

Issue 2: 2025

The Learning Leader

Harnessing Technology for the Future of Education



From the Editorial Desk

Welcome to the second issue of The Learning Leader! We are excited to share this with you as we end 2025 and celebrate the year that's been.

As we put together this issue, what kept emerging is that technology is already influencing everyday practice in schools across Kenya.

In preparing these pages, we listened to school leaders navigating digital platforms for the first time, trainers rethinking how learning happens beyond the classroom, teachers finding new ways to connect, collaborate and grow professionally and partners, who shared their expertise in various aspects, allowing us to exchange best practice. What emerges is a story of people learning and adapting within a changing education landscape.

This issue captures how digital tools are supporting stronger school leadership, more responsive professional development and greater peer engagement and participation, particularly when combined with intentional design and collaboration among institutions. It also looks at the critical place of teacher support in enhancing inclusive and equitable education.

We hope these stories offer both insight and prompt reflection on how technology can help build education systems that serve all learners better.

Thank you to everyone who shared their time, experiences and perspectives.

Happy reading, and as always, let's keep the conversations going.

Sincerely,

Mary Oyuke and Dorian Mwangi

Message from the Editor in Chief



Claire Mazin

Country Programmes Manager, VVOB in Kenya

We are glad to bring you this second issue of *The Learning Leader* newsletter. In this issue, we explore a defining question for education today: how can technology be used to strengthen education in meaningful, equitable ways? Across Kenya, digital tools are increasingly influencing how schools are led, how teachers are supported, how partnerships are strengthened and how learners experience education. The stories in this issue reflect both the promise of this shift and the intentional work required to make it effective.

Technology, when thoughtfully integrated, has the potential to expand access, improve quality and reduce longstanding inequalities. We see this in how school leaders are using digital platforms to strengthen instructional leadership, how teachers are accessing

professional development beyond the limits of time and geography and how data and connectivity are improving coordination across the system. These are practical responses to real challenges in schools.

At VVOB - *education for development*, our work with education institutions and partnerships with agencies such as the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI), the Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE), the Forum for Africa Women Educationalists (FAWE), among others, reflects this approach. Whether through leadership development, gender-responsive pedagogy in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) or digitally enabled continuous professional development, technology is being used as a tool to support people. It strengthens collaboration and enables educators to respond more effectively to the needs of diverse learners.

What stands out most is the commitment of teachers, school leaders and partners who are willing to learn, adapt and lead through change. At VVOB, we are equally committed to walking alongside them and continuously improving how we support their work. This shared openness to new ways of working gives me great confidence in the future of education in Kenya.

As you read this issue, I invite you to reflect on how purposeful use of technology can continue to strengthen education systems that are inclusive, resilient and future-ready.

Table of Contents

From the Editorial Desk -----	ii
Message from the Editor in Chief -----	iii
Foreword-----	2
ICT & Innovation in Leadership Training -----	3
Blended Learning as an Approach to Sustainable Professional Development -----	4
ICT and the Future of Teacher Continuous Professional Development -----	6
What Blended Learning Taught Me: A Trainer’s Experience-----	8
What School Leaders Are Saying About Blended Learning -----	10
Voices from the Field-----	11
A Digital Shift That Revived Leadership, Learning and the Spirit of a School Community -----	12
Creating a School That Works for Everyone -----	14
Building on the ESL4JS Pilot -----	16
Scaling Effective Leadership in Junior Schools-----	17
Effective Leadership for the Next Phase of Curriculum Reform-----	19
From the Gender-Transformative Pedagogy Hub -----	21
Advancing Gender-Responsive STEM Teaching in Kenya’s ASAL Regions -----	22
Teaching Equity: Why Teacher Support Matters Most -----	24
From PACTED to Practice: Teaching for Equity-----	27
Commemorating International Days -----	30
Reframing Literacy through School Leadership -----	31
Promoting Human Rights Through Education -----	33
Interview Features -----	35
Dr. Samuel Ngaruiya, Chairperson, INCREASE Technical Working Group (TWG) -----	36
Martin Kisilu, INCREASE Focal Point -----	38
Nicole Mwende, Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI), ICT Officer -----	40
Resources-----	42
Training Needs Assessment Report 2022 -----	43
Training Needs Assessment Report 2025 -----	43
Highlights from the RTIA Evidence Review report -----	44
Blend ON! Guide: A Practical Roadmap for Effective Blended CPD -----	44

Foreword

It gives me great pleasure to introduce this edition of The Learning Leader Newsletter, which focuses on a timely and transformative theme: Harnessing Technology for the Future of Education. As Kenya continues to implement far-reaching education reforms, technology stands out not as an optional enhancement but as an essential driver for equity, quality, and relevance in learning.

The Ministry of Education recognises ICT in education as a cornerstone for achieving Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) - ensuring inclusive, equitable and quality education for all. Technology enables us to broaden access to learning opportunities, personalise instruction, strengthen school leadership and build the 21st-century competencies needed for learners to thrive in a rapidly evolving world.

We have witnessed how innovative digital approaches such as blended learning for teacher professional development, school leadership training, digital content delivery and data-driven decision-making can transform the learning experience. Importantly, our commitment is not merely to adopt technology, but to ensure that ICT is inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of all learners, including those in remote, marginalised or resource-constrained settings.

Partnerships have been instrumental in advancing this agenda. I commend VVOB and all stakeholders implementing the Implementing National Curriculum Reforms through App-based learning for school leaders in Secondary Education (INCREASE) programme for demonstrating how technology, when combined with strong collaboration, can enhance school leadership and instructional practice. The Ministry remains committed to strengthening these partnerships, scaling successful innovations and ensuring that every school leader, teacher and learner can benefit from the opportunities that ICT offers.

As you read this newsletter, I invite you to reflect on how we can continue working together to shape an education system that is future-ready, learner-centred and technology-enabled.

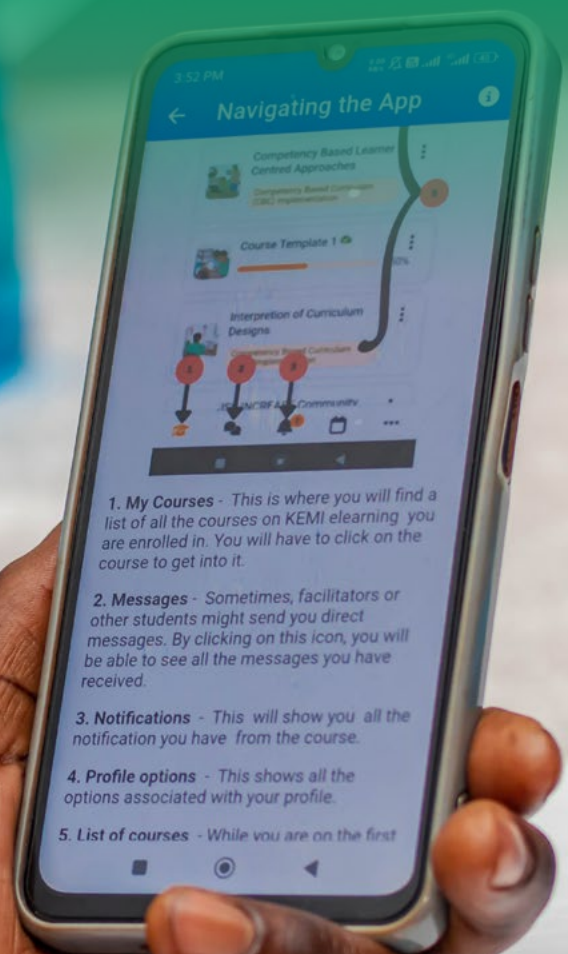
Together, let us harness the full potential of ICT to reimagine education and realise the promise of SDG 4 for every child in Kenya.



Elyas Abdi, OGW
Director General,
Ministry of Education, Kenya

**“ ICT in education
is a cornerstone
for achieving Sustainable
Development Goal 4 (SDG
4) - ensuring inclusive,
equitable and quality
education for all.**

ICT & Innovation in Leadership Training



1. **My Courses** - This is where you will find a list of all the courses on KEMI elearning you are enrolled in. You will have to click on the course to get into it.

