



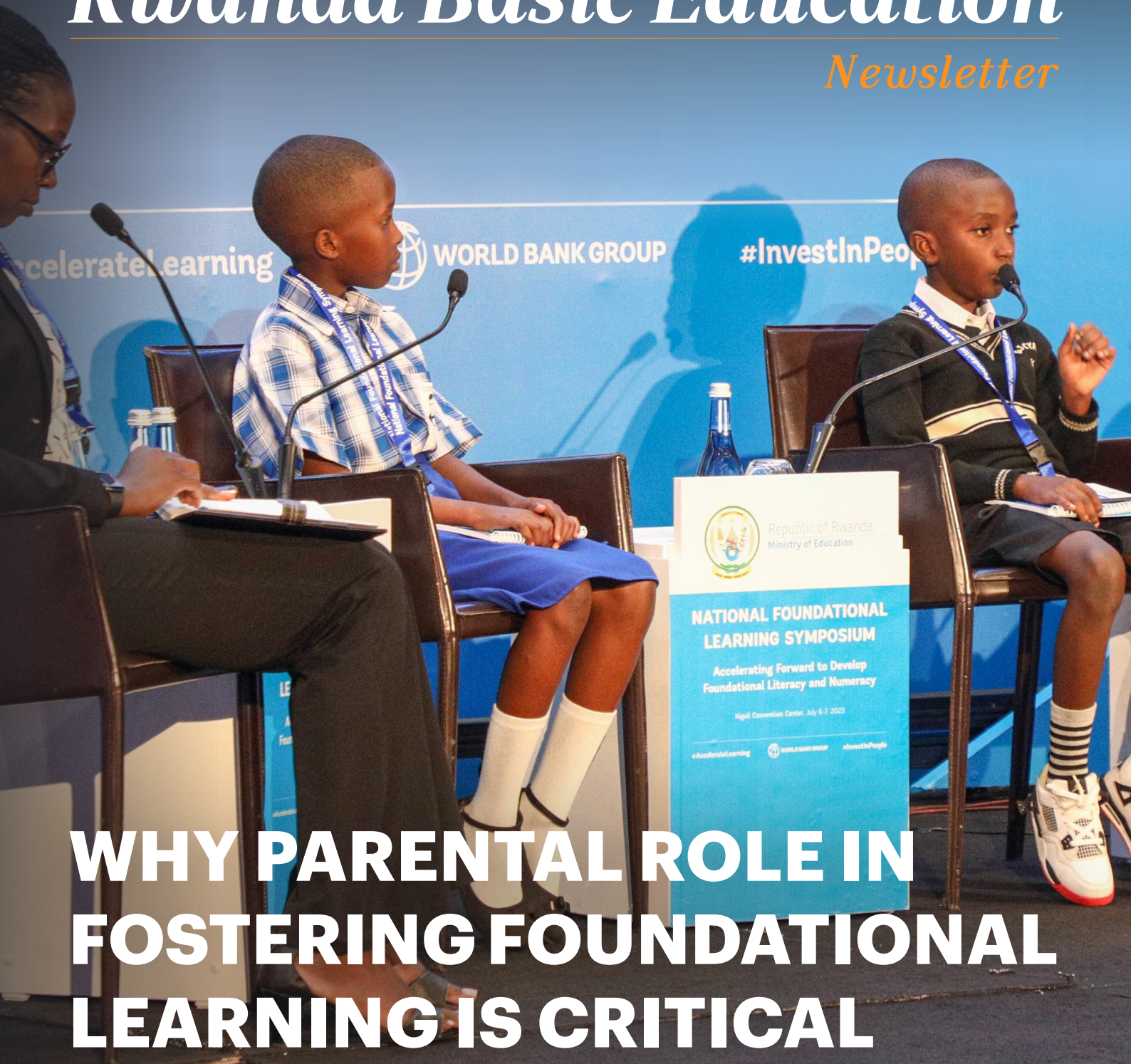
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Rwanda Basic Education

Newsletter



**WHY PARENTAL ROLE IN
FOSTERING FOUNDATIONAL
LEARNING IS CRITICAL**



REB | RWANDA BASIC
EDUCATION BOARD

FOREWORD

Dear esteemed reader,

I would like to welcome you to yet another edition of the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) quarterly newsletter, which chronicles more milestones in Rwanda's basic education sector.

This is our third edition, and it covers the months between April and June 2023. In it, we bring to you a variety of stories including one demonstrating why Rwanda has prioritized the promotion of values-based education among students throughout their academic journey.

The philosophy of Rwanda's education architecture is that without values, a student will never yield the results expected of them. Not for themselves or their families, their community or even the country at large.

Education without values is worthless. Rwandans know better, from the complex history that the country went through just a few decades back, where educated citizens took the lead in inciting compatriots to turn on their neighbors and kill them during the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

The government has therefore made deliberate efforts to impart values amongst students right from tender age. Some of the cultural values that Rwandans espouse include; unity, patriotism, social cohesion, resilience, hard work among others, with Kinyarwanda being the common language, spoken in all parts the country.

Tied to this is the importance that Rwanda's education system attaches to the country's history. In this edition, we bring to you the importance of teaching the Rwandan history in schools and gains that have been made in this regard.

History gives us the tools to dissect problems of the past, thus providing a crucial perspective for understanding and solving current and future challenges. And this can only happen if it is taught from bottom up.

In this edition, we also comprehensively tackle the importance of foundational learning for children and the role of parents in ensuring this undertaking becomes a success.

Finally, unlike before, we bring to you perspectives from our clients, the students. You will read personal opinions from students of Inyange Girls School located in Rulindo District where they emphatically share with us their viewpoints on the Rwandan education trajectory, personal challenges and what the future holds for them.

These and many more stories will be found in this edition, which, like the previous ones before it, was produced through partnership between Rwanda Basic Education Board and the World Bank, which is also a key stakeholder for the country's education sector.

Dr. MBARUSHIMANA Nelson

Director General of Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB)



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EDUCATION BOARD

REB has the following main responsibilities:



To prepare and distribute curricula, teaching materials, teacher's guides, methodologies and establish teaching methods for nursery, primary, secondary, specialised schools and adult literacy schools;



To establish and monitor the E- learning program in basic education;



To promote the use of information and communication technology in basic education;



To coordinate programs and activities to ensure teachers development, build their capacities and monitor their management;



To contribute to the development of education policy;



To coordinate and fast track basic education programmes and activities aimed at providing to all categories of Rwandans the quality education;



To advise Government on all activities which may fast track basic education development in Rwanda.



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WHY PARENTAL ROLE IN FOSTERING FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING IS CRITICAL

Consolee Nyandwi, a 46-year-old mother of two, has a daughter in nursery three and an older daughter in primary two. As a mother, she firmly believes that the cornerstone of education lies in a solid foundation of learning acquired by a child.

Nyandwi emphasized the crucial need for collaborative efforts from various stakeholders to ensure solid foundational learning of all children. However, she is concerned about the current trend where parents, due to their busy schedules, often delegate teachers and play a passive role.

She illustrated her point by referencing a Rwandan saying that goes; “*Umwana apfa mw’iterura*”, meaning that a child can only be molded at the infancy stage. She used this saying to emphasize the criticality of foundational learning, highlighting that neglecting this fundamental stage can lead to significant disruptions and challenges throughout the entirety of a child’s education and entire life journey.

“During the early stages, our children

have fresh minds and can absorb a multitude of information, which significantly shapes their general education. It is important for us, as parents, to thoroughly follow up on their progress and provide support,” she emphasized.

Nyandwi also highlighted the significance of children adopting the habit of studying at home. She emphasized the importance of assisting children with their revision, seeking out engaging books for them to read, and encouraging them to follow educational programs on TV. These initiatives, among others, enable parents to participate in their children’s school life.

Providence Nyirahabumuremyi, a primary one teacher at Groupe Scolaire Sasabirago in Rwamagana district, emphasized the crucial role of parental involvement in their children’s academic journey, particularly in foundational learning.

She emphasized that while teachers strive to provide the best education possible at school, the active engagement of parents

ensures a more comprehensive approach to shaping the future of their children.

Nyirahabumuremyi urges parents to prioritize enrolling their children in nursery schools, emphasizing that it greatly facilitates their transition to foundational learning in primary grades (Primary 1 to Primary 3).

She argues that having a background in nursery school makes it easier for children to adapt and excel in the crucial stage of foundational learning.

Moving on, Nyirahabumuremyi acknowledged the several challenges that continue to impede the progress of foundational learning. However, she emphasized her commitment, as well as that of her fellow teachers, to make every effort to ensure children stay in school. She highlighted the importance of actively engaging parents in addressing issues such as dropout rates.

During the Fourth Edition of the National Foundational Learning Symposium, held on July 6 to 7, which was held under the theme; “Accelerate Forward in Developing Foundational Literacy and Numeracy,”



Fourth edition of Rwanda National Foundational Learning Symposium in Kigali



Fourth edition of Rwanda National Foundational Learning Symposium in Kigali

the Ministry of Education unveiled its efforts to enhance foundational learning.

Gaspard Twagirayezu, the Minister of State in Charge of Primary and Secondary Schools, addressed the issue of low learning outcomes in foundational skills. He emphasized the urgent need to reevaluate existing strategies and identify the best practices that can be adopted to effectively improve the situation.

Twagirayezu disclosed that a Foundational Learning Strategy (FLS) has been developed to facilitate the organization, coordination, and guidance of the collective response to the challenges faced.

The FLS, according to him, was developed through a consultative process and serves as a guiding framework for effectively coordinating interventions aimed at improving foundational learning outcomes.

FLS includes improved quality of Instructions, evidence-aligned foundational skills curriculum, sufficient and effective teaching and learning materials, parent and community support as well as quality assurance and performance management.

“FLS draws from international and context-specific evidence to outline five key priority areas to invest and align efforts in. Within each priority area, there are strategic interventions identified

“
During the early stages, our children have fresh minds and can absorb a multitude of information, which significantly shapes their general education. It is important for us, as parents, to thoroughly follow up on their progress and provide support

which will contribute to the advancement of each goal,” he said.

On behalf of the World Bank (WB), Tihtina Gebre, the Senior Economist at WB Rwanda pointed out that the Bank has committed to strengthening financial and technical support to Rwanda’s current National Foundational Learning policy which is aimed at improving the quality of education and human capital.

Gebre said that the bank has committed

\$340 million to the education envelope of the country.

“The money will go into the quality, classrooms construction, and teacher training, among others,” she said.

She stated that the quality education platform is an important aspect of the partnership with the government of Rwanda where the bank has been supporting in mobilizing funds for basic education specifically for foundational learning, technical assistance, and creating policy dialogue platforms to foster coordination among others.

“Moving forward we are not only committed to sustaining this partnership but looking forward to strengthening it to build both our engagement in terms of financing and technical assistance to accelerate and achieve this important objective,” Gebre said.

According to the Ministry of Education, significant progress has been made in enhancing foundational learning during the past three symposiums. Several key initiatives have been implemented, including the recruitment of over 40,000 new teachers, a historic increase in teacher salaries, and the approval of Ministerial Instruction and Guidelines for expanding pre-primary education.

These initiatives are part of ongoing efforts to strengthen foundational learning in Rwanda.

LEARNING FROM OUR PAST: WHY TEACHING RWANDAN HISTORY IS KEY



Teachers during a civic training 'Itorero'

Over the past 15 years, Sylvain Ndagijimana has become a beacon of inspiration, not only due to his dedication to teaching history but also for his instrumental role in fostering a deep understanding of Rwanda's rich and rather complex past.

Trained in History Geography with Education, Ndagijimana's journey as a history teacher has been a path of growth and transformation. He currently teaches at GS Ruganda located in Muhondo, Gakenke district.

Sharing his testimony on how the journey has been, Ndagijimana said that he understands that his role goes beyond imparting knowledge; he sees himself as a nurturer of responsible citizens for Rwanda's tomorrow.

