support teachers.

One of the projects supported by GEC in Kenya provides schools with satellite broadband and computer labs which allow students to use an online portal for tutoring in maths and literacy. The project has two education advisors (a literacy and a numeracy specialist) who provide guidance to field officers (FOs) who are generally not education practitioners. The main role of the FOs is to build teachers' confidence in using the technology.

The FOs are also tasked with observing lessons and commenting on pedagogy. The education advisors support their professional development in this area and have created some easy tools for lesson observations. There have, however, been some limitations in the support they are able to provide. To improve teaching practices, the teachers require advice and feedback that addresses subject content and subject-based pedagogy which the FOs are unable to give. A suggestion from a monitoring assignment was to appoint FOs who have an education background and teaching experience in numeracy and/or literacy in the future.

Lesson 2: Effective coaching is individualised, well-planned, practical and collaboratively designed with teachers

Individualised support is effective through an instructional coaching approach that makes

TPD a partnership between the coach and the teacher. The coaching process should allow teachers to manage their own development through regular and ongoing reflection and examination of their teaching practices.

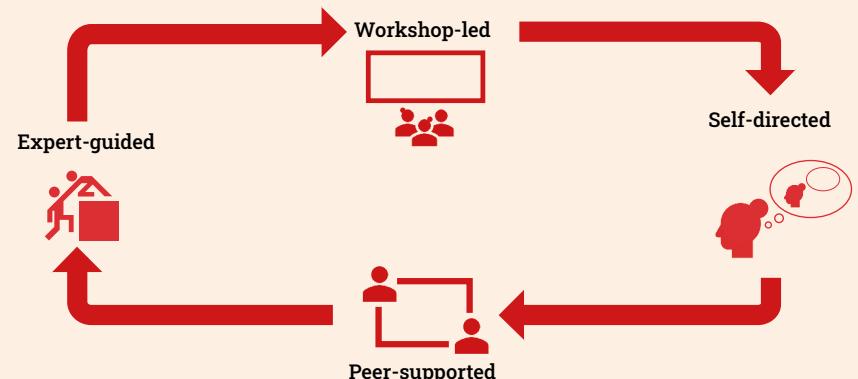
Case study: The cycle of continuous professional development

The *Steps Towards Afghan Girls' Education Success (STAGES)* project in Afghanistan has a CPD cycle which consists of four main stages.

- 1: The activity-based workshop introduces the competencies that will be explored in the cycle. It offers practical ideas that can be applied straight away in the classroom.
- 2: Teachers return to school and, over the next two weeks, complete self-directed activities where they apply the ideas from the workshop.
- 3: A fortnight after the workshop they take part in a peer learning circle. They reflect on what worked well (or not so well) in their classrooms. Video recordings or peer observations are sometimes used to help guide reflection.
- 4: After another fortnight, they receive a coaching session (a lesson observation and feedback from an expert). The cycle then re-starts with another workshop a fortnight later, exploring a different set of two or three competencies.

Teachers go through four to six professional development cycles of training over the course of the academic year. There have been improved learning outcomes in literacy and numeracy in intervention schools as evidenced in the STAGE midline. Interestingly the teachers who receive the most technical support were the highest performers. Teachers reported that TPD has positively impacted on their teaching methods, their level of engagement with learners and the overall learning outcomes of girls.

The cycle of continuous professional development



Lesson 3: Teacher educators should have the skills to effectively model good practice and demonstrate new methodologies

Experienced teacher educators, who know their subject well and understand how learners learn their subject, will be better equipped to model effective teaching strategies. Teachers across GEC projects have consistently reported that seeing new methodologies modelled well is one of the most impactful ways of learning.

Case study: Modelling difficult methodologies in TPD sessions

The [Educating Nigerian Girls in New Enterprises \(ENGINE\)](#) project has found that its community-based, cluster-level teacher learning circles (TLCs) are important spaces for educators “to seek professional guidance without fear of being appraised by their weaknesses” (Project report). The teachers have fed back that the sessions they find most useful are when master trainers (who are generally subject specialists) provide hands-on demonstrations and modelling that they can replicate in their own classrooms. It is important that teachers experience the pedagogy themselves; for example by participating in a lesson in the role of the learner.