2. **Messages** - Sometimes, facilitators or other students might send you direct messages. By clicking on this icon, you will be able to see all the messages you have received.

3. **Notifications** - This will show you all the notification you have from the course.

4. **Profile options** - This shows all the options associated with your profile.

5. **List of courses** - While you are on the first

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to access KEMI elearning
and offline
ed learner content
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Blended Learning as an Approach to Sustainable Professional Development

By Noam Janssens, Strategic Education Advisor, VVOB in Kenya



School leaders engaging in a virtual learning session, connecting with trainers and peers online. | Photo by VVOB

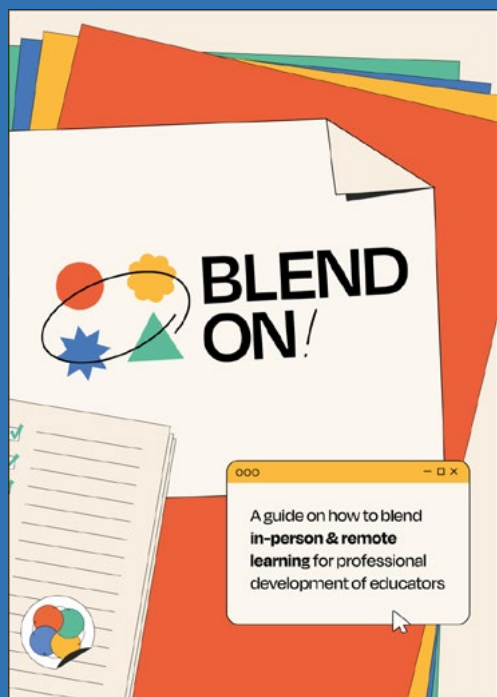
As education systems around the world adapt to rapid technological change, it has become evident that technology is a catalyst for transformation. At VVOB - *education for development*, it is a bridge between ambition and action, enabling professional development for educators that is inclusive, scalable and sustainable.

Why VVOB Adopted a Blended Learning Approach

Traditional continuous professional development (CPD) can be costly, time-intensive and difficult to roll out equitably, challenges that were clearly highlighted in the [Training Needs Assessment](#) conducted at the start of the [Implementing National Curriculum Reforms through App-based learning for school leaders in Secondary Education \(INCREASE\)](#) programme. These findings directly shaped the design of the Effective School Leadership for Junior Schools (ESL4JS) course, a

CPD course that supports junior school leaders to strengthen school-based teacher professional development. To overcome the barriers identified, VVOB adopted a blended learning model for ESL4JS, combining face-to-face engagement with digital, self-paced learning. This model preserves the reflective and collaborative strengths of in-person sessions while giving school leaders the flexibility to learn anytime and anywhere, ensuring more equitable access to high-quality professional development.

Guided by insights from the BlendON Guide (www.blend-on.org), VVOB prioritises accessibility, contextual relevance and sustainability. Embedding digital learning within existing institutions strengthens local capacity and ensures that knowledge and systems continue to thrive beyond external support.


[Read More Here](#)

ICT as a VVOB Value-Add

For VVOB, intentionally integrating ICT in CPD courses is aimed at enhancing learning experiences and expanding access. Interactive digital platforms, multimedia materials and mobile-friendly designs make learning more engaging and practical for educators and school leaders.

Participants can interact through online forums and complete self-paced modules without leaving their schools or homes. This accessibility is particularly valuable for educators in remote or underserved areas.

Importantly, ICT integration also strengthens data-driven decision-making. Real-time analytics on learner participation and progress help facilitators identify learning needs, provide timely support and continuously refine course content for greater impact.

Lessons and Impact: The ESL4JS Experience

The ESL4JS course exemplifies VVOB's blended learning approach in action. Implemented in partnership with the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) and the Ministry of Education (MoE), it supports junior secondary school leaders to navigate the Competency-Based Education and

manage day-to-day school realities. Participants report stronger confidence in leadership and management, better grasp of learner-centred pedagogy and improved collaboration within their school communities. The mix of workshops and digital follow-up keeps learning active and accessible across different contexts.

This progress is tied to how VVOB works with national institutions. Content is co-developed, facilitation skills are strengthened within KEMI and the approach aligns with Kenya's education system. This has shifted blended CPD from a project activity to a system-based model that schools and government can carry forward. It lays the groundwork for professional development that can adjust to future reforms and shifts in digital practice.

Opportunities for Scaling and Innovation

As Kenya continues to expand its digital infrastructure and ICT capacity, the potential for scaling blended learning within the education system is significant.

Building on the success of the ESL4JS course, KEMI is now opening the course to all school leaders from junior schools across the country, extending its reach and strengthening leadership capacity nationwide. At the same time, VVOB is collaborating with the Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE) to pilot a blended learning approach for Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teachers, demonstrating how the model can be adapted for other professional groups in education.

Future directions include integrating blended CPD into national frameworks and exploring innovations such as microlearning, peer-learning communities and AI-supported coaching.

To prepare learners for a rapidly changing world, educators need flexible, relevant and continuous learning opportunities. VVOB's blended approach shows that when technology is thoughtfully integrated, it strengthens systems, connects communities and inspires lifelong learning. Through innovation and partnership, VVOB continues to equip educators to lead the future of education.

ICT and the Future of Teacher Continuous Professional Development

By The Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) ICT Team



KEMI ICT team guiding school leaders on how to navigate the KEMI eLearning App. | Photo by VVOB

The integration of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into Continuous Professional Development (CPD) has transformed how Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI) designs, delivers and monitors its training programmes. This shift is most visible in the Effective School Leadership for Junior Schools (ESL4JS) course, an applied leadership course that equips junior school heads with the competencies to guide teachers, support curriculum implementation and strengthen school-based professional development. In ESL4JS, digital tools have enabled a more flexible, interactive and inclusive learning experience. Through sustained investment in systems and digital capacity, ICT has become central to strengthening school leadership in Kenya.

The Backbone of Flexible Learning

KEMI's Learning Management System (LMS) has served as the course's backbone. It hosts modules, videos, readings, assessments and reflective tasks that participants access at their convenience. This flexibility allows busy school leaders to learn at their own pace, revisit materials as needed and balance their coursework with school responsibilities. LMS discussion forums have evolved into active learning communities where participants exchange ideas and share practical experiences in real time.

The KEMI App

The KEMI App, which is the platform on which the course is delivered, provides an additional layer of connectivity by enabling seamless communication

between trainers and participants. School leaders receive timely announcements, digital forms, reminders and feedback through the app. The ability to upload assignments, photos and evidence of school-based activities directly from mobile devices has simplified monitoring processes. Digital attendance and geo-tagged uploads have also improved data accuracy and strengthened programme oversight.

Building on this ecosystem, trainers now conduct digital onboarding to help participants navigate platforms confidently. Learning materials have been optimised for low-bandwidth environments, ensuring inclusiveness for those in remote areas. Live virtual sessions, supported by recorded content, enable participants with connectivity issues to catch up easily. Dedicated WhatsApp channels further enhance communication and ensure real-time interaction even when internet access is limited.