"Teaching history is a fulfilling job," Ndagijimana says, "you don't just feel like a teacher but also like a person grooming a future generation of responsible citizens," he adds.

However, Ndagijimana's journey towards becoming an adept history educator faced challenges, especially when it came to the sensitive topics of colonialism, post-colonialism, ethnicity, and the painful history of the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi.

"It was difficult to explain some terms and ethnic lines," he recalls. Students would pose questions that were difficult to answer, leading to a tendency to skip or summarize crucial chapters just to go past them.

The role of Itorero program Ndagijimana's turning point came through the Itorero ry'Igihugo, a National Civic Education program designed to equip Rwandans, including educators, with a deep understanding of the country's history.

Itorero proved to be a game-changer for Ndagijimana, providing him with training from knowledgeable experts who possessed a nuanced grasp of Rwandan history.

"From Itorero, we learned how to interpret history and how to use different terminologies," Ndagijimana reflects. The program he says empowered him to explain historical events meticulously and without distortion.

"Itorero opened my mind. It helped me understand the history well and how I can teach it without distortion." Ndagijimana asserts passionately.

Through Itorero, Ndagijimana not only gained a refined skill set for teaching history but also imbibed the values of Rwandan culture and unity, nurturing a

sense of harmony that he imparts to his students.

Ndagijimana's approach to teaching history has had a profound impact. He notes that students are incredibly attentive and curious when it comes to Rwandan history, often displaying a level of interest compared to foreign topics like the French and American revolutions. By illustrating historical events and localizing historical sites, Ndagijimana has ignited a spark of curiosity that fuels his student's desire to understand the past.

Challenges persist

Nonetheless, challenges persist. While Itorero was transformative, Ndagijimana believes that more training is still needed. Didactic materials remain insufficient, and accessible books are scarce. Ndagijimana advocates for the incorporation of film documentaries to enhance the learning experience, urging for innovative approaches that capture the essence of Rwanda's history, vividly.

For Jackson Mwesigwa, a teacher from Mother Mary International School, a private school based in Kigali, teaching history shapes the young students' understanding about the history of their country, boosts their critical thinking while nurturing them to be the guardian of their history.

“History isn’t just about memorizing dates and events,” Mwesigwa asserts. “It’s about sharpening critical thinking skills, drawing parallels between the past and the future, and cultivating a sense of self-reliance,” he adds.

He believes that the knowledge he acquired in school coupled with the training from Itorero has equipped him with enough packages to share with students.

By delving into the records of pre-colonial Rwanda and post-independence struggles, his students gain insights into the country’s resilience and can envision a future rooted in self-reliance.

“Through understanding our history mainly from what we acquired from Itorero, we’re nurturing a generation of potential teachers, lawyers, guardians of history, and even politicians,” he explains. “These young minds are the ones who will shape our nation, carrying the torch of knowledge forward.” He adds.

Beyond academic lessons

Beyond academic lessons, Mwesigwa’s teachings emphasize the importance of cultural norms and values, fostering tolerance and peaceful coexistence in Rwandan society.

“History is a bridge that connects generations. By learning about our heritage, we become more open-minded and appreciative of diversity,” he says. “Teaching Rwandan history also ignites a flame of patriotism. Our students always leave my class inspired, carrying the torch of heroism and nationalistic spirit,” he adds.

However, he emphasizes the value of informal education, too. “Conversations and visits to historical sites are invaluable too,” he states.

“Teaching history isn’t just about facts; it’s about imparting an understanding of our nation’s trajectory,” Mwesigwa affirms. “By comprehending our past, we can navigate our present and future more consciously,” he adds also calling for availability of didactic materials especially in private schools.

Dr. Nelson Mbarushimana, the Director General of Rwanda Basic Education



Dr. Nelson Mbarushimana, the Director General of Rwanda Basic Education

Board (REB) said that teaching Rwandan history in schools is critical as it helps young students grow into responsible citizens.

“History plays a big role in Rwandan society,” said Dr Mbarushimana. “It is a subject that plays an important role in all aspects whether in politics, everyday life in Rwanda.” He adds.

Dr. Mbarushimana explained that Rwanda’s education system ensures that the country’s history is taught in all schools, from primary to secondary level, mainly due to the importance attached to it.

“History teachers from secondary schools are trained during Itorero sessions on Rwandan culture and how to teach history of Rwanda especially,” he says.

“A special emphasis is placed on the genocide against the Tutsi and factors of unity and reconciliation of Rwandans. We want our students to understand the horrors of genocide so that they can never allow it to happen again,” he added reflecting on the importance of the Itorero program.

In the primary school curriculum, he noted, history is integrated into social studies and religious education. There, students learn about traditional Rwanda, colonial Rwanda, the first and second republics, the liberation war, and the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi.

History mainstreamed in schools
In secondary school, history is taught

as a separate subject. In the general education track, students learn about the origin, organization, and expansion of the Rwandan kingdom, pre-colonial civilization, genocide, German and Belgian colonization.

They also learn how the bad leadership led the country to the darkest history of 1994 genocide against the Tutsi and its effect, colonialism and the journey towards Rwanda’s independence, comparative genocide, genocide denial and ideology, and prevention of genocide among others.

In addition to the national curriculum, Dr. Mbarushimana, there are a number of didactic materials available to teachers and students. These include history books, audio-visual materials, and online resources.

“There are history of Rwanda books that have hard copies in schools but not only that the REB e-learning platform the books are available there too,” said Dr. Mbarushimana.

“There are other open sources more especially on Genocide; the Kigali Genocide Memorial has audio-visual materials and are accessible to teachers and students,” he said, encouraging both students and teachers to visit such places to enrich themselves.

“We believe that by teaching our students about Rwanda’s history, we are giving them the tools they need to be good citizens and to build a better future for our country,” said Dr. Mbarushimana.

HOW RWANDAN SCHOOLS HAVE EMBRACED LEARNING TECHNOLOGY FOR TEACHERS, PUPILS

Ecole Primaire Tinduti located in eastern Rwanda has cultivated a love for learning to help both pupils and teachers unlock their full potential after adopting the use of technology.

The ICT-led education program was introduced by the Rwandan government, through Rwanda Education Quality Improvement Program (RwandaEQUIP) in 2022—as a holistic methodology that focuses on integrating technology into classrooms and school management.

It provides continuous teacher training and capacity building, develops lesson plans that are shared digitally with teachers through a teacher's tablet, and facilitates the distribution of learning materials.

The teacher tablet is uploaded with expertly constructed daily lesson guides for all subjects and grade level based on the national curriculum.

So far, over 7,000 teachers across the country were equipped with the digital tools, according to RwandaEQUIP.

Ecole Primaire Tinduti located in the remote Kazo Sector in Ngoma District is among the 250 public and government-aided primary schools where the program has been deployed so far.

When we visited the school in June, children were for example participating actively and reading aloud in Literacy and Kinyarwanda classes.

It is part of the vision of RwandaEQUIP, making lesson time more interactive to help children retain more information.

School administrators are equipped with skills and smartphone-based school management applications to effectively manage schools, drive accountability and transparency within classrooms.

Marcel Secoko, the school's head

teacher said the program is already paying dividends, with the school being able to provide quality teaching and learning to more than 1000 pupils.

“The program has improved pupils’ literacy levels and fluency in English language which was not the case before. It has really transformed the way things are done,” he said.

“Teachers are now relieved of the burden of carrying volumes of books and spending a lot of time preparing lesson plans,” he added.

Twenty-nine teachers at the school were given tablets, after undergoing technical training to equip them with the necessary skills needed to effectively adapt to the program.

The school began with teachers’ attendance, where all teachers are required to log in using the system at 7:30am.

Previously, teachers used to arrive at school at different intervals, some could report late, but with the new program teachers are punctual.

Failure to observe time, the system marks red, meaning lower grading.

Before introducing the program, the school’s teachers and pupils had issues in speaking English, writing, reading and listening, according to Mr. Secoko.

But with the new program, this problem is almost solved, whereby pupils and teachers are now able to use English in class.

“In addition, the program has helped the school to improve our academic performance. It raised our bar high for nearby schools,” said Secoko.

Teachers also find the new technology rewarding to themselves and pupils. Speciose Nikuze, a teacher of English and mathematics at Ecole primaire Tinduti said that RwandaEQUIP program came as a timely intervention.

“It presents itself with numerous advantages for teachers and pupils at the same time; first as teachers the program introduced us to the use of tablets, where lesson plans are already prepared,” she said.

She recalled that previously, teachers used to carry voluminous textbooks in order to prepare lesson plans and schemes of work, not any more with the new technology.

On the other hand, she said there is more learning with the program especially in English language speaking and literacy skills.

Nikuze said she did not find much difficulty learning how to use the technology.

Besides boosting pupil’s confidence, RwandaEQUIP program entails mixing teaching with cheering which has served as a significant source of motivation for learners, said a literacy teacher Ms. Liliane Manzi.

“The use of new technology has made pupils participate actively in learning. It also helps to identify children with learning difficulties and support them accordingly,” she said.

Secoko said the technology facilitates regular assessment which is essential to improving the teaching and learning experiences.

The teacher tracker looks at how well the teacher motivates pupils to behave and work hard, how well the teacher uses the lesson plan, how well the teacher checks on pupil’s performance and how well the teacher responds to pupil’s performance.

Marks are rewarded from one to 10.

Each of the daily lesson guides leverages effective techniques that have been tried, tested and refined for the greatest impact on learning.

Clement Uwajeneza, the Managing

Director of RwandaEQUIP says the program is aimed at making the country's basic education system globally competitive.

"The ultimate objective of RwandaEQUIP is to ensure that every child in Rwanda can access high-quality education and avail opportunities for personal and academic development," he said.

"Integrating RwandaEQUIP pedagogical practices and technology into classrooms ensures a more productive learning experience as teachers have time to deliver more personalized, engaging and feedback-driven instruction. Teachers have time to provide support to those who are struggling - leading to improved learning outcomes," he noted.

Besides supporting each and every teacher, the tablets also deliver data on teacher attendance, lesson completion and assessment results.

The teacher tablets help teachers to monitor progress in time to identify gaps and provide targeted interventions in their pupil's knowledge and skills.

Pupils are supported with textbooks, interactive learning materials, allowing pupils to access educational content, in and out of school.

Even pupils feel they are thriving with the technology program compared to previously.

"It helps us improve our literacy levels because we have access to textbooks. The learning process involves making

a recap of previous lessons and encourages active participation in class unlike before when we used to spend more time copying notes," said primary Six pupil Augustine Rugamba.

"The program also introduced cheering wonderful acts in class which is exciting to pupils."

RwandaEQUIP monitors the program's performance goals by gathering data from teacher observations, lesson completion rates, learning assessments and administrative records of teacher and pupil attendance.

The program also carries out regular monitoring and evaluation (M&E) to evaluate the progress of implementing schools as well as comparison schools.

This focuses on pupil performance and utilizes externally developed assessments to measure foundational numeracy and literacy skills in English and Kinyarwanda, according to Uwajeneza.

"The feedback loop in the design process and the richness of the RwandaEQUIP data platform allow us to track these issues and course-correct it and align it with stronger pupil learning outcomes," he said.

He hailed the program's lesson plans for facilitating teachers to effectively deliver quality lessons in English, which improve learning gains.

"In the last M&E, there was a four-fold increase in high-quality instructional time per day. Pupils demonstrated significant progress in foundational English, Kinyarwanda literacy, and numeracy compared to pupils in the government schools used for comparison. Additionally, there was a 50% reduction in teacher absenteeism," said Uwajezena.

He highlighted trouble using English as a language of instruction among a number of teachers and others who are not conversant with using the technology among the challenges.

But Uwajezena observed that technology has "greatly improved education in Rwanda by improving access to learning, enhancing teaching methods as well as enabling personalized and interactive learning, and promoting inclusivity."

The methodology was introduced in Africa in 2009 and is already being used successfully to drive up learning and improve teaching by other governments across Africa and in India.