Lesson 4: When relevant, provide teachers with take-away teaching and learning materials that they can use in their classrooms

TPD is more impactful when teachers are shown how to implement strategies in the classroom in conjunction with the provision of associated resources.

Case study: Providing teachers with resources

The [Improving Girls' Access through Transforming Education \(IGATE\)](#) project in Zimbabwe provided teachers with a set of laminated reading cards in combination with training on how to use them with learners. Reading cards are a simple set of a two-sided laminated A4 paper with a levelled story and simple illustrations on one side and comprehension questions on the other; cards are divided into five learning levels. A set of 100 cards was provided to each school. This provides teachers with an easy-to-use practical resource which they can use straight away in their classrooms, and which they can keep and reuse with different groups and share with other teachers. These resources have helped teachers address the lack of accessible reading materials for learners with low literacy. They have also aided teachers in implementing more learner-centred lessons: the levelled cards make it easier to address different learning levels and differentiate lessons; they make it easier to check for understanding as comprehension questions are provided; and they provide a model of learner-led activity where learners are interacting with the text.

Lesson 5: Engage headteachers and principals from the outset and create opportunities for peer mentorship among leaders

To ensure a gender-equitable learning environment, a whole-school approach is needed which involves learners, teachers and school leadership (which should include the school management committees, and Parents-Teachers Associations) working together to develop a supportive culture that builds girls’ confidence and learning. The support and oversight of TPD programmes by school leadership is critical to effective implementation.

Case study: Involving headteachers for sustainability

At the beginning of the project, [ENGINE](#), in Nigeria, engaged state level government officials as mentors to support teachers through coaching and conduct training sessions. When the project started to think through its sustainability strategy, it came to realise that school principals were central to anchoring activities at the school level.

Activities of school principals: Principals are now fully involved in the oversight and supervision of learning sessions within their schools. Principals also lead on the training of other non-*ENGINE* teachers within their schools. Project staff meet quarterly with the school principals across the implementing states to continue to strengthen their understanding of programme strategies and goals, and to develop their capacity to make these mainstream in their schools. Principals have been trained to understand safeguarding issues and issues pertaining to gender and social inclusion, as well as learner-centred teaching methodologies. They have also been trained to develop action plans to implement interventions within their schools.