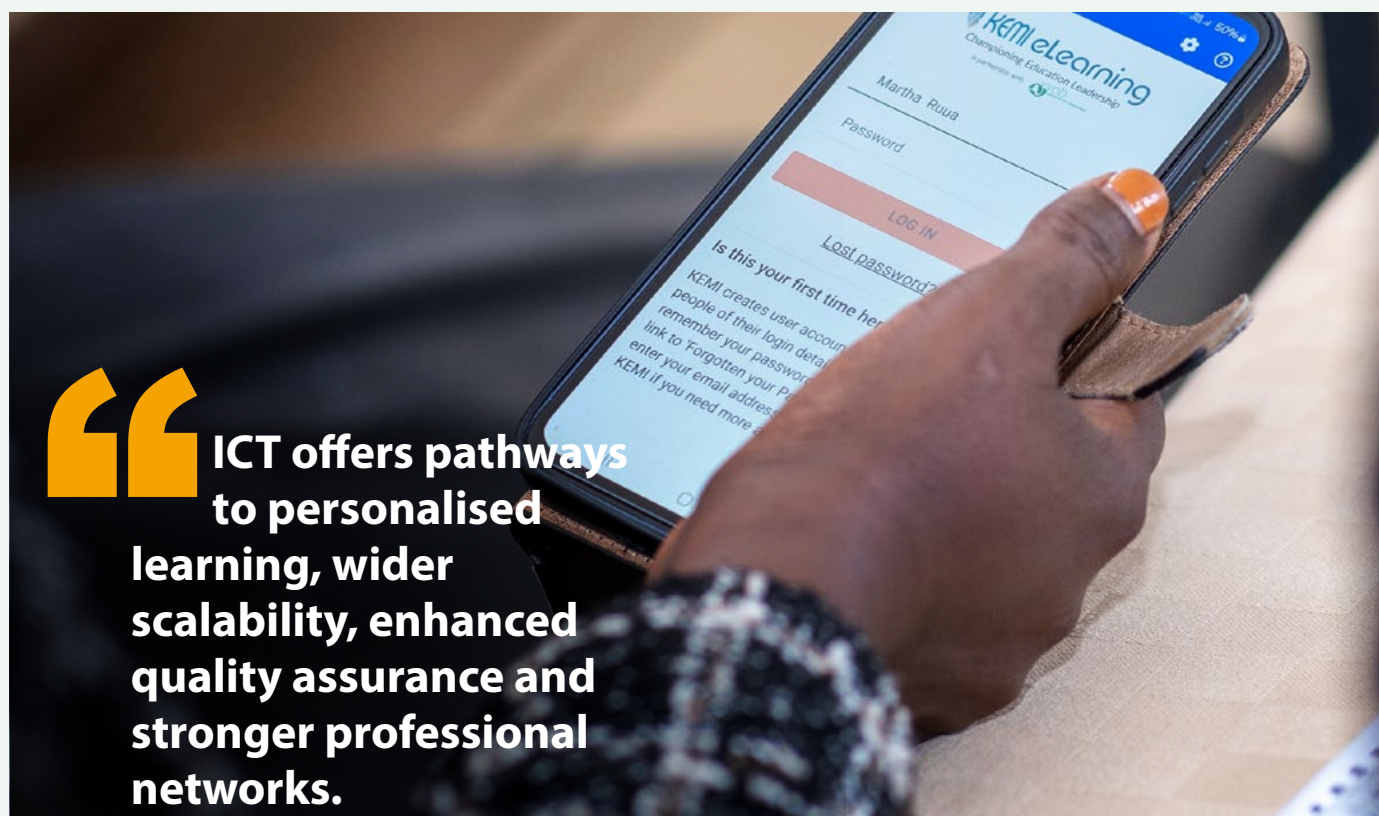
Supporting Trainers Through Digital Tools

ICT has also streamlined trainers' experiences. Automated analytics on the LMS allow facilitators to track progress and identify participants who

may need additional support. Digital submissions have reduced administrative workloads, allowing trainers to focus more on personalised coaching. Many trainers note that ICT has improved consistency in follow-up and strengthened relationships with participants.

Several key lessons have emerged from this journey: digital literacy must be built continuously; technology works best when paired with strong facilitation; and responsive support systems such as help desks, user guides and timely troubleshooting are essential for maintaining engagement. Above all, digital tools must be realistic to ensure they enhance rather than complicate the work of school leaders.

Looking ahead, ICT holds significant potential to further transform CPD delivery in Kenya. It offers pathways to personalised learning, wider scalability, enhanced quality assurance and stronger professional networks. As KEMI prepares for the national expansion of ESL4JS, the digital foundations established over the last three cohorts of the course will be critical in delivering a high-quality, accessible learning experience to school leaders across the country.



A school leader navigating the KEMI eLearning App. | Photo by VVOB

What Blended Learning Taught Me: A Trainer's Experience

By **Mr. Symon Ngatia**, Trainer, Effective School Leadership for Junior Schools (ESL4JS)



Mr. Symon Ngatia facilitating an in-person learning session with school leaders. | Photo by VVOB

Facilitating the Effective School Leadership for Junior Schools (ESL4JS) course has been one of the most fulfilling parts of my career. It has given me a front-row seat to the power of blended learning and of the commitment school leaders bring to their roles. As a trainer, I have seen participants grow in confidence and skill and I have had to grow too. I have adapted to new tools, new facilitation approaches and the shifting expectations around leadership development.

Blended engagement demands intentional planning, flexibility and creative delivery. I have found that opening sessions with short reflective prompts help leaders connect each idea to their daily work. Virtual breakout rooms give quieter participants room to contribute, which leads to more grounded discussion. Using short videos, quizzes and scenario-based tasks keeps the pace steady and helps participants stay focused throughout the session.

Leadership Growth in Action

The growth demonstrated by school leaders has been the most inspiring part of this experience. Many share how they have strengthened teacher support systems, reworked school routines or improved communication with parents after applying lessons from the course. I remember a deputy headteacher who launched a school-wide literacy campaign that mobilised teachers, parents and community volunteers after our module on school improvement. This initiative improved reading outcomes and strengthened the sense of shared purpose in her school. These stories are powerful reminders that leadership development produces immediate, tangible benefits for learners.

Sustaining Learning Beyond the Classroom

One of the biggest strengths of the blended model is the ongoing engagement it enables. Unlike traditional workshops that end abruptly, ESL4JS allows trainers to stay connected with participants throughout the programme. Regular digital check-ins, LMS discussions and phone-based support have built strong relationships rooted in trust. Participants frequently share photos, videos and reflections from their schools, giving me invaluable insights into their realities and allowing me to offer more targeted guidance.

This experience has reshaped how I view both facilitation and leadership. Effective facilitation is not only content delivery but also supporting leaders as they reflect, experiment, adapt and grow.

Navigating Challenges in Digital Learning

The journey has not been without challenges. Connectivity issues can interrupt virtual sessions;

some participants begin with limited digital skills and competing administrative workloads sometimes hinder consistent participation. To address these challenges, we have introduced user-friendly guides, recorded sessions for flexible access, used WhatsApp for timely reminders and paired participants for peer support on digital tasks. These strategies have significantly improved participation and reduced frustration, ensuring all leaders benefit regardless of their digital starting point.

As we prepare for national scale-up, I am confident that the blended model will continue to strengthen school leadership across Kenya. The dedication I have witnessed assures me that, with the right support, our leaders will continue to drive change in their schools. Being part of this journey has reminded me that leadership development ultimately changes learners' lives and that is a responsibility I carry with deep pride.



Mr. Symon Ngatia offering one-on-one support to school leaders during an in-person session. | Photo by VVOB

What School Leaders Are Saying About Blended Learning

Self-paced learning is an advantage because it gives me the flexibility to move through the course at the right time for me.

Phyllis Vijenje

Head of Institution, Khadija Comprehensive School, Mombasa County.

Blended learning has really brought masomo mikononi (studies right into our hands). You can learn at your own pace wherever you are, at whatever time, in whatever small space you have.

William Lusimbo

Head of Institution, Canon Apollo School, Nairobi County.



We did not embrace technology from the beginning, but with the training and support provided, we are now confident and ready to use it to support our learners.

Josephine Simiyu

Head of Institution, St. Columbans School for The Deaf, Trans Nzoia County.

The online component is very convenient. It does not interfere with my school schedule. I can fulfil my mandate as a Head of Institution and still learn effectively. I can follow the lessons from my own comfort.

Eric Akatu

Head of Institution, Kimondi Primary and Junior School, Nandi County.

Voices from the Field



A Digital Shift That Revived Leadership, Learning and the Spirit of a School Community



Junior School learners participating in an English lesson enhanced by multimedia and online tools at Tagabi Junior School. | Photo by VVOB

My name is Sally Tanui, the headteacher of Tagabi Junior School in Kericho County. I have led the school for eight years and during this time, witnessed a remarkable transformation, one that began with a few dusty computers and an untapped dream.

When I first took up leadership, computers and projectors sat idle in a corner while teaching continued the traditional way. Lessons mainly relied on chalkboards with little interaction between teachers and learners.

I knew ICT could change how our learners engaged with knowledge, but I felt it was something only better resourced schools could afford.