NURTURING A VIRTUOUS COMMUNITY THROUGH VALUES-BASED EDUCATION

An electrifying atmosphere fills a class session at GS Camp Kigali in Nyarugenge district, as one teacher and students engage in heated discussions on the values that underpin a true Rwandan.

Encouraged to voice their thoughts and perspectives, these students exhibit a profound desire to embrace value-based education.

Their zeal to learn demonstrates a genuine understanding of the importance of these principles, not only in their personal growth but also in shaping the future of their beloved country.

This is part of the initiative by the government through Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) to promote values-based education by incorporating Rwandan values into the Competence Based Curriculum (CBC).

Values-based education is an approach of teaching and learning that creates a strong learning environment that enhances academic achievement and other competences.

It enhances not only knowledge and skills but also the right attitudes and values that help them to be active and competent members of the society.

All schools are encouraged to teach values to students from nursery up to secondary, a program that currently benefits over three million students according to officials.

According to Jean de Dieu Niyonsenga, the Secretary General of the Head of Schools Organization in Rwanda, by instilling values in students, schools have a profound mission that goes beyond conventional academic delivery.

“We strive to cultivate virtues that will guide our students throughout their lives, much longer after they have left school,” he says, his eyes reflecting the deep sense of purpose.

Grounded in the belief that Rwanda’s values must be rooted in positive principles, the school’s core values revolve around **patriotism, unity, integrity, tolerance, peace promotion, human rights, empathy, democracy, and freedom** among others.

These principles form the bedrock of the students’ character development and shape their understanding of responsibility and citizenship.

“Our focus on these core values not only prepares our students for academic success but also equips them to become

compassionate and socially responsible individuals,” he notes.

“We believe that today’s students are future leaders and that academic skills coupled with values are what we can give them today,” adds Niyonsenga.

In a bid to achieve this, schools have adopted a multifaceted approach. Teachers themselves undergo comprehensive training, both formally through pedagogical courses and related subjects like civic education through *Itorero ry’Igihugu*.

Teachers are also equipped with practical skills informally through conferences and continuous professional development.

“Armed with this knowledge, they then set out to become role models, demonstrating the values they teach through their daily lives,” Niyonsenga says, adding that a good teacher is one who teaches by example.

Tailor-made approach

Schools have embraced different approaches to instill value-based education among students, tailored to meet the needs and understanding of each age group, according to Niyonsenga.

For instance, the little ones in nursery

Some of students at GS Camp Kigali during a session discussing values as schools continue to promote value based education



learn through play and games, fostering concepts of friendship and excellence.

As they progress to lower primary, the children engage in writing about core values, while secondary students participate in debates and imitation exercises that inspire their peers.

“We strive to create an engaging and inclusive learning environment, where students can explore and internalize these values at their own pace,” Niyonsenga shares with pride.

Notwithstanding the schools’ approaches, the education does not confine itself to the walls of the school. Students are encouraged to learn from their surroundings, seeking inspiration from resourceful role models, especially older members of their families.

Challenges

According to Niyonsenga, the process is not without its challenges. He says that the family environment can significantly affect a child’s development. Students face challenges from their respective family background as well as economic challenges among others.

“Students may face complex issues ranging from the way their parents live together; children from conflicting families will habitually have difficulties in embracing values than those who live in better families,” he says.

“We work closely with parents and guardians to ensure a harmonious atmosphere at home, promoting healthy communication and mutual understanding. Economic disparities pose another hurdle,” he noted.

To address such issues, school actively fosters empathy and understanding among students, encouraging them to make a positive impact on their society.

“We want our students to realize that they have the power to make a difference, regardless of their backgrounds. By nurturing empathy, we hope to create a generation of change makers who will work towards a more inclusive future,” states Niyonsenga.

Huge impact

The impact of promoting value based education has come with a huge impact over the years.

According to the officials, students who embrace these principles strive for excellence and shun the culture of laziness, working hard to achieve their goals. They become compassionate individuals, respecting others’ rights and cultivating teamwork and innovation.

Their unwavering patriotism fuels their desire to contribute positively to their society while they thrive in their academic journey as they work harder and together.

“We see our students from different schools grow into confident, compassionate individuals who will shape a brighter tomorrow, we groom them to become good future leaders and responsible citizens,” he says.

Students speak out

Students from different schools have commended the initiative to equip them with Rwanda values, stressing that they benefit a lot from it.

“Value based education has not only enriched my knowledge but also my character. It has taught me to respect others and be respectful towards myself.” Says Clementine Uwimanimpaye, a 16-year-old senior three student from Duha Complex School in Rwamagana district.

“Through values-based education, I have learned the true meaning of patriotism. It is not just about love for your country, but also about promoting harmony and peace in the country,” she added.

“Respecting one another is the key to building a positive and inclusive society. Value based education has instilled this value in me and I see the difference it makes in my relationships with others.

It also helps me to work well with others and my performance has improved,” says Laetitia Uwera, another student from GS Camp Kigali.

According to Dr. Nelson Mbarushimana, the Director General of REB, with a curriculum centered on nurturing holistic development, students are being prepared

not only intellectually but also morally and socially.

“Values-based education plays a tremendous role in building a strong future society and generation,” emphasized Mbarushimana. “Our major aim is to help children grow up intellectually, socially, and morally sound, achieving holistic development.”

Competence Based Curriculum (CBC), Mbarushimana said forms the cornerstone of the country’s educational transformation, integrating values across all subjects to instill dignity and integrity, self-reliance, national and cultural identity, peace and tolerance, justice, and respect for human rights.

“This comprehensive approach aims at developing not only knowledge and skills but also the right attitudes and values that help students become active and competent members of society.” He added.

He said that teachers play a critical role in promoting value- based education stressing that through Continuous Professional Development activities, teachers are equipped with the necessary skills to integrate values into their lessons effectively.

“Our education system has shifted from solely imparting knowledge to developing skills, character, and values,” stated Dr. Mbarushimana with pride.

He said that apart from teaching values among the students in classes and in clubs, the Ministry of Education, Rwanda Basic Education Board and other partners work together to promote value based education.

This is done through a Culture Month (Ukwezi kw’Umuco) in all schools, which is held between February and March where REB works with the Ministry of Culture and is geared towards upholding Rwanda Cultural values in the school community.

Other initiatives include Itorerero which is also implemented in all schools for students to learn Rwandan History and Cultural values and teachers from secondary schools are trained on how to teach History of Rwanda especially history of genocide against the Tutsi.

EMPOWERING TEACHERS TO SPEARHEAD DIGITAL LITERACY IN RWANDAN SCHOOLS

Teaching has become easier for Hosiana Musenge, an ICT teacher at Groupe Scolaire Murambi in Kicukiro District, who is now able to give a test to his students using digital platforms, saving time while enhancing her digital capabilities.

“Before acquiring these digital skills, we were still struggling with the teaching and learning standards. However, our knowledge has improved and that of our students,” she said while touring the smart classroom equipped with computers and a projector.

According to her, students are very motivated and always eager to learn new things in ICT as they familiarize themselves with these digital devices and how to use them while learning other subjects in research and for other educational purposes.

This is a result of a project dubbed “Digital Literacy” championed by Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) and funded by BIG WIN Philanthropy, with Digital Skills Foundation as an implementation partner, to transform Rwanda into a knowledge-based economy.

Started in January 2023, the project targets to train 10,000 teachers from basic education schools and 80,000 students in upper secondary from across the country

in digital literacy, in one year.

The program for teachers is covered in 613 schools across the country and 150 schools for students in general education. It has more than 200 masterclass trainers.

Esaie Kubwimana, Project Manager, Digital Skills Foundation, said that this project is implemented in self-learning mode where teachers and students log into an online platform and access their respective modules from wherever they are.

“We provide foundational skills that allow them to manipulate digital devices, surf the internet and other tools that enable them to even learn advanced digital lessons by themselves,” he explained.

According to Kubwimana, this will allow the country to have digital literate citizens who are able to remain relevant in this technology era and in a country that is on a digital transformation journey with more services being now accessed online.

In 2006, the government of Rwanda introduced the policy on ICT in Education with an aim of bringing technology into classrooms to make learning more interactive and engaging.

However, this was implemented as introducing ICT as a periodical lesson by exposing students to computer devices on

how to manipulate them and learn some few skills on using Microsoft office, and in some schools, there were also some computer-specific combinations that students could pursue at the advanced level and dive into deeper knowledge about the computer.

When REB shifted to competence-based curriculum in 2015, ICT was no longer only a subject but also used as a tool for teaching all subjects at all levels.

Diane Sengati, Head of Department of ICT in Education, REB, said before the change of curriculum, only teachers who were willing were trained but later on realized that all teachers have the right and responsibility to possess these digital skills.

“After this was introduced, we found a gap in a sense that teachers also needed to be trained on how to use available digital tools before employing them in their teaching approaches. Hence, we introduced a pedagogy on how to teach using ICT,” she explained.

She further noted that it is important to use visual tools in teaching and learning to stimulate the student’s memory and innovation. “With this project, we





train teachers for the sake of not only imparting knowledge but so that they can also train other teachers in their respective schools.”

Smart classrooms

The project is complemented with smart classroom initiative under ICT in Education department,

where the target is to have every school with a designated technology classroom equipped with digital materials like laptops, projectors, and internet connectivity.

With the support of different development partners who provide laptops and government initiative to provide internet to schools in collaboration with UNICEF, Sengati said that REB has achieved at least 50 percent of the rollout of Smart Classroom project.

She said that they plan to conduct a survey to assess the impact that this has created in terms of how these trained teachers are able to equip students with the right skills that make them

competent when they go out on the labour market.

“If you ask them, they tell you they like it but we need to also know how it is impacting their learning outcomes,” she noted.

However, observations in the current pace of digital transformation in the country suggest that young people are key drivers with more knowledge on how to use digital gadgets, adaptability, and innovation in this technological era.

On the other hand, Sengati emphasized that there is need for an awareness campaign to reach parents at all levels and make them understand the benefits of technology and their contribution in the education of their children as well as internet safety measures.

As Rwanda continues to make strides in pushing the digital agenda, it also enforces cybersecurity and internet safety measures to protect people at different levels.

Musenge called for more investment in internet connectivity to avoid interruptions while teaching or learning due to poor internet speed. Besides that, she is positive that the future of the education system in Rwanda is revolutionized with digital transformation.





HOW RWANDA IS TAKING THE LEAD THROUGH THE AFRICAN CENTRE FOR SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

By Dr Fay Hodza, & Chantal Kabanda Dusabe

The journey of improving quality education is a continuous and collaborative effort. The Government of Rwanda has embraced the idea that effective school leadership plays a significant role in creating conditions necessary for effective teaching and ultimately improving learning outcomes.

Bearing this in mind, the Government of Rwanda, in collaboration with its key partners, is at the forefront of developing and strengthening the African Centre for School Leadership (ACSL) building on its experience in promoting effective school leadership.

The ACSL is an initiative by and for African and African-based partners, and other stakeholders that share the goal of advancing quality education on the continent. It is hosted by the Government of Rwanda and implemented by a coalition of partners. The objective of the Centre is to support governments and governmental agencies in the education sector to build supportive school leadership systems that strengthen teaching and improve learning outcomes for all.

The Centre does this by using the best

“

We are inviting all interested parties to join this consortium of partners to support governments, government agencies and other partners in Africa, to build national and regional capacity in promoting effective school leadership

available expertise in the region to deliver high-quality continuous professional development (CPD) services, research, and policy advice.

The work of the ACSL is coordinated by a Secretariat in Rwanda with the support of staff members that are embedded within partner organisations, in the first instance within VVOB – education for development. During its foundation and first implementation phases, the Centre is

implemented through a series of projects that are coordinated by VVOB.

VVOB serves as the Secretariat and technical lead of the Centre while the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) and the Rwanda Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) are co-chairing the foundation phase project steering committee, an advisory and oversight body of the project.