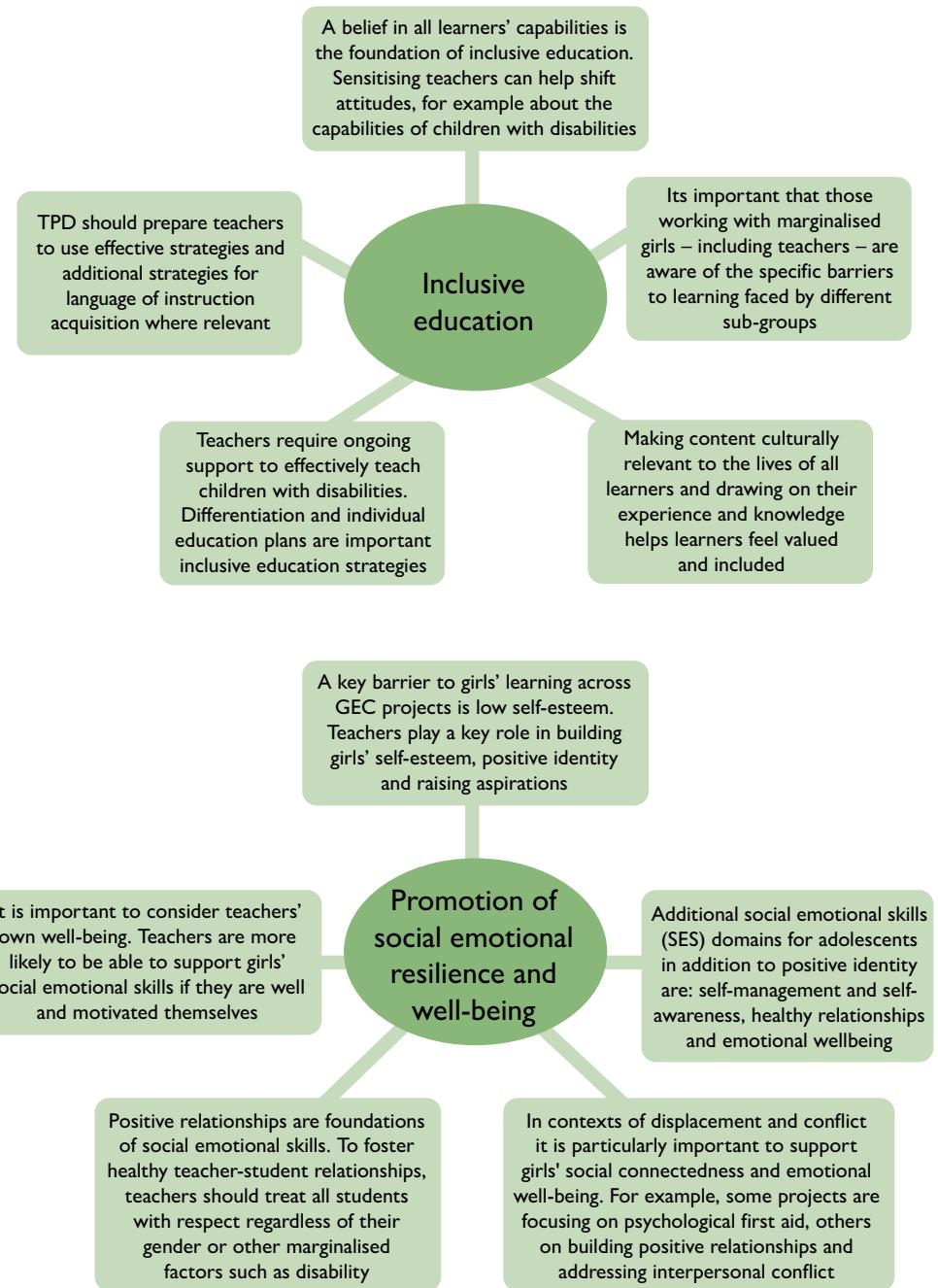
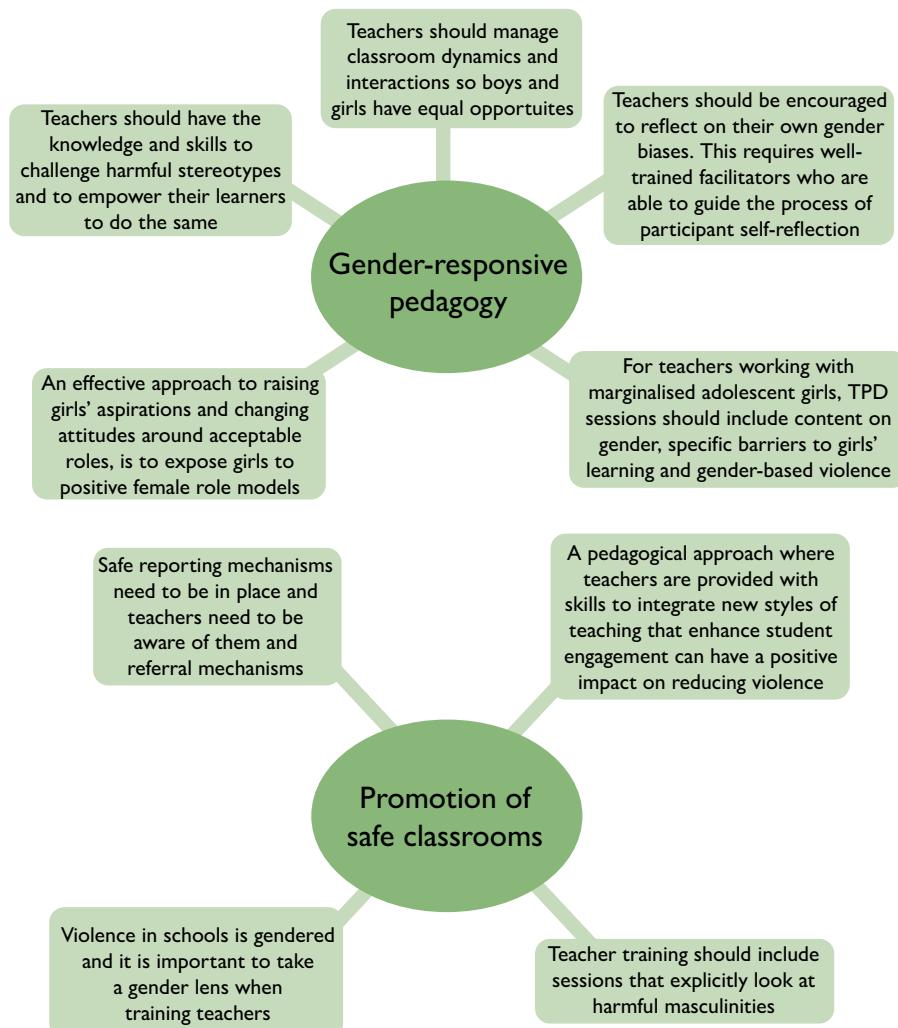
Results from engagement with school principals: The full involvement of school principals has brought about encouraging results, especially in terms of sustainability of programme intervention. Principals have made commitments to support marginalised girls to overcome barriers to completing their education; they are ensuring that gender is mainstreamed into school activities – especially the school assembly – and they are instituting regular TPD sessions within their schools to ensure continued improvement in teacher quality.