How One Course Sparked a Digital Revolution

Everything changed after I joined the Effective School Leadership for Junior Schools (ESL4JS) course. The training opened my eyes to how ICT could be meaningfully integrated into lessons and equipped me with both the strategies and confidence to lead change. On returning to school, I worked closely with my teachers to introduce technology into our daily teaching. We organised practical sessions with an ICT expert, helping teachers learn how to connect equipment, project lessons and make use of digital tools. Together with the Board of Management, we developed an ICT strategy and secured a stable internet connection to support the new vision.

Today, learners at Tagabi Junior School experience interactive lessons where subjects like English come alive through multimedia and online resources. What once felt abstract is now tangible and exciting. Learners are more engaged, stay in school longer and actively participate in co-curricular



Science laboratory and desks provided by a Tagabi Junior School sponsor after witnessing the transformation in the school. | Photo by VVOB

clubs such as ICT, debate and music. The interest has spread beyond the classrooms. Parents from neighbouring areas have noticed the difference and transferred their children to our school. Our enrolment has grown so rapidly that we now face a shortage of desks, a challenge that, in many ways, symbolises our success.

Technology That Reignited Motivation

The transformation has renewed passion for teaching among my staff. Before the ESL4JS course, only two government deployed teachers were handling Junior School. Now, teachers from the primary section have shown great interest in joining the two. Teachers who once hesitated to use technology now confidently access online resources, attend virtual workshops and share lesson plans digitally. We introduced team teaching, which has strengthened collaboration and mutual support. With improved morale and digital competence, teacher absenteeism has significantly reduced. We have also established personalised learning programmes for learners who need more support to ensure that every child progresses at their own pace.

Recognising that wellbeing is essential to learning, we enhanced our guidance and counselling services for both teachers and learners. This has deepened trust and strengthened relationships within the school community, creating a nurturing and inclusive learning environment.

The Ripple Effect of Change

Our progress has extended beyond classrooms and into school management. Our sponsor, Lipton was impressed by the changes and supported us with desks and labour for constructing a new science laboratory. The local community often expresses pride in our achievements. Administrative processes have also become smoother and more transparent such as maintaining records and managing government funds efficiently through digital systems.

Looking back, I see ESL4JS as a true turning point in my leadership journey. The ICT integration module gave me a vision of what was possible, while the assessment and resource management modules improved accountability, teamwork and innovation. These lessons have reshaped how I lead, how teachers teach and how our community engages with the school. Today, I lead with renewed confidence and purpose. We have built a modern science lab and cultivated a shared spirit of transparency. I hope every school leader across Kenya will one day experience the same transformation that the ESL4JS course provides.

Creating a School That Works for Everyone



Daniel Mule, School Leader of Ngosini Comprehensive School. | Photo by VVOB

My name is Daniel Mule and I serve as the School Leader of Ngosini Comprehensive School in Makueni County. I have been a teacher for six years and a school leader for another six. When I first joined the Effective School Leadership for Junior School (ESL4JS) course, our school was struggling in many aspects. Teachers were demotivated, learners showed little interest in learning and there was low community engagement. At the time, only one classroom had electricity, which limited our ability to use technology in teaching. Teachers often left the school for meals, eating separately and missing opportunities for interaction. The learners, on the other hand, had never taken part in co-curricular activities such as music festivals. Discussions on gender-based violence or menstrual hygiene were almost unheard of. It was evident that both teachers and learners needed renewed energy, connection and purpose.

The ESL4JS course completely changed how I

viewed leadership. It made me realise that lasting change begins with self-leadership. Leading by example through compassion, collaboration and consistency. With this mindset, I began prioritising teacher welfare, recognising that motivated teachers are the heart of a successful school. Together with my team, I introduced a welfare initiative where teachers contribute funds to support one another during key life events such as weddings, childbirth and bereavements. The same spirit of care now extends to our learners as well. When a learner loses a parent or guardian, the class teacher and fellow learners, together with staff, visit the family and contribute items such as firewood to help during the mourning period.

To strengthen unity further, we established a merry-go-round fund to help teachers address financial needs without turning to shylocks. Each morning now begins with a short prayer that unites us in gratitude and reflection before the school day

starts. We have also started sharing lunch within the school compound, which has encouraged closer relationships and teamwork. To uplift morale, we introduced the Outstanding Teacher Awards in collaboration with our Curriculum Support Officer and the Board of Management. These awards celebrate excellence in teaching, sports and leadership, nurturing a culture of appreciation and respect.

Embracing Technology

One of our greatest milestones has been connecting every classroom to electricity and installing Wi-Fi, making it a digitally enabled learning environment with more than the initial one powered room. Teachers now integrate ICT into their lessons, upload assessments online, print learning materials and access the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) radio lessons and other digital content with ease. Inspired by this progress, several teachers have independently enrolled in professional development courses like UNESCO's Digital Educator and Social Emotional Learning modules. They have earned certificates and brought back new ideas that have enriched classroom learning.

Learner welfare has also taken centre stage. Guided by the principles I learnt from ESL4JS, we introduced structured guidance and counselling sessions for both boys and girls. In partnership with Ujamaa Africa, three teachers received specialised training on handling cases of gender-based violence and promoting safety and positive behaviour.

Learners now confidently use slogans such as *"The Hero is in Me"* and *"No to Gender-Based Violence"* during assemblies and community events, powerful signs of their growing confidence and awareness. On World Menstrual Hygiene Day, we held a joint session for boys and girls, providing accurate information on hygiene and menstrual health. In addition, learners are now celebrated for different strengths such as reading, handwriting, sports, communication and discipline which makes every learner feel recognised. Teachers now report earlier, inspired by my example of arriving ahead of the workday. Parents have also noticed this change and now attend meetings in greater numbers.

I firmly believe that if all school leaders in Kenya experienced and applied the principles of the ESL4JS course, our schools would not only excel academically but also become nurturing spaces that promote compassion, character and transform



Teachers receive tokens of appreciation for their impact at Ngosini Comprehensive School. | Photo by VVOB

Building on the ESL4JS Pilot



Scaling Effective Leadership in Junior Schools

By **Dr. Maurice Odondo**, CEO, Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI)



Dr. Maurice Odondo | Photo by VVOB

The completion of Cohort Three of the Effective School Leadership for Junior School (ESL4JS) course marks a milestone in KEMI's work to strengthen education leadership across Kenya. What started as an ambitious pilot under the Implementing National Curriculum Reforms through App-based Learning for School Leaders in Secondary Education (INCREASE) programme has become a nationally validated model of continuous professional development (CPD), with a planned national scale-up in 2026.

ESL4JS is a blended CPD course jointly developed by the Kenya Education Management Institute and VVOB - *education for development*. Developed under INCREASE to support the Competency-Based Education rollout, the course equips Junior School heads and deputies with practical leadership, coaching and school-based management skills. The course blends digital learning with face-to-face engagement, ensuring that school leaders can learn flexibly while applying new skills directly within their school environments.

A Culture of Innovation and Continuous Learning

Reflecting on the programme's trajectory, ESL4JS has been defined by innovation, collaboration and continuous learning. Since its inception, KEMI has been intentional about designing a leadership course that responds directly to the realities facing Junior School leaders.

The first cohort illuminated the diverse needs of schools and emphasised the importance of contextualised cases and school-based application. Subsequent cohorts enabled us to refine content, streamline facilitation and strengthen the coaching component.

Through this iterative approach, we learnt that effective CPD must remain dynamic, flexible and grounded in the daily experiences of educators if it is to create meaningful and lasting change.

“Technology has served as an equaliser, ensuring that physical distance does not limit access to professional development.”

ICT as a Gateway to Access, Equity and Improved Learning

A defining strength of the course has been the strategic use of ICT to expand access and promote equity. The blended learning approach, combining face-to-face workshops with online modules, digital check-ins and assignments, has allowed school leaders to learn without leaving their instructional duties unattended.

The integration of the Learning Management System (LMS), the KEMI App and other digital tools has enhanced engagement, enabled timely communication and supported real-time monitoring of learner progress.

For leaders in remote settings, technology has served as an equaliser, ensuring that physical distance does not limit access to professional development. This digital-first approach has deepened the course's reach while aligning KEMI's CPD framework with both global trends and national ICT strategies.