In addition, the Centre is also working in partnership with the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) from Kenya, the Institute of Educational Planning and Administration (IEPA) from Ghana, the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) and the University of Rwanda-College of Education (UR-CE) from Rwanda to implement the foundation phase of the project.

As indicated above, the ACSL has the full support of key education players in Africa. For example, in the recently concluded co-creation workshop that took place from 19-21 July in Rubavu, high-level representatives from different African countries were in attendance. The delegates were from the Rwanda Ministry of Education, ADEA, the Mastercard Foundation, REB, IEPA, KEMI, UNESCO International Institute for Capacity

Building in Africa (IICBA), UR-CE and VVOB.

During this workshop, the guest of honour, Hon. Gaspard Twagirayezu, the Minister of State in charge of Primary and Secondary Education in Rwanda reiterated the Government's commitment to effective school leadership and the ACSL. He said:

“We believe that effective school leaders create conditions necessary for effective teaching and ultimately improve learning outcomes. This is why African governments need to collaboratively invest in school leadership support as part of their education policy agenda and we see the African Centre for School Leadership as an opportunity to achieve this agenda”.

From 2023 to October 2024, the Centre will focus on three countries (Rwanda, Kenya, and Ghana) and plans to reach 12 countries by 2030. This work will be accomplished through working

with government-affiliated capacity development and continuing professional development providers. The focus of ACSL will be on providing technical and coordination support at both operational and strategic levels to governments and their agencies with an emphasis on:

- The development or re-development of school leadership policies and guidelines and effective and scalable professional development programmes for school leaders.
- The delivery of professional development programmes for school leaders through capacity development of professional development providers.
- Monitoring, evaluation and research on the effectiveness and impact of school leadership and school leadership development.
- Knowledge mobilisation, advocacy and sector coordination through multi-stakeholder partnerships and dialogue.

While the initiative is currently supported by the Mastercard Foundation and the Jacobs Foundation to run its activities from May 2023 to October 2024, efforts are being made to reach out to a series of potential donors for resource mobilisation. To cooperate/collaborate with Government partners to strengthen national school leadership support systems, the ACSL follows the steps below:

1. The ACSL presents and advocates for the promotion of effective school leadership at regional fora.
2. Governments and/or their agencies express interest through a formal request letter for collaboration.
3. A memorandum of understanding or partnership agreement is signed.
4. The ACSL requests the interested government or its agency to carry out a mapping exercise of school leadership in that country.
5. The ACSL and partners analyse and validate the results from the school leadership mapping exercise- focusing on identifying gaps that need to be addressed and/or best practices to be scaled up within the ACSL focus areas.
6. Co-implementation of activities/ programmes/projects through partners with the financial support of donors and the governments themselves.

It is anticipated that this initiative will need a total budget of USD25 million from 2023-2030. We are therefore inviting all interested parties to join this consortium of partners to support governments, government agencies and other partners in Africa, to build national and regional capacity in promoting effective school leadership. We must, together, ignite the power of school leadership to improve the quality of education in Africa and meaningfully contribute towards the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4 by 2030.

Dr Fay Hodza Regional Coordinator, African Centre for School Leadership, VVOB while Chantal Kabanda Dusabe is the Acting Country Programmes Manager, VVOB-Rwanda



RWANDA QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION FOR HUMAN CAPITAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT KEY ACHIEVEMENTS SINCE 2020

1. School Construction

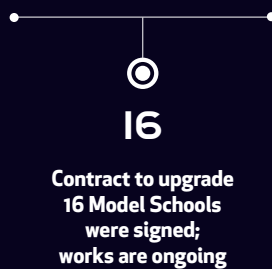
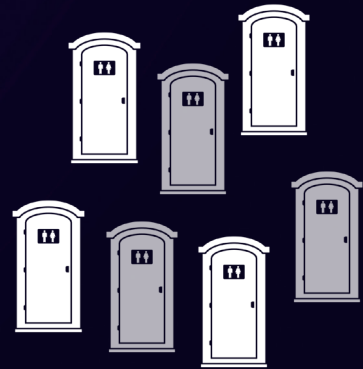
Classrooms



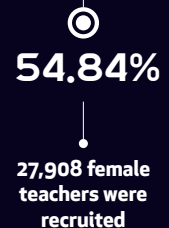
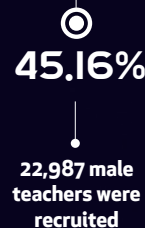
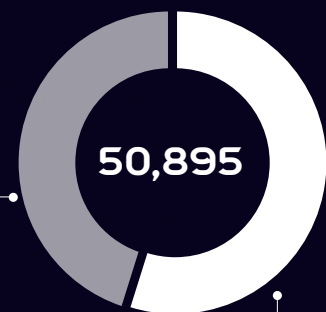
Pupils



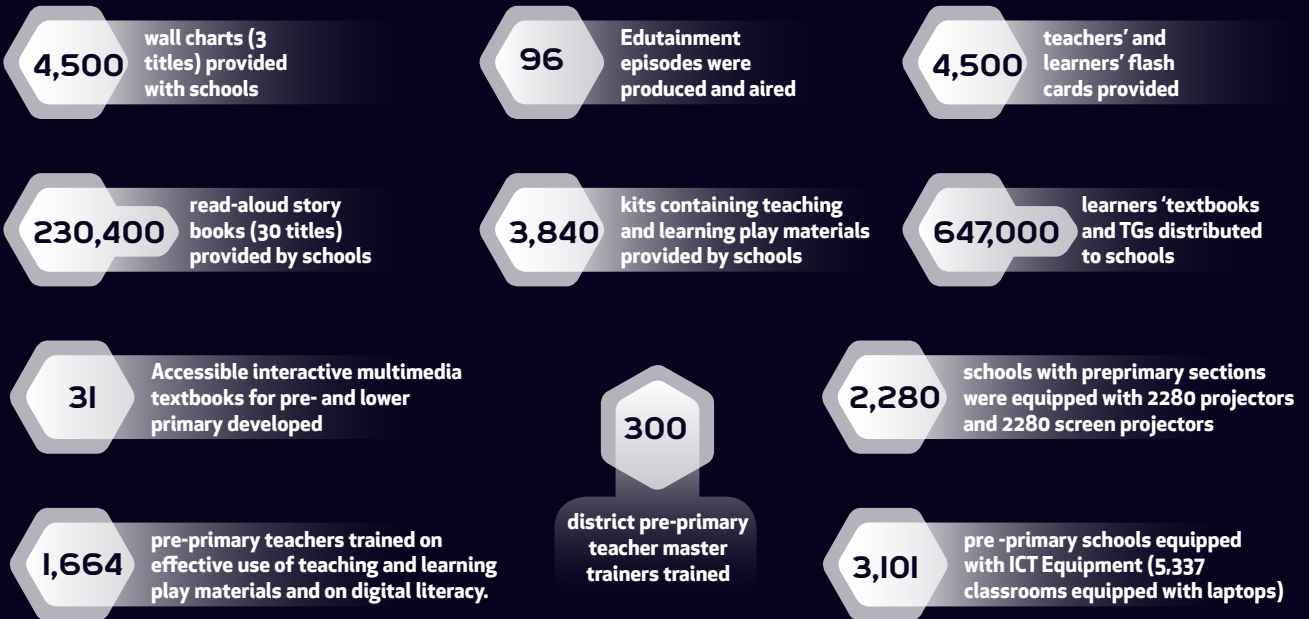
Latrines



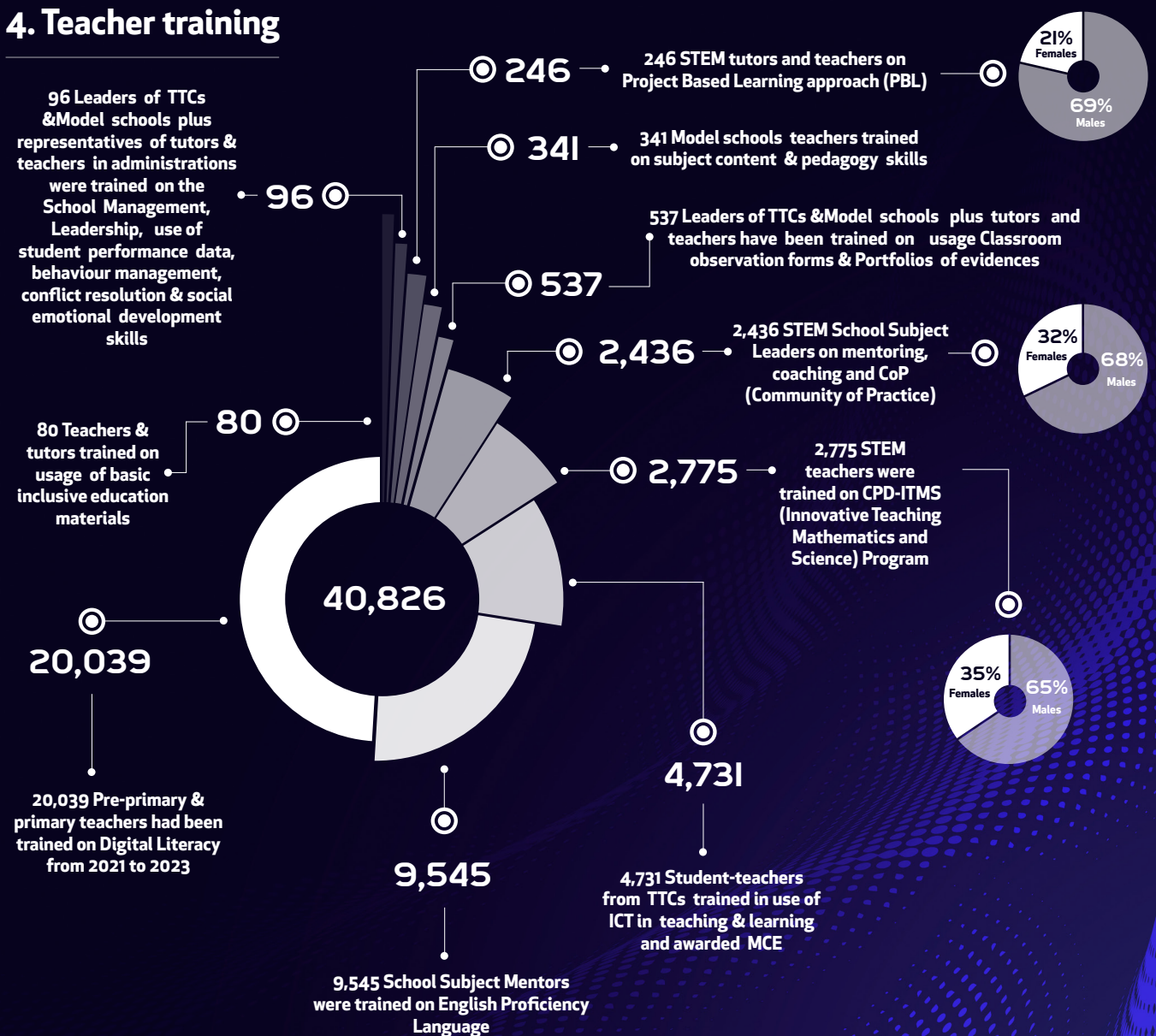
2. Teacher recruitment



3. Pre-primary

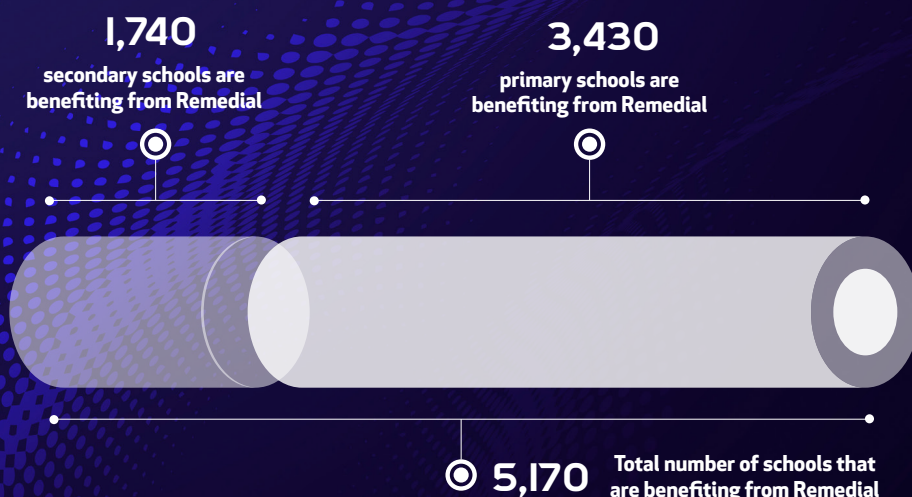


4. Teacher training



5. COVID-19 Response

a) Remedial learning program



b) Handwashing facilities



1,099

handwashing facilities were constructed (including 5 on schools with refugees)