Competencies for creating safe and inclusive classrooms: Learning from the GEC

There are many teaching competencies related to inclusive and safe learning environments.

This section highlights some of the most important learning in relation to four key areas:

1. Gender-responsive pedagogy.
2. Promotion of safe classrooms.
3. Inclusive education.
4. Promotion of social emotional resilience and well-being.



Gender-responsive pedagogy

A gendered approach to TPD can make a significant difference to girls' experiences in the classroom. Teachers need to understand why it is important to be gender-responsive and the additional challenges girls face that impact on their learning, transition and livelihood. They also need to be aware of the power relations that sustain hierarchies and harmful stereotypes, their role in challenging and changing them, and how they can empower learners to do the same.

GEC projects have found that there are important skills a teacher needs to promote a gender-responsive classroom environment such as:

- valuing equally the learning ability of both male and female learners and allowing equal opportunities for learning
- managing any negative attitudes and discouraging gender-discriminatory behaviour
- addressing behaviours resulting from social norms such as shyness, lack of confidence or dominance
- assigning exercises that encourage learners to speak out
- ensuring group work is not dominated by more confident learners and that roles are assigned equally (for example girls are not always note takers and boys are not always leaders).

Promotion of safe classrooms

Violence in schools is common in many GEC project contexts. While a lot of GEC projects have TPD sessions on important topics (such as teacher codes of conduct and legal frameworks), projects are finding that it is more impactful to focus training sessions on non-violent classroom management. There are several ways that projects are approaching this topic.

- By incorporating skills building in classroom management (for example setting up routines or co-establishing class rules).
- By facilitating a process of critical self-reflection where teachers are encouraged to reflect on their own experiences, for example of corporal punishment as a child, or of perpetrating corporal punishment, in both cases with an element of reflection on the impact of abuse and on their attitudes to learning.

- By approaching non-violent classroom management through pedagogy rather than discipline. This is concerned with increasing the engagement and interest of learners. It is also concerned with establishing relationships based on mutual respect; relationships that enable the teacher retain authority whilst respecting their learners, and the knowledge and experience that they bring to the lessons.