Collaboration: The Pillar of Sustainable Transformation

The collaborative spirit that has shaped ESL4JS is central to its success. The partnership between KEMI, VVOB and other INCREASE partners brought together diverse strengths, from pedagogical design and coaching support to digital learning expertise. Joint planning sessions, monitoring visits and co-facilitated workshops ensured that the course remained practical, learner-centred, and well aligned with the Competency-Based Education.

These partnerships affirm KEMI's conviction that sustainable education transformation is only possible through strategic collaboration.

Positioning for National Scale-Up in 2026

As we look forward to the 2026 nationwide scale-up, several elements speak to KEMI's readiness:

- a proven, adaptable, and scalable blended learning model
- a growing pool of trained facilitators across counties
- a strong digital ecosystem that supports enrolment, learning, and monitoring
- and robust internal systems ensuring quality assurance and standardisation

Evidence from the first three cohorts is clear: school leaders are applying what they have learnt, using data to guide decisions, strengthening teacher support structures, enhancing instructional leadership and implementing the Competency-Based Education (CBE) with confidence and clarity.

Institutionalising ESL4JS within KEMI's broader CPD strategy is a critical step toward sustainability. The course aligns with national priorities for leadership development and strengthens KEMI's mandate to professionalise education leadership. Embedding ESL4JS into mainstream CPD pathways ensures that school leaders will have continued access to high-quality leadership development long beyond the pilot period.

As we celebrate the closure of Cohort Three, I extend my sincere appreciation to all school leaders, trainers and partners who have contributed to this transformative journey. The future of education requires bold, competent and visionary leadership. Through the ESL4JS course, KEMI remains steadfast in its commitment to supporting school leaders to navigate this future with confidence, purpose and innovation.

Together, we are shaping a leadership pathway that embraces technology, champions instructional excellence and places the learner at the centre of every decision.

Effective Leadership for the Next Phase of Curriculum Reform

By **Risper Mumbie**, Education Advisor, VVOB in Kenya

Since 2022, VVOB and the Ministry of Education (MoE), working through the Kenya Education Management Institute (KEMI), have collaborated under the INCREASE Programme to strengthen leadership in Kenya's junior schools. Through three successful pilot cohorts, the Effective School Leadership for Junior Schools (ESL4JS) course has equipped more than 900 leaders across 21 counties with instructional leadership skills and the capacity to deliver school-based continuous professional development (CPD) that supports competency-based education (CBE).

As the ESL4JS pilot concludes and KEMI prepares for national scale-up, we mark a major milestone: the institutionalisation of ESL4JS within KEMI's regular professional development portfolio. What began as a pilot will now become a national programme accessible to all junior school leaders.

Introducing ESL4SS: The Next Step in Leadership Development

This success creates an opportunity to address emerging needs ahead of the next phase of CBE rollout. We are proud to introduce the Effective School Leadership for Senior Schools (ESL4SS) pilot, an innovative blended-learning CPD course designed to support senior school leaders as Kenya implements CBE at Grades 10-12 from January 2026. This school segment caters to learners typically aged 15 to 18, covering what was previously Forms Three and Four under the 8-4-4 system, now expanded to include an additional year in line with the reformed curriculum pathways.

Most current senior school leaders were trained under the 8-4-4 system, which emphasised content delivery and teacher-led instruction. To understand

their needs in implementing CBE, VVOB and KEMI conducted a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) in Nakuru, Machakos, Migori and Kwale. Through curriculum mapping and consultations, the TNA revealed both strengths and critical gaps in areas such as curriculum pathway management, resource mobilisation, ICT governance, learner and staff welfare and institutional leadership. Leaders were clear that implementing CBE in senior schools requires advanced, context-specific leadership competencies beyond what ESL4JS covers.

A Blended, Collaborative and Contextualised Course

ESL4SS builds on the proven blended model of ESL4JS while integrating key lessons to ensure relevance, flexibility and strong engagement. The course begins with an in-person onboarding session to establish rapport and foundational understanding. This is followed by periodic online synchronous check-ins that promote peer learning and continuity and concludes with a final online reflection session.

Two participants per school, the headteacher and Director of Studies, will be enrolled to strengthen collaborative learning and support whole-school CPD for CBE. The course also includes an e-portfolio with peer assessment, guided by an assessment framework that encourages reflective practice and constructive feedback. Delivery will be through KEMI's eLearning app, which supports offline access for low-connectivity areas.

Content development and quality assurance remain rooted in a multi-stakeholder approach. Partners from the [Ministry of Education](#) (MoE), [Kenya Education Management Institute](#) (KEMI),

Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), Teachers Service Commission (TSC), county leadership, and other education actors continue to shape the course, ensuring it aligns with national priorities for senior school reforms.

Pilot Implementation and Target Counties

The ESL4SS pilot will run in Kitui, Migori, Kwale and Narok. County Directors of Education will nominate school leaders, who will then complete a simple application process to confirm interest and commitment. Each county will target 70 participants from 35 schools, specifically school heads and Directors of Studies, who will champion instructional leadership within their institutions.

A Strategic Investment in Kenya's Education Future

The ESL4SS pilot is a critical step in preparing senior schools for the full implementation of CBE. By equipping leaders with advanced instructional leadership competencies, the course aims to strengthen school-based CPD, build vibrant professional learning communities and ultimately enhance teaching and learning outcomes.

As we begin this new chapter, we look forward to co-creating knowledge, learning from implementation and innovating alongside our partners and school leaders. ESL4SS is a strategic investment in the future of education, ensuring that every learner thrives under CBE and is prepared to succeed in an increasingly competitive world.



“When leaders learn, learning transforms. Great schools don’t happen by chance; they happen by leadership.”

A school leader navigating the KEMI eLearning App. | Photo by VVOB

From the Gender- Transformative Pedagogy Hub



Advancing Gender-Responsive STEM Teaching in Kenya's ASAL Regions

Insights from an interview with **Patrick Kogolla**, Director, STEM Training, CEMASTEAM



School leaders using educational applications on laptops. | Photo by CEMASTEAM

The Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTEAM), in partnership with VVOB - *education for development*, is pioneering a blended continuous professional development (CPD) course designed to strengthen how teachers deliver inclusive and engaging Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education in Kenya's arid and semi-arid (ASAL) regions.

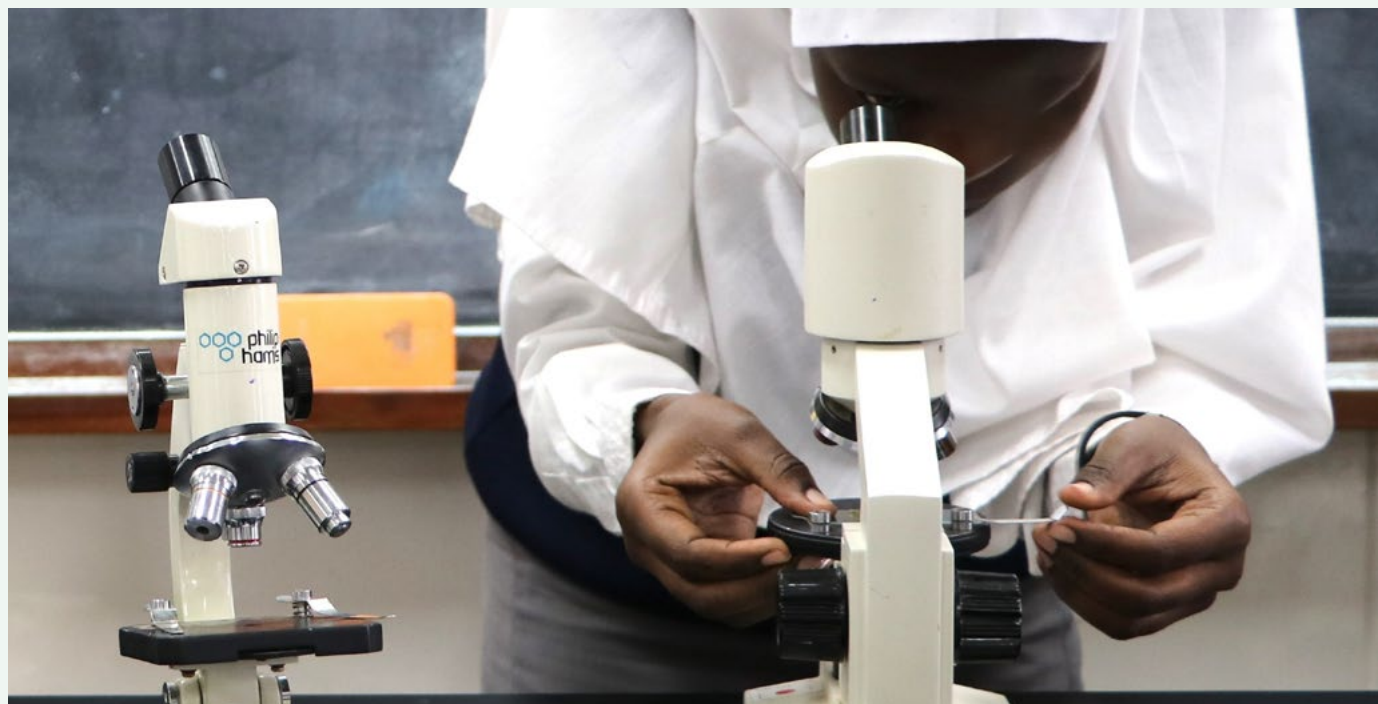
Together, the two organisations have co-developed the Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) in STEM CPD course to build the pedagogical skills of 200 Junior School STEM teacher champions across ASAL counties. These teachers, most of whom teach Integrated Science and related STEM subjects, will gain practical skills to design and facilitate lessons that are both gender-responsive and actively inclusive.