c) Scholastic Materials



807,694

807,694 pupils from 1,084 schools in 11 vulnerable districts were given scholastic materials

d) School Feeding

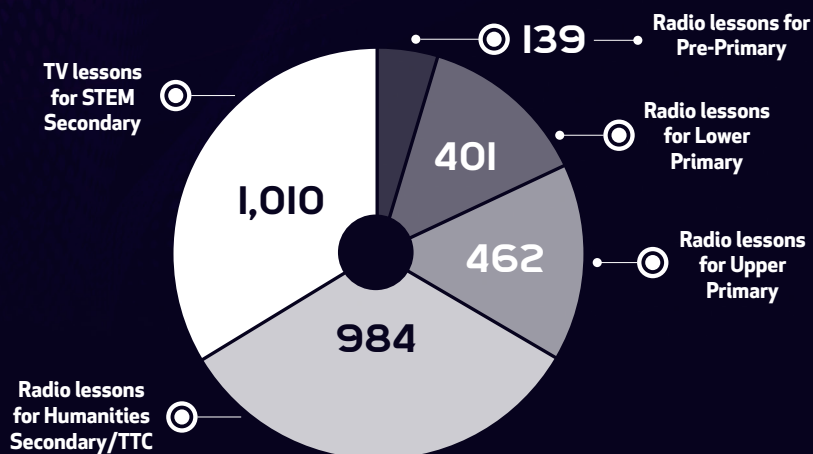


846,544

846,544 students from 979 schools in 11 vulnerable districts received school feeding support.

e) Learning from home

A total of 2,996 Lessons were recorded in different levels.



785

Lessons were aired (255 on TV & 530 on Radio)

48

Edutainment episodes produced and embedded with Rwandan sign language

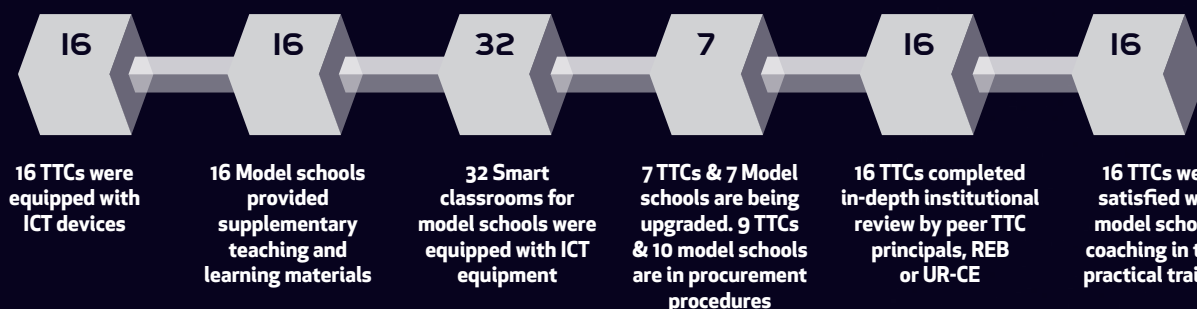
48

Edutainment episodes were aired on radio & TV and uploaded on digital platforms.

29,000

Booklets for new teachers were printed and distributed

6. TTCs and Model Schools



TEACHING AND LEARNING WITH TECHNOLOGY IN BASIC EDUCATION

Diane Sengati Uwasenga

In today's fast paced and technology-driven world, the integration of technology in education has become increasingly important. Technology has transformed the way we live, the way we work and communicate, and opened up new avenues for teaching and learning.

With the right implementation plan and tools, technology can enhance and enrich the educational experience for students in basic education, helping them develop crucial skills for the future.

In recent years, Rwanda has made significant strides in integrating ICT into the education system, particularly in the realm of basic education. Rwanda has recognized the transformative potential of ICT and has embarked on the journey to harness it for the benefit of students and teachers. Through strategic initiatives and investments, Rwanda is paving the way for future where technology plays a crucial role in teaching and learning.

One of the key drivers behind the success in integrating technology into basic education is the "Smart Rwanda" initiative, which aims to create a knowledge-based economy by leveraging

ICT in various sectors, including education. The government has made significant investments in infrastructure, such as providing schools with access to reliable internet connectivity, ensuring that students and teachers have the necessary tools to utilize technology effectively and efficiently.

Some of the notable achievements include establishing smart classrooms by providing ICT equipment for students in schools, providing laptops for teachers, and access to internet connectivity. This promotes, not only digital literacy but also enhances access to educational resources and opportunities. This also empowers students to become participants in their own learning process, fostering critical thinking, creativity, and problem-solving skills.

It also enables teachers to create engaging and interactive lessons, incorporating multimedia elements to enhance the learning experience. Enhancing smart classrooms has proven to be particularly effective in improving students' engagement and knowledge retention, as it caters to different learning styles and encourages active participation.

Another significant aspect of technology

integration in teaching and learning is the development and use of online platforms and digital content. REB has partnered with various organizations to develop and deploy e-learning platform which provides access to a wide range of educational videos, interactive quizzes and other learning materials, making education accessible to students even in remote areas. It serves also to promote the blended learning for both students and teachers.

Benefits of using technology in basic education

Enhanced engagement: technology has the power to captivate student's attention and makes learning more interactive and engaging. Educational apps, multimedia presentations and online platforms provide students with dynamic and interactive learning environment that encourages active participation and exploration. This increased engagement can lead to improved understanding and retention of knowledge.

Personalized learning: every student is unique with different learning styles, strengths and weaknesses. Technology allows for personalized learning experiences, where students can learn



at their own pace and according to their individual needs. Adaptive learning software and online resources can provide tailored content and activities, ensuring that each student receives appropriate support and challenges. However, this requires teachers to have appropriate skills to design relevant lessons and content for the students.

Access to information and resources:

the internet has opened up a vast world of knowledge and resources. With technology, students can access up-to-date information, educational videos, e-books and interactive simulations that enhance their understanding of various subjects. This easy access to a wealth of information promotes independent research and critical thinking skills.

Collaboration and communication:

technology facilitates collaboration and communication among students, teachers and parents. Online platforms and tools enable students to collaborate on group projects, share ideas and receive feedback from their peers. Teachers can use technology to provide timely feedback and communicate with parents, fostering a strong home-school partnership.

Challenges

While the integration of ICT in education has shown remarkable progress, it is important to acknowledge that challenges still exist. Infrastructure limitations, such as intermittent power supply and limited internet coverage, can hinder the seamless implementation of ICT in some areas. Additionally, ensuring that technology is used as a tool for active learning rather than passive consumption remains a constant focus for educators.

Infrastructure and access: One of the significant challenges in integrating ICT in teaching and learning is ensuring adequate and inclusive infrastructure and access for all students. Not all schools have the necessary technology resources, including computers, reliable internet connectivity and technical support. Through different initiatives, REB is developing strategies to address the challenges of limited ICT equipment and digital resources to ensure equity and quality in the use of technology in

schools. By leveraging technology, REB is extending the reach of quality education, bridging the gap between urban and rural areas. It allows students from all over the country to access the same educational resources and opportunities, leveling the playing field and fostering inclusivity.

Teacher training and support: Moreover, ICT integration in education also benefits teachers by providing them with professional development opportunities. Effective integration of ICT in education requires well-trained teachers who can leverage its potential to enhance learning. Teachers need professional development opportunities to learn how the use of technology tools effectively, integrate them into the curriculum and address potential challenges. Ongoing technical support is also crucial to ensure smooth implementation and troubleshooting. Rwanda Basic Education Board, in collaboration with different partners, organizes training programs to familiarize teachers with digital tools and methodologies, enabling them to effectively incorporate technology into their teaching practices. These programs not only enhance teachers' pedagogical skills but also create a community of practice where educators can share experiences and best practices.

Digital Literacy and cybersecurity: technology brings with it the need for digital literacy skills, including the ability to evaluate online information, protect personal data and navigate digital platforms safely. Basic education should include digital literacy education to empower students to become responsible and ethical digital citizens. Additionally, cybersecurity measures need to be in place to protect students' privacy and safeguard against potential threats. The national curriculum stresses the use of ICT as a tool in all subjects at all levels, but also ICT as a subject.

Balancing screen time and real-world experiences: while technology offers numerous benefits, it is essential to strike a balance between screen time and real-world experiences. Basic education should provide a well rounded education that includes physical activities, social interactions, and hands-on learning opportunities. Technology should be used

as a tool to enhance and complement traditional teaching methods, rather than replace them entirely.

Nevertheless, REB commitment to leverage ICT in teaching and learning has yield significant positive outcomes. Students are more engaged, have access to wealth of educational digital resources and develop vital digital literacy skills. Teachers are empowered with modern tools and techniques that enhance their instructional practices. By embracing technology, the ministry of education is laying a solid foundation for a knowledge-based economy society, preparing students for the challenges and opportunities of the digital age.

In conclusion, teaching and learning with technology in basic education holds immense potential to transform education and equip students with the skills they need for future. By harnessing the benefits of technology, such as enhanced engagement, personalized learning, and access to information educators can create a dynamic and inclusive learning environment. However, addressing challenges such as infrastructure limitations, teacher training, digital literacy and balancing screen time is crucial to ensure equitable and responsible technology integration. With careful planning, support and collaboration, ICT can become a powerful tool that empowers students and prepares them for digital age. The integration of ICT in teaching and learning is a testament to a transformative power of innovation in the educational sector. Through strategic initiatives and investments, an environment is created where ICT serves as a catalyst for learning and development. As Rwanda continues to advance efforts, it is poised to become a model for others seeking to harness the potential of technology to revolutionize education.

Diane Sengati Uwasenga is the Acting Head of Department of ICT in Education in Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB). She has an experience of more than 17 years in the ICT in Education sector. She is a passionate advocate of digital education, and has made a significant contribution to the development of the country's digital education landscape.

GIRLS' EMPOWERMENT THROUGH EDUCATION



I often wonder what my life would be like had I been born during a time when girls my age were denied the right to attend school.

I would probably be married to a complete stranger by now, with one or more children. Because, contrary to now, a few decades ago, girls were thought to be solely good for housework and related chores.

I am the only girl among four children in my family. Thankfully, I'm not only required to stay indoors and do housekeeping tasks. And neither is my mother. Both my parents are well educated and understand that gender should not hinder anyone from pursuing their dreams.

Even though I am the only girl among three boys, our parents have given me equal opportunities as my brothers. I have never been treated or made to feel differently. I can even confidently say that I have attended better schools than my brothers because, truthfully, I would perform better in class.

When it comes to household chores, we all dig in and help each other without any bias. In our family, we believe in supporting one another's interests and dreams. We encourage everyone to work hard and pursue their passions.

I have been fortunate to attend some of the best schools in Rwanda. For my Ordinary level, I studied at Fawe Girls School, and for my Advanced level, I attended Inyange Girls' School of Sciences. My parents motivated me to pursue both science and languages, and now I am studying MPC [Math, Physics and Computer Science]. I am also a member of the Media Club, where I write articles, poems, and other forms of write-ups.