Inclusive education

Inclusive education is not just about getting learners with disabilities into mainstream education. It is also about restructuring education systems and schools so that they can ensure meaningful learning for a diverse range of learners, for example:

- disabled and non-disabled
- from different ethnic, language or socio-economic backgrounds
- refugees or displaced children and young people.

An inclusive teacher has a holistic approach to supporting a child. For example, if a child is acting inappropriately, they would seek to understand the cause of this behaviour rather than locate the issue with the child.

Case study: Inclusive education strategies

The [Expanding Inclusive Education](#) project in Kenya, interviewed teachers who identified the following areas for TPD to ensure inclusive classrooms:

- Meeting the needs of all learners in classrooms with large class sizes.
- The need to better understand how to adjust the pace of lessons to accommodate children with learning or cognitive difficulties.
- Targeted communications skills to enable teachers to communicate with deaf and/or blind children as well as children with speech impairments.
- Better knowledge of teaching approaches for different disability types.
- How to prevent bullying inside the classroom and outside.
- How to manage negative attitudes from fellow teachers and school authorities.

Promotion of social emotional resilience and well-being

A focus on social emotional resilience and well-being helps build girls' positive sense of self and their ability to successfully interact with each other and their communities. They are key to encouraging girls to recognise their own strengths and build their self-confidence, self-respect, power and resilience. As outlined in the [GEC's Thematic Review of Girls' Self-Esteem](#), teachers can play a key role in raising girls' self-esteem. Projects that worked on raising girls' self-esteem noted several positive outcomes related to girls' learning such as increased motivation to learn and higher aspirations for their futures.

This is a particularly important competency to focus on in contexts of displacement and conflict. Some projects in context settings are adapting content from the [Teachers in Crisis Contexts Teacher Training Pack \(INEE\)](#). As a result of COVID-19 and in response to increases in violence, many GEC projects have been incorporating psychological first aid into their TPD activities. Other projects such as [EAGER](#) in Sierra Leone have a particular focus on building positive relationships and addressing interpersonal conflict.