The course focuses on three pillars:

- creating or adapting digital teaching resources that embed gender-responsive pedagogy
- using a blended delivery model that combines online and face-to-face training
- building teachers' capacity to apply inclusive practices consistently in their classrooms

Why Gender-Responsive Pedagogy Matters

Despite near gender parity in primary schooling, gender gaps widen significantly in secondary and tertiary STEM pathways. As of 2024, women made up only 35% of STEM graduates and consequently, in STEM careers ([UNESCO, 2024](#)). Barriers are even greater in ASALs, where socio-cultural challenges



Student using a microscope in a science laboratory | Photo by CEMASTEIA

reduce girls' participation in STEM compared with urban areas.

Mr. Patrick Kogolla, Director STEM Training at CEMASTEIA explained that integrating GRP into STEM CPD is essential for addressing these disparities. Effective training will help teachers recognise biases, challenge stereotypes and adopt inclusive strategies in lesson planning, classroom management and assessment.

Evidence from programmes such as [Education Development Trust's Wasichana Wetu Wafaulu](#) shows that GRP training can meaningfully improve girls' STEM achievement, enrolment and retention.

Key Features of the Blended Course

The course is structured into three phases, combining orientation, two rounds of skills development and practice and feedback and reflection sessions. Its hybrid design relies on the CEMASTEIA-VVOB TPD app, accessible via both mobile and web.

ICT plays a pivotal role by:

- enabling flexible access through asynchronous content
- supporting personalised learning via multimedia resources and analytics

- enhancing collaboration through online discussion platforms, and
- strengthening continuous assessment through quizzes, e-portfolios, and peer review

Blended learning also reduces environmental impact by minimising travel and printing, aligning with VVOB's green priorities.

Looking Toward Scale-Up and Long-Term Impact

As the pilot launches in 2026, Kogolla emphasised the importance of systematically capturing lessons to inform wider rollout. The blended model is inherently scalable, offering potential for nationwide reach and continued mentorship through teacher champion networks.

He also pointed to the initiative's transformative potential: increasing girls' participation in STEM, elevating teaching quality and positioning Kenya as a regional leader in gender-responsive STEM education.

With VVOB's [Regional Teachers' Initiative for Africa](#) and CEMASTEIA's strategic direction, the vision of an education system where STEM is accessible to all learners, free from bias and a driver of equitable growth, is fully achievable.

Teaching Equity: Why Teacher Support Matters Most

By **Mary Oyuke**, Strategic Advisor, Communication and Advocacy, VVOB in Kenya

Teachers shape more than lessons. They influence how children see themselves and others. [Research](#) shows that by age six, most children already believe some jobs or roles are “for boys” and others “for girls”. Even at as young as three, children start to pick up on the quiet and sometimes loud social cues, norms and practices that shape their overall worldviews. This is why teachers need time and resources to reflect and train on how to challenge harmful bias, norms and stereotypes and build classrooms where every learner thrives.

Why Gender-Responsive Pedagogy?

Persistent gender inequalities in classrooms affect participation, outcomes, and children’s overall learning experience. [Globally, three-quarters of children of primary school age who may never set foot in school are girls.](#) We cannot talk about equipping children with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to enable them to pursue education and live their limitless potential, without also

addressing the challenges and barriers that hinder them from attaining this. Education must go hand in hand with tackling the stereotypes and social norms that limit children’s choices and futures.

Gender-Responsive Pedagogy (GRP) is teaching that gives every learner a fair chance to succeed. [It shapes what is taught, how it is delivered and how learners retain knowledge.](#) GRP helps teachers to recognise and address the gender norms that often play out in classrooms; norms that silence girls, penalise boys for showing vulnerability, or restrict children into rigid roles. It supports teachers to plan lessons, use language, and manage classrooms in an inclusive way.

[When implemented effectively, GRP improves student attendance, engagement, and learning outcomes, particularly for girls.](#) Teachers who model gender equity in class do not just change classroom dynamics; they also show learners that stereotypes can be challenged and new possibilities imagined.



A teacher facilitating a classroom session. | Photo by VVOB

Over time, this helps shift community attitudes toward equity and fairness. That's why teachers must be at the centre of curriculum design, system reforms and new initiatives.

The Case for Teacher Support in Inclusive Education

Teaching is central to Africa's vision for education, reflected in the [AU Agenda 2063 \(The Africa We Want\)](#), [Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025](#) and the [Sustainable Development Goals](#) (SDG 4 on Quality Education and SDG 5 on Gender Equality). Across Sub-Saharan Africa, political will is strong and billions are invested in education reforms every year. Yet without matching investment in teachers themselves, progress stalls. The continent continues to face challenges in insufficient teacher training, low morale and lack of recognition, which impedes the realisation of high-quality, inclusive and equitable education.

Insufficient teacher training in GRP, sees educators unintentionally reinforcing gender stereotypes in classrooms, such as calling on boys more in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) lessons or assigning domestic chores to girls. [Research](#) shows, however, that teachers who are trained in GRP and have a strong understanding of gender-sensitive teaching implement effective gender-inclusive practices despite educational systems and curricula that contain significant gender biases.

This is why the [Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa](#) (RTIA) works with [VVOB – education for development](#), [ENABEL](#), [APEFE](#), [UNESCO](#), [African Union Commission](#), [Forum for African Women Educationalists \(FAWE\)](#), among others, to improve teacher training on gender-responsive pedagogy in Early Childhood, Primary, and Lower Secondary Education in Kenya, Ghana and South Africa. The initiative seeks to strengthen education systems and build a pool of competent and motivated teachers who can make a lasting impact on children's futures globally.

Why Continuous Professional Training?

One of the biggest gaps in promoting GRP is the reliance on one-off trainings. A workshop may raise awareness, but it rarely reshapes the deep-seated attitudes, practices and resilience teachers need to sustain inclusive learning. What teachers require is continuous professional development (CPD) embedded in daily practice, supported by self-reflection and reinforced over time, alongside guidance from the broader school ecosystem.

In Sub-Saharan Africa, different models of GRP training have been tested:

1. Pre-service integration, like Ghana's Transforming Teacher Education and Learning (T-TEL programme), [embeds GRP in initial teacher training colleges, though results take time](#).
2. In-service cascade workshops (where trained teachers use their own training to train other teachers), used by Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE) and Kenya's Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTE) reach many teachers cheaply, but often, leads to dilution of content as information is passed down.
3. Coaching and mentoring, tried in Ghana, Uganda and Tanzania, provide tailored support, helping teachers change classroom practices such as grouping methods and language use.

[Research](#) shows that blended approaches work best, combining models such as pre-service training for future teachers, cascade workshops for quick reach, while incorporating coaching for lasting impact.