At school, we are empowered to become the strong and capable women we are meant to be. Our teachers always remind us that there are no limits to what we can achieve and encourage us to never give up on our dreams.

We participate in various competitions, both scientific and linguistic, such as debates and essay writing. Girls often excel in these competitions such as AIMS, SCRATCH, and ROBOTICS, among others.

I know that girls can accomplish anything and that they possess skills to make informed decisions while also tackling any challenge that comes their way. But I understand my experience may not be the reality for all the young girls in the country. There's still more to be done.



We must work hard to showcase our abilities and change the world for the better, thus proving wrong those who doubt our potential. And, the best way is through educating ourselves first

So, what steps can the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) take to empower girls through education? Good enough already, REB offers equal opportunities to boys and girls, taking into account their academic performance in national examinations.

It is clear that girls excel in education, as evidenced by the fact that many of the top-performing schools in Rwanda are exclusively girls' schools. Some notable examples include Fawe Girls School, Lycée Notre Dame de Citeaux, Maranyundo, Gashora, Karubanda, and

Akilah University.

The education and empowerment of girls have opened doors for them to pursue leadership roles. This is evident in the achievements of Minister of Education, Valentine Mujawamariya, and the Secretary-General of the Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OMF) Louise Mushikiwabo, to name a few.

In addition, it is worth noting that 60% of parliamentary leaders are women, and others who also serve in the defense forces, with some even holding higher ranks than men, which can all be attributed to the equal educational opportunities provided to girls.

There is no doubt that education is critical to empowering women and girls and allowing them to take control of their lives. A well-educated man, on the other hand, values and respects his wife. He gives his children equal opportunity and support regardless of gender. An educated man never underestimates his daughters; instead, he offers all they require and guides them towards becoming the best versions of themselves. An educated man is also less likely to engage in gender based violence as previously proven by research.

So, if all men and society as a whole were educated, perhaps girls and women would be treated with respect and provided equal educational opportunities instead of fighting for what's rightfully theirs. This means that it's not just up to REB and the government to fight against gender inequalities and hold accountable those who engage in corrupt practices, especially in relation to "sex corruption" and anyone who undermines or mistreats girls.

Additionally, we as girls must recognize our own power, stand up for ourselves, and fight against those who try to abuse or exploit us. We must work hard to showcase our abilities and change the world for the better, thus proving wrong those who doubt our potential. And, the best way is through educating ourselves first.

*Jeanne Laurine Gwizingabire
S4 MPC, Inyange Girls School of Sciences*

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY THROUGH EDUCATION



I remember back in primary school when I had the privilege of studying alongside a classmate with albinism. She often found herself isolated and feared by others, as misconceptions about albinism being contagious prevailed. Unfortunately, her entire family shared this condition. I made an effort to reach out and befriend her, aiming to alleviate her loneliness and show her that there was no difference between us.

She was not the only student with a disability at school. I grew to understand that many of them were struggling with many other unmet needs, beyond acceptance among fellow students. Most of them were struggling financially in addition to the health complications that often come with disabilities.

At least, with time, acceptance and stigma stopped being one of their worries. As we (the rest of the students) studied with them, hung around them and got to know them, we all came to understand that there was far more about them than their disabilities.

Good enough, education plays a pivotal

role in fostering diversity and inclusivity in Rwanda. People from different backgrounds can coexist, study together, transcending their differences. Moreover, today, more than ever, individuals with disabilities have equal opportunities to education, challenging the outdated notion that they should be confined to their homes, stripped of their potential.

I wholeheartedly support Rwanda's efforts to dismantle the negative beliefs surrounding the abilities of individuals with disabilities. These inspiring individuals continually motivate me to utilize my own physical abilities in a meaningful way.

I am reminded that there are countless people out there who would greatly benefit from the organs I possess but cannot access them. It also drives me to work diligently in my studies, or any other thing I undertake, determined to not take for granted any of it.

Another remarkable aspect of individuals with disabilities is their remarkable cooperation and unity. They demonstrate a willingness to explain concepts to one another, utilizing their unique perspectives. This collaborative approach not only enhances their own education but also serves as an inspiration for me to work harmoniously with my peers.

Denying individuals with disabilities access to education would confine them to a life of isolation and unfulfilled potential within their homes. They would be hindered from showcasing their remarkable abilities, and I, personally,

would not have gained the valuable experiences and insights I have had the privilege to witness.

I am proud of my country's unwavering support, such as teaching aids and scholarships, as well as essential resources like hearing aids, wheelchairs, and books for the visually impaired.

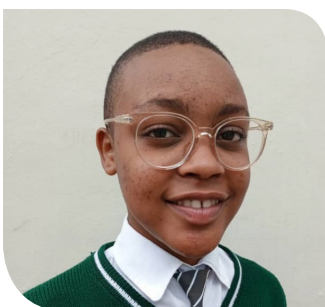
Another example of diversity is the ability to practice various faiths without feeling any need to hide or hate on each other for having different beliefs.

For instance, I used to believe that Protestants were hostile toward Catholics because of their differing views. I also assumed that Muslims had a general dislike for Christians. However, as a result of my school's diversity, I've learned to understand and respect the beauty of inclusivity. Many of my closest friends have converted to other faiths, including Protestantism and Islam, and we didn't allow it to affect our relationship.

In a nutshell, Rwanda's dedication to promoting diversity and inclusive education is both commendable and transformative. By providing equal opportunities and support to individuals with disabilities, we are fostering a society that celebrates the strengths and capabilities of all its members. Overall, through education, we can break down barriers, challenge stereotypes, and create a brighter, more inclusive future for everyone.

*Jessica Beline Kazenzeza, Senior 2
Inyange Girls School of Sciences*

EDUCATION: JOURNEY OF AWESOMENESS



When I try to describe what education means to me, I think it is like a key that unlocks countless doors, leading to a world of endless possibilities and personal growth. It is so much more than memorizing facts and figures; it's a transformative journey that shapes who we are and who we can become.

For me, education is all about stepping outside of my comfort zone and venturing into the great unknown. It's all about meeting new people, sharing experiences, and exchanging ideas.

It is an opportunity to grow as a person. It is like leveling up in a video game, unlocking new skills, and conquering superpowers. Well, maybe not actual superpowers, but it does give us the tools

COMMENTARY

we need to conquer the challenges that life throws at us.

But education is not just about the knowledge gained; it's about the process of learning itself. It's about cultivating critical thinking, questioning the status quo, and developing a thirst for knowledge that can never be quenched. Through education, I have learned to challenge my own beliefs, broaden my perspectives, and engage in meaningful conversations with others.

I love engaging in lively debates, sharing different experiences, and learning from my peers. It's like having a supportive community of fellow learners who inspire me to push my boundaries and strive for greatness.

Education also ignites a spark of creativity within me. It encourages me to think outside the box, explore new ideas, and express myself in unique ways. Whether it's through art, music, or writing, education provides me with a platform to unleash my imagination and bring my ideas to life.

Of course, there are challenges; such as the pressure to excel, the fear of failure, and the occasional dreadful subjects that can sometimes be boring.

Thanks to Rwanda Basic Education Board and other institutions in charge, for now, different practical experiments, Computer Aided Learning, leadership, and fun programs like youth first Rwanda and others, are deployed in learning which

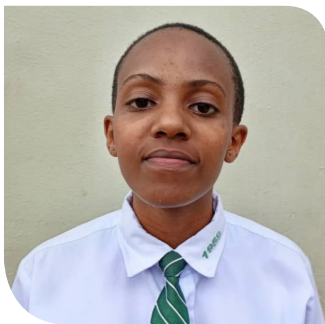
makes it interesting.

Education is more than just a choice; it is a fundamental necessity for everyone. Just imagine a country where the majority of the population is educated... The potential for growth and progress would be immense. Education should no longer be seen as an option but rather as a top priority, given its undeniable importance.

Now, let's strap on our backpacks, grab our pens (or laptops), and embark on this journey of awesomeness. To the thrill of learning, the joy of discovery, and the sense of empowerment that education brings!

*Marie Pamella Gitego, S6 MPC,
Inyange Girls School of Sciences*

EDUCATION: MY VISION FOR RWANDA



I can still vividly recall the memories of my first day at school when I was just 4. It was a mixture of excitement and nervousness, embarking on this new journey of meeting new people, waking up early, spending long hours away from home, and finding solace in strangers rather than my mother. It was a complete change of scenery.

Now, 12 years later, reflecting on my journey, I have experienced a myriad of emotions. There have been moments of sadness, fear, frustration, anxiety, and stress. At times, it's so overwhelming that I contemplate giving up. Then, I am reminded of children my age who long for the privileges I have, for whom Education is a privilege rather than a right, accessible and enjoyable.

Of course, despite acknowledging that

learning is beneficial and enlightening, I can't shake off the underlying dread I feel when I step into school. The limited sleep time, the unfamiliar food, and the discomfort of adjusting to new routines, etc. However, the struggles and hardships become worthwhile when you finally hold your diploma, with your head held high. Or better yet, the simple feeling of learning something new!

Some may express their discontent with their schools for various reasons, but I consider myself fortunate to attend a reputable institution, where everyone communicates fluently in different languages, values moral principles, and strives to become upstanding individuals. Because I also understand that school is not a place where we acquire knowledge only, but also some of the most fundamental principles that govern our lives.

Beside the fact that everyone should experience what it is like to be at and in school, it's worth noting that everybody doesn't learn the same way. Personally, I find that I learn best while observing something and practicing it myself until it becomes perfect - hands-on activities.

There are different methods of studying, including theoretical and practical

approaches. The theoretical aspect involves reading, writing, and conceptualizing ideas, whereas the practical aspect focuses on real-life applications.

Thankfully, in Rwanda, education is a significant aspect of our country's development. The country currently places emphasis on the practical side of education, evident through the provision of mandatory computer labs and well-equipped chemistry, biology, and physics labs in certain schools, and internship placements among other things. Although we still have a way to go compared to more advanced countries, I am grateful for the efforts our nation is making and proud of our progress.

So, while I may not often envision the future, one vision I hold for Rwanda is that my children will attend school with excitement and enthusiasm. I dream of a Rwanda where all children are able to acquire education and are supported to learn in ways that work best for them. I hope they will be able to meet new people, make friends, and witness Rwanda become as advanced in education with better equipment and resources available to everyone.

*Nadira Keza Teta, S4 MPC,
Inyange Girls' School of Sciences*

HOW ONLINE IN-SERVICE TRAINING PROGRAM IS TRANSFORMING RWANDAN TEACHERS

An online in-service teachers training program is delivering impressive results for hundreds of teachers in selected districts of the country, just a few months after it was rolled out.

At Muhima Primary School in the capital Kigali, 16 teachers are eager to learn new knowledge and undertake the training on their smartphones and computers, according to the head teacher Mary Uwampogoje.

They are part of hundreds of teachers undergoing the blended learning approach to Continuous Professional Development (CPD) program in two districts of the country.

Some of them have not been well acquainted with information and communication technology gadgets and have spent most of their professional lives using chalk and blackboard in teaching and learning.

However, thanks to the blended learning program for in-service teachers, these educators are not just learning the ropes; they are making good progress.

The Ministry of Education, through Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) and other partner institutions with the support of the USAID's Tunoze-Gusoma project, developed the blended learning CPD.

The program provides a range of content through the blended learning approach.

It includes courses ranging from general pedagogy to subject-specific pedagogy in line with the country's Competence-Based Curriculum.

It also covers instruction and assessment techniques, how children learn at different stages, cross-cutting topics like gender-responsive pedagogy as well as inclusion of children with disabilities and social and emotional skills.

Besides, school-based teacher coaches go an extra mile to support their colleagues



undertaking the training.

For the teachers, the program has been a life-changing experience.

"This learning approach has been pivotal in my professional development. It has helped me learn how to manage pupils and understand their different learning abilities," said Christine Kayirere, a Kinyarwanda and mathematics teacher.