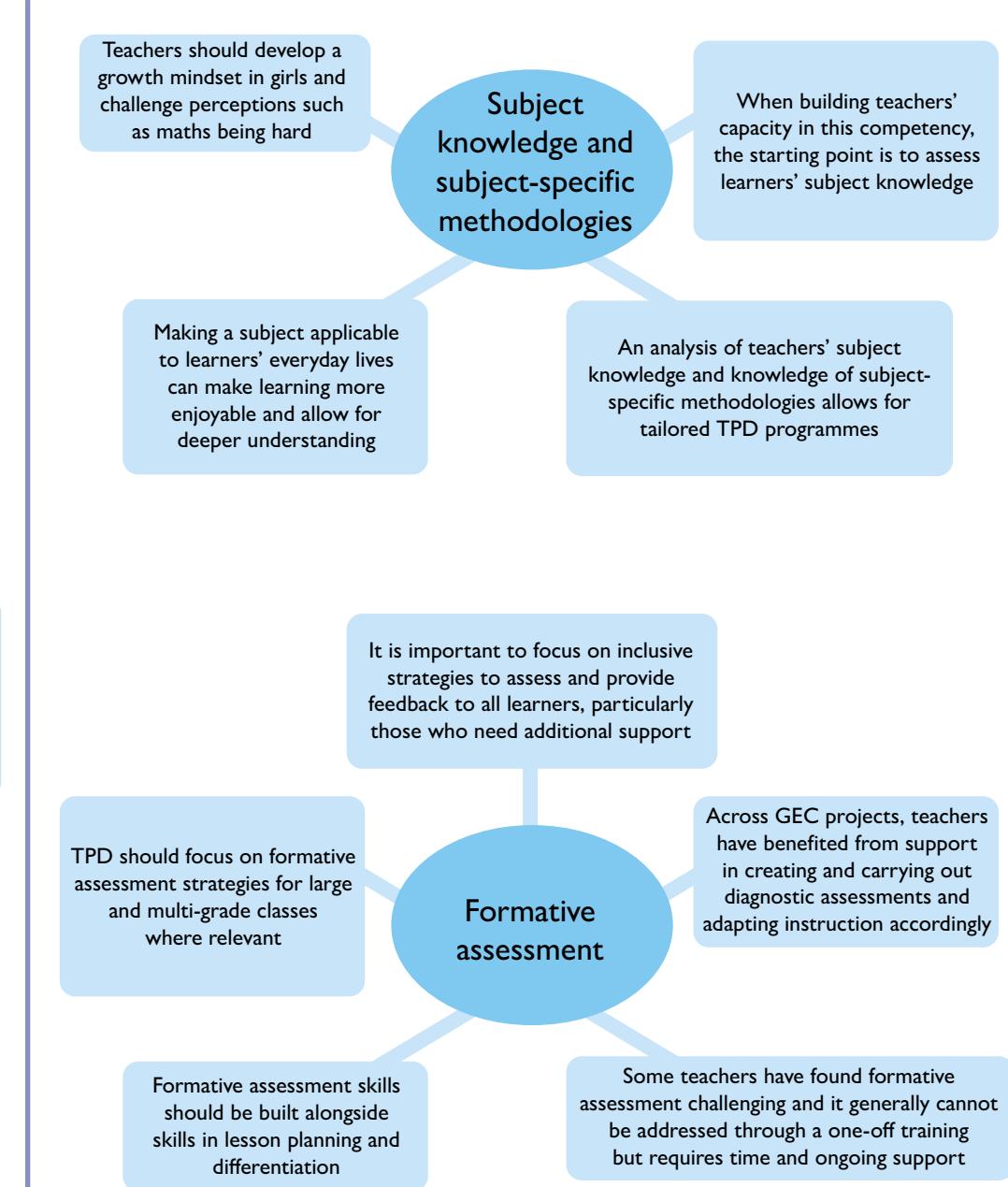
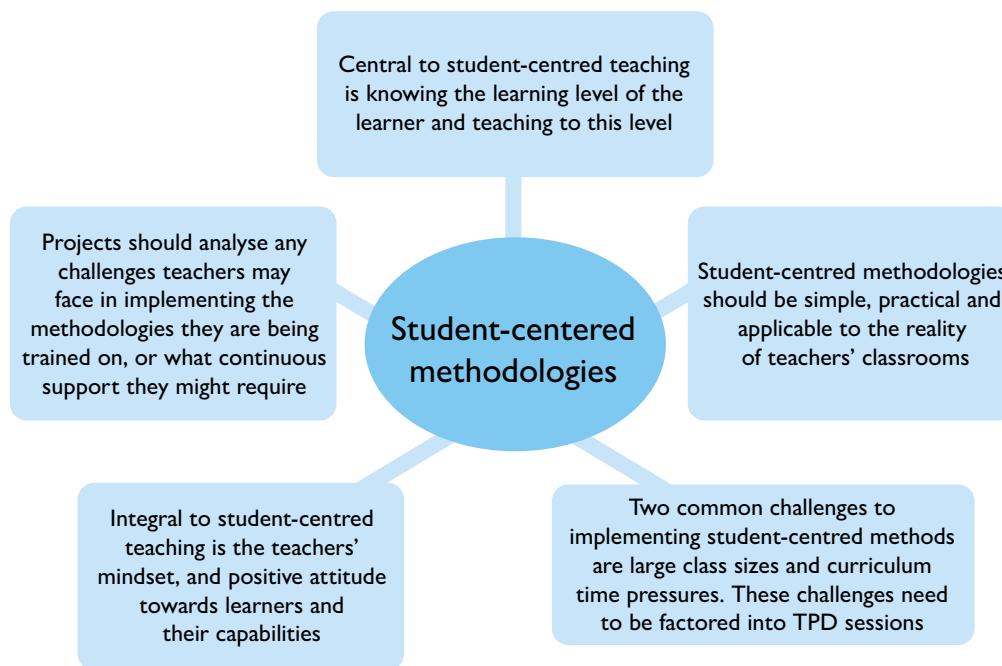
Case study: Building social and emotional resilience