However, CPD alone is insufficient. Teachers also need emotional and peer support through coaching, mentorship and communities of practice, which help them continually challenge stereotypes. This approach aligns with the Bioecological Systems Theory, which highlights that teachers operate within larger ecosystems of institutions, traditions, and relationships that shape their beliefs and practices. A phased, school-based model of GRP training, reinforced by peer

networks and mentoring, offers the most sustainable route to systemic change, moving beyond awareness to action. When teachers feel valued, supported and equipped, students benefit.

What Effective Implementation of Gender-Responsive Pedagogy Requires

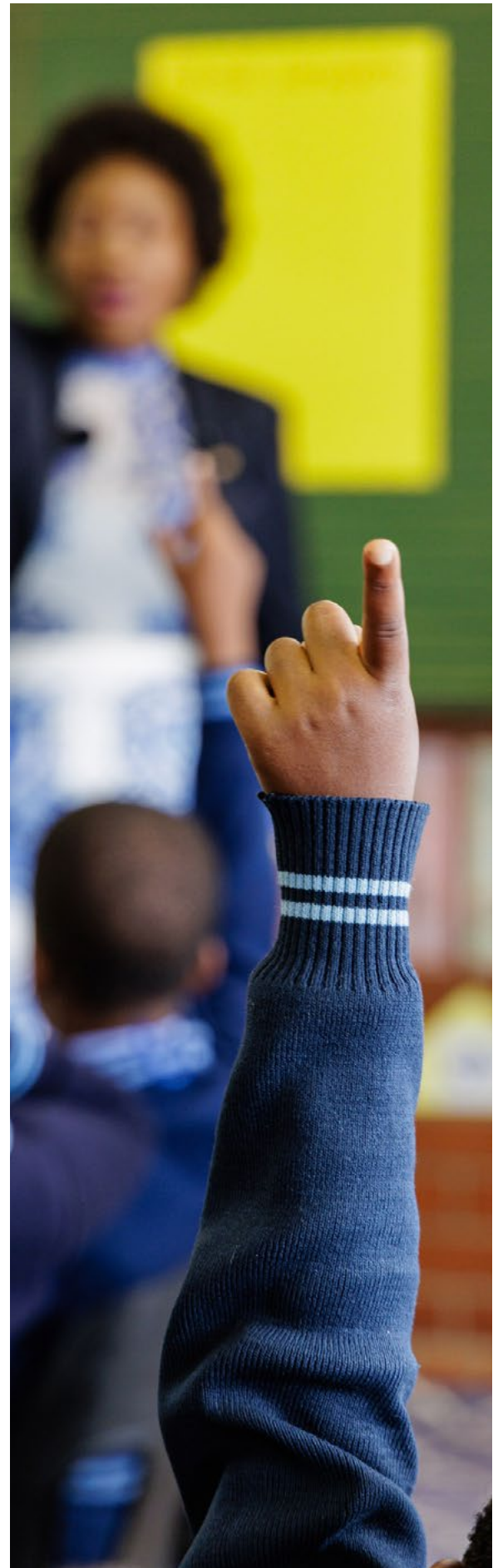
Professional development must also include a focus on the skills or competencies teachers need to implement inclusive teaching effectively. Various studies highlight seven core competencies as essential for successful GRP practice:

1. Teacher Self-Reflection and Knowledge (recognising and examining personal attitudes and bias)
2. Gender Awareness (understanding gender stereotypes, norms, bias and the inequalities and discriminations that result from these)
3. Planning and Organisation (designing inclusive lessons)
4. Facilitation and Classroom Management (ensuring equitable participation and that every voice is heard)
5. Curriculum and Materials Use (adapting materials to be gender-fair)
6. Socio-Emotional Skills (supporting learners through challenges such as peer pressure)
7. Community Advocacy (engaging families, leaders and community to extend gender equity beyond the classroom)

These essential competencies are what should guide the design of teacher professional development programmes across the region.

Which Way Then, for Effective Gender-Responsive Pedagogy?

For gender-responsive pedagogy to succeed, it must be embedded in national policies, teacher education and supportive professional development systems. It is therefore imperative for all education stakeholders to have continuous engagements to share insights, challenges and opportunities to enhance teaching in Africa, as teachers hold the key to creating classrooms where every child, regardless of gender, can learn, lead, and dream without limits.



Learner participating in class. | Photo by WVOB

From PACTED to Practice: Teaching for Equity

By Mary Oyuke, Strategic Advisor, Communication and Advocacy, VVOB in Kenya



Panellists from the joint VVOB-FAWE breakout session at PACTED 2025.

Nothing for teachers without teachers. This truth lies at the heart of every effort to strengthen education systems across Africa. Teachers are the driving force of learning transformation, and when their professional growth, recognition and wellbeing are prioritised, classrooms become spaces of equity and inclusion.

Studies affirm that teachers' voices are essential in shaping teacher professional development programmes to be relevant and grounded in the realities of their classrooms. They can't do it alone. Teachers require ongoing coaching, mentoring, and peer networks to help them shape teaching approaches and classroom practices. This is why VVOB – *education for development* in partnership with **Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE)** convened a breakout session, "Empowering Educators for Inclusive & Transformative Learning: Teacher Professional Development for Gender-Responsive Pedagogy" on 2 October during the **Pan African Conference on Teacher Education**

(PACTED 2025). The session, running under the EU Global Gateway's **Regional Teachers Initiative for Africa (RTIA)** was aimed at sharing insights from a **study** highlighting effective practices, challenges and opportunities in making teacher education more gender-responsive.

Putting Pedagogies into Practice

During the session, VVOB, FAWE and partners from **UNESCO International Institute for Capacity Building in Africa (UNESCO-IICBA)**, **African Union International Centre for the Education of Girls and Women in Africa (AU/CIEFFA)**, and **South Africa's Department of Basic Education** explored strategies to bring gender-responsive practices into classrooms and the solutions needed to scale Teacher Professional Development for Gender-Responsive Pedagogy in Africa. "Gender-responsive teaching goes beyond giving boys and girls equal turns," noted Everlyne Nyongesa, Gender Technical Lead at VVOB in Kenya, during the session. "It's

about transforming classroom practices to reflect inclusivity, equity and a deeper understanding of the barriers learners face.”

For VVOB, [Gender-Responsive Pedagogy](#) (GRP) means teachers and school leaders creating learning environments where harmful gender stereotypes are challenged and addressed and where teaching and leadership practices promote gender equality. GRP guides teachers and school leaders to support equality among all children, inspires teachers to observe all learners and to address individual differences in needs and skills, thus promoting inclusive environments and overall well-being for learners.

Dr. Martha Muhwezi, Executive Director of [FAWE](#) urged that learning environments need to be safe spaces for learners, which could only happen if teachers were equipped with inclusive teaching methods. “We may have good frameworks, but if they don’t align to classroom teaching methodologies, we will not attain Quality Education for All. We must integrate Gender-responsive Pedagogy into teacher training.”

Key Takeaways from the Session

The joint VVOB/FAWE breakout session explored how gender-responsive pedagogy can be scaled through teacher professional development to help shift classroom practices across Sub-Saharan Africa. Key takeaways included:

- Gender-responsive teaching is not an add-on but is essential for inclusive, equitable education. It calls on teachers to reflect on their own values and assumptions, to recognise how these shape what and how they teach. When teachers engage in this kind of reflection, they learn how to recognise and challenge inequitable norms in their classrooms and communities.
- Teacher collaboration and peer support are crucial.
- Professional teacher development should be continuous, with mentoring and coaching, not one-off workshops.
- Gender-responsive pedagogy needs to be integrated into both pre-service and in-service training, tailored to local realities and contexts. This needs to be developed jointly with teachers.
- Strong partnerships, multi-sectoral collaboration and leadership across governments, unions, civil society organisations and communities are vital for scaling gender-responsive pedagogy.
- Scaling gender-responsive pedagogy requires regular review for relevance, adaptability and cost-effectiveness. Ministries of Education will only adopt innovations that are affordable, practical and with clear outcomes.
- Gender-responsive pedagogy must take a holistic approach, linking with inclusion, psychosocial support, teacher well-being and prevention of gender-based violence, among others.