With over 12 years of teaching experience, Kayirere said she quickly gained confidence using technology in learning and she is now able to learn her lessons without the help of the school-based coach.

Whenever she has no classes to teach, she sets aside time to attend her lessons from Monday to Friday.

"If for example I have two hours of free time per day, I use it for blended learning CPD, it doesn't interfere with my teaching work," said Kayirere.

She said they were encouraged to be positive towards using the new technology and they all loved and worked hard to adapt.

Chricentha Mukacunda, another teacher

said with no previous experience in using information technology, she felt nervous at first. However, with dedication she was able to acquire basic IT skills, which helped ease her learning process.

She said blended learning has built her capacity to understand pupils' learning capabilities, and equipped her with skills on how to handle students with learning difficulties.

She has been teaching Kinyarwanda, math and social studies since 1997.

"I normally attend my classes during break time and sometimes weekends. I am now able to even teach others who would require support in e-learning," said Mukacunda.

She cited inadequate computers, slow internet connectivity and smart phones among their challenges.

Mary Uwampogoje, the school's head teacher said the program is delivering impressive results.

"This learning program was timely in this era of technology, we don't want to be left behind and we hope that this will result into positive development," Uwampogoje said.



“I was excited after being informed that our school had been selected for the program. Our teachers have been positive about the Blended learning program.”

The school has 46 teachers.

Uwampogoje said the blended learning program has improved the quality of teaching.

Teachers now use information technology skills to make research and broaden their knowledge, which has always not been the case.

Uwampogoje said that blended learning would enable her school to achieve its goals through improved academic performance as well as help teachers to assess the performance of their pupils in real time.

Special needs pupils

The head teacher explained that pupils with special needs get more attention and special education and care by the teachers with a focal person who is responsible for following up such pupils with special needs.

She commended teachers who took the first step to embrace the program saying they are now able to help their colleagues.

Anastase Harerimana, a school-based teacher coach, said the initial training of teachers about internet usage and various basic steps acted as an ice-breaker for teachers without prior computer

knowledge.

“At the moment the teachers are familiar with internet use and the e-learning. We use break time for teachers to attend lessons,” he said.

“I closely follow these teachers to offer them necessary support.”

He also mentioned inadequate computers, smart phones and slow internet among their challenges.

Some teachers complained about the time allocated for attending the e-learning lessons, saying it was still limited.

According to Dative Niyitegeka, Literacy Advisor at USAID Tunozu-Gusoma Schools and Systems Project, the developed blended learning program is now supporting in-service Kinyarwanda teachers in Lower Primary to improve teaching practices for better learning outcomes.

This program, she said, provides teachers with a structured way to engage in blended learning program through routine activities that reflect best practices for adult learning.

At least 907 lower primary school teachers are undergoing the online learning program in the districts of Nyarugenge and Rulindo where it was introduced last year, according to Niyitegeka.

Next year, the target is to reach three

more districts, which are Ruhango, Bugesera and Rubavu with around 317 schools and 2725 teachers for Lower Primary.

“The blended learning approach is expected to contribute to finding solutions to in-service teachers’ continuous professional development needs, allowing many teachers to access high quality content that is aligned with their job requirements,” Niyitegeka said.

“Blended Learning CPD content will always be available via the REB e-learning platform for new teachers embarking on their teaching careers and teachers who want to review best practices as they teach.”

Niyitegeka underlined that the program improves teachers’ teaching capacity and student outcome.

Under the program, teachers are facilitated with a real-world application of learning by providing professional development at the school.

Teachers can therefore quickly try out what they have learned, immediately see students’ responses to the new practices and see improvements in students’ learning.

Niyitegeka called for more coordinated efforts from the schools leadership, education and other development partners in order to ensure effective implementation of the blended learning approach.

Unlike the traditional teacher training method, where everything happens in a face-to-face setting as one-time training where teachers go to a specific training center to be trained for a certain amount of time then go back to implement their learning in their schools.

The blended learning program is built around a comprehensive approach that promotes a combination of face-to-face training, school based and online activities.

“It provides audio –visual materials of high-performing teachers interacting with pupils, allowing teachers to see and hear best practice instruction - which cannot be replicated in a standard cascade training or easily conveyed via printed text,” Niyitegeka said.

PIONEERING THE FUTURE OF CODING AND ROBOTICS IN RWANDAN SCHOOLS

In one of the classrooms at College du Christ Roi in Nyanza District, a group of five enthusiastic students is busy commanding robots they recently helped design and build. The robots move gracefully across a tablemat, displaying the students' coding and robotics skills.

Quersy Imbabazi, a 15-year-old S3 student at the school recalls how her journey into the world of robotics began when STEM Inspires and CODERINA EdTech introduced coding and robotics programs to 35 schools in Rwanda, including hers.

"I was thrilled by the concept of robotics," Imbabazi expressed, her eyes gleaming with enthusiasm. She aspires to become one of the scientists who can command robots to perform complex tasks currently carried out by human labor.

Imbabazi is part of the team code-named 'Block Python', comprising ten students under the age of 16, who have excelled in robotics and emerged victorious in various competitions.

"I can design and build robots using coding languages like Python and Spike Prime, enabling them to perform various tasks according to my instructions. My dream is to become a specialist in managing and utilizing robots," she adds.

Though coding and robotics are not part of the Competence-Based Curriculum, as they are currently offered as extracurricular activities, students who benefited from the program embraced this cutting-edge technology eagerly. Science teachers from schools like College du Christ Roi, which received robotics kits from the partners of Rwanda Basic Education Board, volunteer to offer STEM courses and assist students in learning and using robotics.

Excelling in competitions in Rwanda and beyond

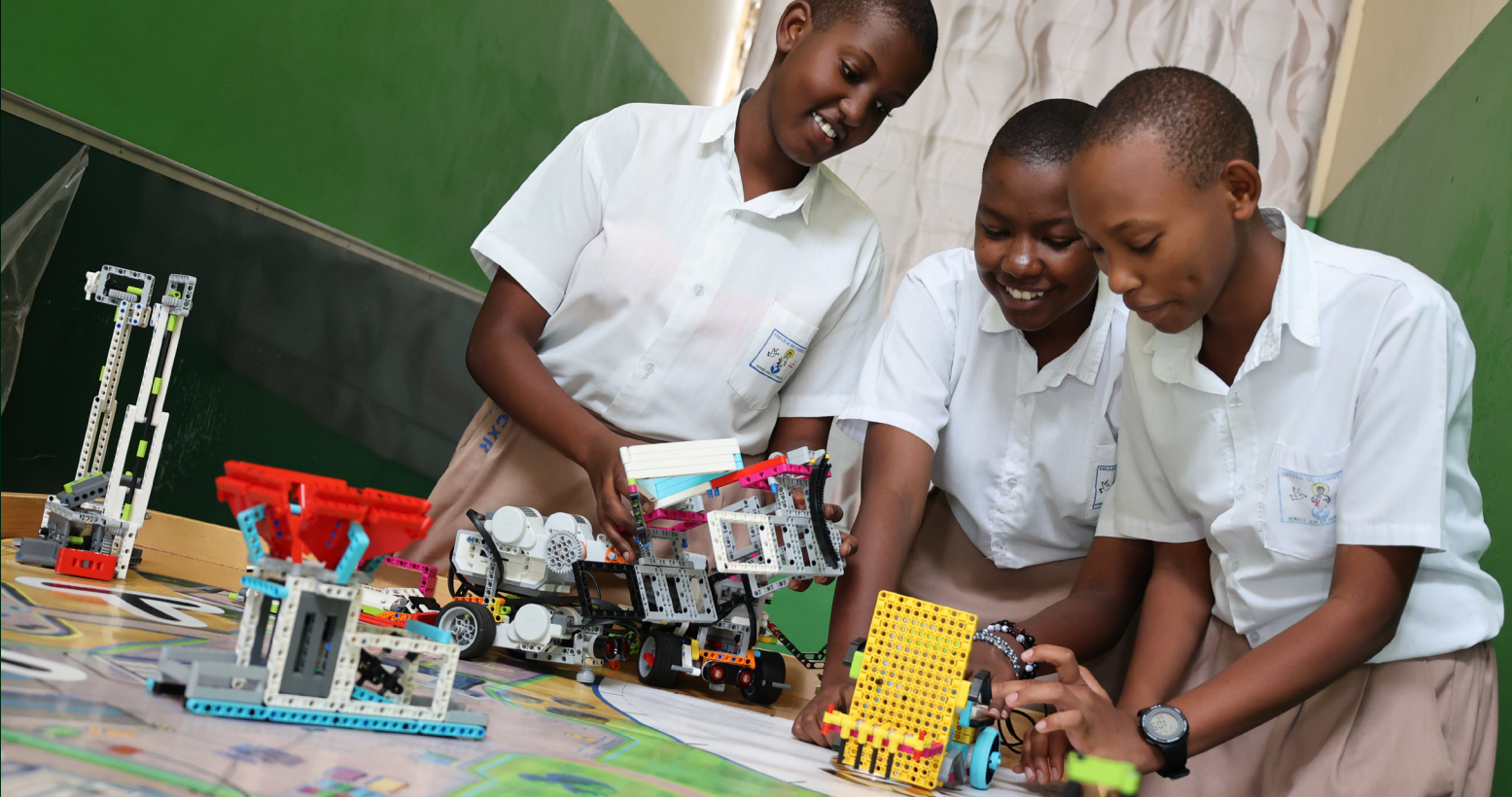
In March this year, a team of students from College du Christ Roi participated in the LEGO League and excelled, ranking among the best in the country. The FIRST LEGO League is an international robotics competition for students aged 9-16, aiming to inspire young people to pursue STEM careers.

The competition challenged teams to design, build, and program autonomous robots using LEGO kits to complete a set of missions on a themed playing field. Over 30 schools participated, and College du Christ's Block Python team emerged as one of the best at the national level.

"It was a challenging experience, but we accomplished it as a team. The competition taught us how to think critically and act quickly," says Imbabazi, highlighting the importance of teamwork and collaboration in robotics.

"Robotics fosters essential skills such as creativity, critical thinking, collaboration,





Students from college du christ Roi working on robots they have developed as part of coding and robotics program recently introduced to some schools.

and communication, among others,” she noted.

After their success in the First Lego League in Rwanda, the next step for the team was to compete internationally. In May, a team of students from College du Christ Roi flew to Morocco to compete in the International FIRST LEGO League Open International, where students from over 40 countries with 66 teams convened to compete.

The Block Python team performed exceptionally well, earning the “Coopertition award” for exhibiting excellent innovation, teamwork spirit, and collaboration to achieve their mission.

“The award demonstrates that anything is possible. Competing with teams from countries that have developed robotics for over 20 years exposed us to emerging issues that require technology like robotics to be solved,” says Jeremie Habumugisha, a Mathematics teacher at College du Christ Roi and a volunteer trainer in coding and robotics.

Preparing Students for a Tech-Savvy Future

Participating in international competitions is not only an honor but also a valuable learning experience for students like Imbabazi and her teammates.

For Akram Ndayisenga, another student, coding and robotics offers an avenue for them to explore cutting-edge technology while enhancing their critical thinking abilities and overall STEM skills.

“Robotics involves mathematics, physics, and engineering aspects, which challenge us to think critically. It also fosters teamwork and collaboration, essential skills for success in any field,” says Ndayisenga.

“Participating in the FIRST LEGO League Open Competition was particularly a learning experience and it raised fear in us that we can do more if we work together and carry out more research,” he added.

Mainstreaming coding and robotics in curriculum

Diane Uwasenga Sengati, the Acting head of ICT in the Education Department at Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB), expressed her excitement about the future of coding and robotics in Rwandan education.

While coding and robotics are currently being offered as extracurricular activities, REB is planning to integrate them into the Competence Based Curriculum that is guiding education in the country.