Following a mandatory pause at the beginning of COVID-19, the [EAGER](#) project in Sierra Leone restarted learning sessions in safe spaces by bringing adolescent girls together in smaller groups. This is enabling girls to stay socially and emotionally connected to their peers and female mentors during the pandemic, while ensuring protective social distancing during sessions. Learning content reinforces the value of maintaining healthy interpersonal relationships, as this is an important coping strategy and stress mitigator during the lockdown. The curriculum emphasises skills such as: active listening, identifying emotions, managing stress, and assertive communication.

Technical competencies to improve learning outcomes: Learning from the GEC

There are many technical competencies that are needed to improve learning outcomes. This section highlights some of the key learning in relation to three competencies:

1. Student-centred methodologies.
2. Subject knowledge and subject-specific methodologies.
3. Formative assessment.



Student-centered methodologies

In many project contexts the focus is often on covering the curriculum and on what the teacher teaches rather than what the student learns. Across GEC projects, TPD programmes are shifting the focus to student-centred teaching which makes the learning and progress of each individual learner central to the education experience.

It shifts the focus to competencies in essential areas, rather than only on the subject matter. Rote learning, or mimicking the teacher, is not enough to allow for engagement and deeper understanding; instead, opportunities should be provided for learners to practise or engage with the skills being taught. Learners should be active agents in the learning process rather than passive. Student-centred approaches are informed by the principle that learners are central to the learning process which should be the bedrock to all TPD.²

Subject knowledge and subject-specific methodologies

Not only is it important that teachers have in-depth knowledge of their subject and the curriculum, they must also know how learners learn their subject. A starting point for projects is first to know where learners are struggling in a given subject, and secondly to know where teachers have gaps in their own skills, subject knowledge and subject-related methodologies.

GEC monitoring has revealed that when teacher subject knowledge is low, teachers are more likely to fall back on methods such as having learners copy from the board, which does not allow for deeper understanding.

“Maths knowledge was low ... teachers are at a Grade 12 qualification level, and naturally have a series of difficulties in teaching and content knowledge. Maths teaching is weak in general, and it seems that teachers have difficulties delivering maths lessons in terms of methods to teach maths, as well as difficulties in solving maths exercises themselves. [...] In the monitoring, it was observed that student’s engagement differed based on the subject, and seemed better in Islamic subjects and the social sciences and poor in maths, which seemed to rely on rote methods with observations of students being very busy copying directly from the board without full understanding.”

(Project report)

To deal with this challenge, many projects have a dual focus on subject knowledge and subject-specific methodologies. GEC projects have also stressed the importance of making content applicable to their learners. For example, when teaching maths, it is important to use real-life, practical examples; making maths relevant to girls’ lives immediately makes concepts more valuable.

Formative assessment

Teachers' understanding of their students' learning levels is one of the most important aspects of classroom teaching. Formative assessments give teachers the ability to assess students' understanding, provide regular feedback, and adapt instruction. This has immediate benefits for learners. Knowing what students understand allows a teacher to guide learners through tasks and content at their level. In systems where the focus can often be on preparation for exams, formative assessments can help the focus to shift from covering the curriculum to ensuring every learner understands before moving on, therefore ensuring no one is left behind.

While projects have found building capacity in this area one of the most challenging aspects, they have also found it to be one of the most impactful. For example, the [Discovery Project 2](#) midline found that in Nigeria there were links between teachers using strategies to check understanding and positive learning outcomes. Generally, it cannot be addressed in a one-off training. Instead, it requires ongoing support.

“Getting teachers to respond to formative assessment findings through differentiation, redirecting the lesson and providing appropriate and meaningful feedback is more challenging, though trainer-coaches do report some growth in these areas.”