“Coding and robotics have proven to be instrumental in Rwanda’s education,”

Sengati stressed. “Through our trial in a few schools, we witnessed firsthand how these technologies captivated students, fostering not only enthusiasm but also a deep level of engagement in the learning process.”

“By integrating coding and robotics into the mainstream curriculum, we are opening doors to endless opportunities for our students. These skills are not only essential in the digital age but also empower them to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and innovators.” She added.

The initiative to integrate coding and robotics into schools could begin in the next academic year, starting with 20 schools should all go as planned, a move promises to revolutionize the way students learn and engage in the classroom, empowering them to become critical thinkers, problem solvers, and innovators in the digital age, according to the official.

The integration of coding and robotics marks a significant milestone in Rwanda’s commitment to fostering a dynamic and forward-thinking learning environment. As the pilot program is set to start, educators and policymakers eagerly anticipate its positive impact on students, preparing them to navigate the challenges of the 21st century with tech-savvy proficiency.

WHY PROMOTION OF INCLUSIVITY IN EDUCATION IS EVERYONE'S OBLIGATION

Jacques Mugisha lost eyesight during the 1994 Genocide against Tutsi at a tender age of nine. By that time, he had reached primary three and just like many who had different types of disability, he struggled to continue school in a country that was just rising from ashes.

After completing primary school and joining high school in 2001, he was lucky to join Groupe Scolaire Gahini in Kayonza District, an inclusive school. At the school, he studied alongside other students and strived to adjust to the conventional classroom teaching and learning style.

With the teacher writing on a chalkboard and students taking notes, the visually-impaired Mugisha would rely on the teacher's explanations to learn and a colleague dictating the notes to him so that he could write his own using a braille textbook.

This, according to him, was a challenge not only to him but his colleagues who

would help him while having little time of their own. Despite that, Mugisha scored good marks throughout the years and was able to complete secondary school in 2007.

“When you look back, this was like an integration of students with disabilities in schools but not an inclusive education system because we lacked people who were equipped with skills to deal with students with special needs at all levels. It changed gradually,” he noted.

Ensuring that every individual has access to and benefits from equal educational opportunities to advance their learning process remains a global challenge.

Sustainable Development Goal 4 on education, as well as the Framework for Action for the realization of this goal, emphasize the imperative of ensuring inclusion and equity as foundations for quality education.

In 2007, the government of Rwanda through the Ministry of Education put in

place a task force for inclusive education development in Rwanda that aimed at identifying challenges that children with special needs face and how to address them and provide them with access to education.

Special needs include mobility and physical impairments, visual impairment, hearing impairment, and intellectual disability, among others.

Inclusive education means all children in the same classrooms, in the same schools. It means real learning opportunities for children with disabilities and other groups traditionally been excluded by putting in place enabling infrastructure, special needs tailored tools, and a learning environment.

UNESCO emphasizes that inclusive education involves changes and modifications in content, approaches, structures and strategies, with a common vision that covers all children of the appropriate age range and a conviction that it is the responsibility of the regular



One of the primary school candidates with disabilities, sits for national exams on Monday, July 17.

system to educate all children.

In efforts to drive inclusive education, Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) created a Special Needs and Inclusive Education (SNE) and Technical Working Group (TWG) and it is part of the Competence-Based Curriculum and TTC program and resources.

Under a World Bank-funded project called Rwanda Quality Basic Education for Human Capital Development Project, TTCs and model schools are given resources needed for special needs education.

“When TTCs and model schools incorporate basic inclusive educational materials into their training programs, they will contribute to the development of more competent and compassionate tutors and teachers who can create supportive and effective learning environments for all students,” said Emmanuel Shyaka, the SPIU Coordinator, REB.

According to Shyaka, teachers trained with a strong foundation skill in usage of basic inclusive education contribute to a more inclusive society, the positive practices and attitudes learned by future teachers will influence generations of students, creating a culture of inclusivity that extend beyond the classroom.

He added that providing basic inclusive educational materials and training both Teacher Training Colleges and model schoolteachers in Rwanda is crucial for advancing the nation’s goals of equity, quality education.

“These materials and trainings will empower educators to create inclusive environments, support diverse learners, and contribute to the holistic development of all students, thereby fostering a more inclusive and harmonious society,” said Shyaka. At the national level, learning for children with disabilities is embedded in the Education Sector Strategic Plan (ESSP) 2018/19-2023/24 (Strategic results 5 and 7).

According to 2019 Education Management Information Systems data (EMIS), there are approximately 23,044 learners with disabilities from nursery to basic education and TVET in Rwanda.



Emmanuel Shyaka, the SPIU Coordinator, REB

Donatille Kanimba, Executive Director of Rwanda Union of the Blind, said the level of implementation in Rwanda is still low because of different factors including the lack of skills for teachers in handling and educating students with disabilities.

“This is a new concept in Rwanda which means that there are many things yet to be achieved in terms of mainstreaming inclusive education.”

She noted that there is a need to assess and empower each student based on their capabilities. For instance, one might have a mental disability that hinders them from performing well in conventional class work but endowed with drawing talent, it is, therefore, necessary to educate them with basic nurture of their talents.

Additionally, Kanimba stressed that inclusivity starts from families and communities by changing the mindsets towards disabilities and understanding that they have a crucial role in creating an enabling environment for unleashing a number of abilities that children with disabilities are endowed with.

Currently, REB is ensuring the textbooks aligned to the competence-based curriculum together with storybooks for literacy programs are in a digitally

accessible format through the support of UNICEF, World Bank, USAID, and other NGOs.

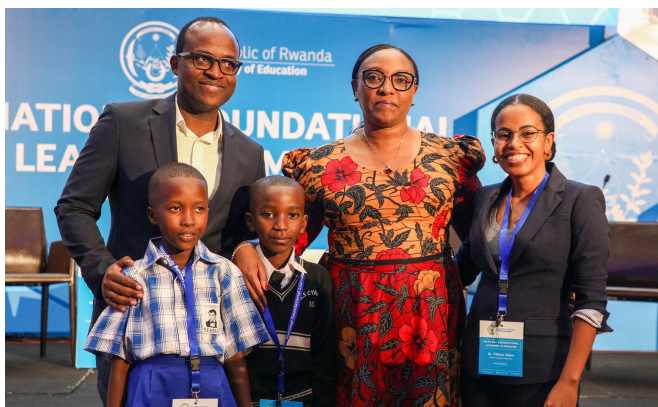
On a similar development, REB also introduced the teaching of braille and sign language in Teacher Training Centres (TTCs) so as a means of driving inclusivity once they are deployed in schools to teach, however, the pace of scalability is still low and calls for partnership in this area.

Mugisha, now 38, graduated from the University of Rwanda with a degree in journalism and continues with his work of advocating for the inclusion of people with disabilities.

He emphasized that while technology comes with advantages, it is important to provide and make use of braille textbooks for children with visual impairment as foundational learning.

According to UNICEF, inclusive education is the most effective way to give all children a fair chance to go to school, learn and develop the skills they need to thrive by valuing the unique contributions students of all backgrounds bring to the classroom and allowing diverse groups to grow side by side, to the benefit of all.

FOURTH EDITION OF RWANDA NATIONAL FOUNDATIONAL LEARNING SYMPOSIUM



PICTORIAL



HOW TEACHER MANAGEMENT INFORMATION SYSTEM IS DRIVING QUALITY TEACHING DELIVERY

It was all cheer for Mamerthe Uwayezu, a teacher at Groupe Scolaire Karengye, Rwamagana District, when she learnt that teachers won't have to make long distances for job application or process work transfer after the introduction of the Teacher Management Information System (TMIS).

According to her, the system was long overdue and has played a key role in professionalizing the teaching career even more.

“It has made a whole world of difference,” she said. “REB [Rwanda Basic Education Board] has over the years improved the education sector, but the lack of a synchronized automated system was always a challenge,” she added.

Uwayezu explained that it previously took a long time to get the approval of teacher transfers and other services reserved for teachers due to poor coordination, as well as delays in salary claims.

“This has significantly improved,” she said.

In 2021, TMIS was upgraded and launched in partnership with UNICEF and the Mastercard Foundation as a response to major challenges related to teacher management in the education sector.

It was designed to help in registration of teachers, licensing of a professional teacher, recruitment and appointment of teachers by managing posts, teacher training, teacher transfer, performance appraisal of teachers and promotion of teachers in pre-primary, primary and secondary schools.

The platform can be accessed by more than 14 categories of users in the National Education System. These categories range from the Senior Management of the Rwanda Basic Education Board to the teams in charge of teacher placements, incentives, and training, as well as the District Directors of Education (DDE) across the country.

Overall, the platform is one of the best-performing initiatives implemented by REB as it facilitates teacher management through recording and accessing teacher's biographical data, generating payroll samples as per district to avoid 'ghost teachers' and the unpaid cases. It

also allows budgeting and reporting to support in various decision making on a monthly and yearly basis.

Leon Mugenzi, the Head of Teacher Development Management, Career Guidance and Counseling Department, said that having all teachers (in-service and newly recruited) in TMIS has brought a lot of positive changes in the education system in terms of teacher management and development.

For instance, he said, managing transfers and replacements was revolutionized because the platform has reduced the cost of time, human resource and money, promoted transparency and made the process whole fast, improved the quality of data to inform decisions, and improved the service delivery not only for teachers but all stakeholders in the education sector.

Currently, Mugenzi said that there are at least 102,500 teachers registered in TMIS. According to him, to achieve this, REB has had to conduct a series of training to Head Teachers, District Directors of Education, and teachers on how to navigate the platform as they continue to acquire digital literacy skills.

Jacques Mugisha, District Director of Education, Bugesera District, said that the introduction of Teacher Management Information System (TMIS) has created



more time to engage in other work and facilitated faster service delivery. “The teacher placement process was tedious,” he said, “It used to take us about two weeks but it can now be processed within three or five days. Besides that, one error in recording data would imply reviewing the whole registration but we can now correct it on its own.”

Mugisha noted that this system is an encouragement to students in Teacher Training Centres (TTCs) to perform well in their studies so that they are competitive once they step on the labour market because this platform has made it easier for them to secure jobs.

TMIS is an integral part of digital transformation in the education sector as the country seeks to establish a knowledge based economy through advancements in technology and innovation.

Just like many other teachers, Uwayezu commended this initiative and called on her colleagues in the profession to equip themselves with digital skills to remain relevant in this technology era and on the labour market.

How TMIS works

On the platform, head teachers have the option to request a number of posts

based on the positions they have at their schools. The DDEs have an interface that shows all the requested posts from schools before they are sent to REB. Then REB gets the total number of posts requested from all districts grouped by qualifications.

After compilation and processing, REB distributes posts to districts based on

guidelines of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, and DDEs also distribute the received post limits to their schools based on their analysis and need by type of position and by school.

Teachers are placed in vacant posts. The teacher placement list is generated on a monthly basis and kept in the system for future references.





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EDUCATION BOARD

Requirements for private schools that want to order for Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) textbooks from printing companies which were contracted to print and supply them

- **A letter addressed to the Director General of REB requesting to have access to CBC textbooks at affordable prices**
- **In addition to the letter, the following information should be provided:**
 - ✓ *Address of the school*
 - ✓ *Telephone number and email of the school head teacher*
 - ✓ *Title and quantity of needed textbooks per title and per level/class*
 - ✓ *Number of students per class*

Required information for private schools to order for CBC textbooks


The Schhol Address:

- ✓ *School name:*
- ✓ *District:*
- ✓ *Sector:*
- ✓ *Cell:*
- ✓ *Tel. Number for school Headteacher :*
- ✓ *Active school/ Headteacher's email:*

	Textbooks' titles	Textbooks quantity per level														
		N1	N2	N3	P1	P2	P3	P4	P5	P6	S1	S2	S3	S4	S5	S6
1																
2																
3																
4																
...																

Note: Information regarding the number of student per level should be also provided.

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VISION

The vision of REB is to promote the quality of education in basic, specialised and adult schools



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