(Project report)

What the evidence says

Organisation and delivery of TPD programmes

Ongoing support involving long-term teacher mentoring or in-school teacher coaching is more effective than one-off centralised trainings.^{1 2 3}

Teacher training is more effective when it focuses on the needs of teachers as learners, when it is connected to teachers' work, when it is coherent and when it includes scaffolding and support by a trained support person.⁴

Teacher training will work best if it is tailored to different points in the teachers' careers.^{5 6}

TPD is more effective when combined with the opportunity to discuss with peers.⁷

Content of TPD programmes

Providing teaching and learning materials to teachers is more effective at improving learning outcomes when accompanied by teacher training that shows how to use the materials and employ new methods in the classroom.⁸

The proportion of training time spent practising with other teachers is highly correlated with positive learning impacts.⁹

Teacher training is effective when it is ongoing/long-term, individualised, and includes specific and practical methods that teachers can use immediately in their classroom.¹⁰

Adult education tends to work best with clear applications rather than a theoretical focus.¹¹

Improvements in learning outcomes come from pedagogical interventions that improve teachers' instructional practices in such a way that it matches students' learning needs.¹²

Training in-service and prospective teachers on gender, human rights and gender-based violence is central to positively influencing the teachers' own understanding and attitudes about gender.¹³

Engaging in teacher education which focuses on subject knowledge, pedagogy and gender equality, as well as developing attitudes of tolerance and inclusion, can have a significant positive impact on improving girls' participation in school and their learning outcomes.¹⁴

Support mechanisms for TPD programmes including coaching and peer support

Integral to teacher learning is the quality and skills of those who are training them. The cascade model may be less effective as both information and pedagogical ability may be diluted as a master trainer trains a trainer, and so forth.^{15 16}

When training teachers, it is more impactful when delivered by experienced education practitioners as opposed to using researchers or local government officials for example. Programmes that use non-education professionals as trainers tend to have worse outcomes *ibid.*

Teachers improve best through an instructional coaching approach that makes the professional development journey a partnership, and when the teacher and coach collaboratively design the support intervention.^{17 18}

Workshops are most effective in smaller groups and when providing pertinent and practical teaching methods.¹⁹

School leaders, particularly principals, have a key role to play in setting direction and creating a positive school culture including the proactive school mindset, and supporting and enhancing staff motivation and commitment needed to foster improvement and promote success for schools in challenging circumstances.²⁰

Competencies for creating safe and inclusive classrooms

School-based universal SEL programmes that teach children to recognise emotions, establish and maintain positive relationships, and make responsible decisions have been shown to improve academic performance and peer relationships, while reducing conduct problems, aggression and emotional distress.²¹

Students with higher self-esteem are more inclined to take an active part in their education than a student with lower self-esteem.²²

Violence in schools is detrimental to education quality and the general school environment by: increasing school dropout; deteriorating relationships between peers, teachers, and other adults; and redirecting use of instructional

time away from learning activities.²³

When children and youth are safe from abuse, exploitation, neglect and violence and are psychologically, emotionally, socially, cognitively, physically and economically well, their ability to engage in school and to learn is further enhanced.²⁴

Technical competencies to improve learning outcomes

The more proficient a teacher's knowledge of the subjects they teach, the higher the increases in student learning.²⁵

While general pedagogical knowledge might contribute to student learning, TPD programmes that focus on equipping teachers with subject-specific pedagogy are likely to make the largest contribution to student learning.²⁶

Many teachers learn to teach using a model of teaching and learning that focuses heavily on memorising facts, without also emphasising deeper understanding of subject knowledge.²⁷

Training teachers in formative assessment – getting them to assess their learners' performance, and getting them to adjust their teaching based on their assessments – has a positive impact on learning.²⁸

Teaching children at a level that matches their level of learning can significantly improve learning outcomes.²⁹

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The author of this document is Anita Reilly on behalf of the Fund Manager, Girls' Education Challenge.