Effective School Leadership as an Enabler to Inclusive Classrooms

Discussions at the conference also stressed that effective school leadership is essential in creating gender-responsive school cultures and equipping teachers with continuous, practice-based professional development.

Speaking during a panel session, “Transforming Teacher Education in Africa: Advancing Innovation, Equity, and Leadership” VVOB in Kenya’s RTIA Regional Coordinator, Louisa Kadzo reminded attendees that school leadership must go beyond examination results to nurturing holistic learners. “To improve teaching and learning, we must invest in leadership that is both instructional and focused on developing a holistic learner. Professional development for school leaders should be long-term, practice-oriented and embedded in daily school life.”

The session was aimed at spotlighting and sharing innovative, context-relevant teaching approaches that raise education quality and improve learning outcomes across the continent.



Participants pose for a group photo after the VVOB-FAWE breakout session

“We may have good frameworks, but if they don’t align to classroom teaching methodologies, we will not attain Quality Education for All. We must integrate Gender-responsive Pedagogy into teacher training.”

Dr. Martha Muhwezi, Executive Director of FAWE

About PACTED 2025 and Africa’s Commitment to Education

The [Pan African Conference on Teacher Education \(PACTED 2025\)](#) was held from 1-3 October, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Bringing together education stakeholders from around the world, the event laid a strong emphasis on teacher professionalisation, recognition and inclusive education.

During the event, the [African Union](#) and partners launched the Decade of Education 2025-2034, which is Africa’s promise to:

- End learning poverty and secure foundational skills for all learners.

- Put teachers at the centre of development.
- Align education with the future of work through digital transformation and innovation.

The event also marked the launch of The Africa Teachers Forum, a digital hub to connect teachers across the continent; and the unveiling of key policy reports and strategies, including the [2nd Continental Report on CESA and SDG4](#), the Common Continental Assessment Framework, [Transforming Knowledge for Africa’s Future](#), [Science, Technology and Innovation Strategy for Africa STISA 2034](#), and [Continental Education Strategy for Africa CESA 2026-2025](#).

PACTED culminated in the awarding of nine exemplary teachers as part of the [World Teachers’ Day](#) commemoration, reaffirming the importance of teacher recognition and motivation.

As Africa advances its education goals, let’s recommit to stand with teachers by investing in their professional development, embedding gender-responsive pedagogy in policy and practice, and ensuring that no teacher is left behind. You can read more on tangible actions on this in our report [here](#).

Commemorating International Days



Reframing Literacy through School Leadership

#InternationalLiteracyDay2025

By Risper Mumbi, Education Advisor, VVOB in Kenya



School leaders scan a QR code to enable them connect digitally during a blended learning course | Photo by VVOB

Digitalisation is no longer at the margins of education but is the arena in which much of learning now happens. Today, almost seven in ten people worldwide is online and four in five people aged 10 or older own a mobile phone ([International Telecommunication Union \(ITU\)](#), 2025). But this progress masks deep inequalities. An estimated 739 million youth and adults still lack basic literacy skills ([UNESCO](#), 2025). Access to technology, skills and opportunities is unevenly distributed and raises urgent questions about who benefits from digital transformation.

The divide between high and low-income countries is sobering. In 2024, 93% of people in high income countries used the internet compared to just 27% in low-income countries ([ITU](#), 2025). Even in schools, where digital skills are increasingly non-negotiable, less than half of primary schools

worldwide had internet access for teaching ([UNESCO Institute for Statistics \(UIS\)](#), 2025). For many learners, “literacy” remains incomplete without the digital dimension. Without inclusive policies, relevant content and skilled educators, digitalisation risks leaving many further behind rather than levelling the playing field.

Beyond Reading and Writing

At VVOB in Kenya, literacy is understood beyond reading and writing, but also as the ability to navigate, evaluate and produce information in digital spaces. This understanding drives our work under the [Implementing National Curriculum Reforms through App-Based Learning for School Leaders in Secondary Education \(INCREASE\)](#) programme.

The programme focuses on school leadership as a lever for systemic change. It recognises that when leaders are equipped with the right tools, they can support teachers to embed digital literacy in their classrooms and in turn prepare learners for the demands of the 21st century.

At the centre of INCREASE is the Effective School Leadership for Junior Schools (ESL4JS) course. This is a continuous professional development (CPD) course delivered through an app designed specifically for Kenyan school leaders.

The app combines interactive modules, self-paced study, peer exchange and course assessments in a single platform. Leaders can log in to review content, join discussions with colleagues and track their progress, all in their own time. By engaging with the course in this way, they strengthen their own ICT literacy.

But the design goes further. The course content is tailored to help leaders:

- Mentor teachers in integrating technology into everyday lessons
- Link digital skills to core curriculum areas
- Create school environments where learners see digital literacy as a natural part of learning

In practice, this means a headteacher can learn new strategies through the app in the evening and the next day support a teacher to use digital tools to make a science lesson more engaging or to help learners build media literacy skills. The course therefore connects professional learning directly to classroom realities.

Integrating Digital Literacy into Education Systems

This model speaks to the wider goals of the Competency-Based Education (CBE) in Kenya, which is designed to prepare learners who are skilled in navigating complex environments. Digital literacy is a core competence within CBE, but its realisation depends on teachers and leaders who are confident in weaving technology into both learning and school culture.

The 2025 [International Literacy Day](#) theme focuses on literacy in the digital era and reminds us that technology can either reduce or reinforce inequalities. For Kenya, where investment in digital learning is growing but uneven, the challenge is to ensure that reforms reach classrooms in practical ways.

VVOB's contribution lies in working with school leaders and teachers to make this shift tangible. Leaders trained through the ESL4JS course become guides for their schools, shaping how teachers use technology and how learners build critical digital skills alongside foundational literacy.

Our Commitment

As literacy itself is redefined, the stakes are high. Kenyan learners need to read and write in both print and digital spaces, to question information and to create knowledge of their own. Programmes like INCREASE are laying the groundwork by ensuring that those at the helm of schools are prepared for this responsibility.

For VVOB in Kenya, we reaffirm our commitment to strengthen the instructional leadership of school heads so they can support their schools to cultivate 21st-century competences and to build partnerships that ensure digital literacy is treated as a necessity. The next phase focuses on scaling the programme's most effective elements, fostering collaboration across countries and reinforcing the digital ecosystems that underpin instructional leadership. The goal is a future where learners are supported by school leaders equipped to guide with confidence, foster innovation and ensure inclusivity.

Promoting Human Rights Through Education

#HumanRightsDay2025

By Claire Mazin, Country Programmes Manager, VVOB in Kenya



A learner participates in a classroom lesson by placing a visual aid on the blackboard, reinforcing learning through hands-on engagement. | Photo by VVOB

Every year on 10 December, the world observes [Human Rights Day](#), commemorating the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; one of humanity's most important commitments to dignity, equality and freedom for all.

This year's global theme, Human Rights, Our Everyday Essentials, reminds us that human rights are not abstract principles reserved for special occasions, but they shape our daily lives. They are the foundation on which people build safe, fulfilling and dignified futures. Among these essentials, the right to education stands out as one of the most transformative.

Education as a Pathway to Dignity and Freedom

Education is one of the most powerful expressions of human rights. It not only protects but also equips, bringing confidence, joy and opportunity into daily life. Evidence shows that each additional year of schooling can increase a person's earnings by up to 10% ([World Bank, 2024](#)) and that education reduces the likelihood of child marriage, early pregnancy and exploitation ([Girls not Brides](#)).

When people access quality education, they gain the knowledge and skills to make informed choices, participate fully in society and pursue their aspirations. Education turns human rights from declarations into lived realities.

Education is also one of the essentials we all share. It connects humanity through understanding and respect, helping us see beyond our differences. In times of uncertainty, the right to education remains a constant source of stability and hope. When everything else feels unstable, learning equips us to think critically and engage meaningfully in the decisions that shape our lives. Ultimately, education is a foundation for equality, safety and freedom.

VVOB's Contribution: Advancing Gender-Responsive and Inclusive Teaching

In Kenya, VVOB works alongside the Ministry of Education and the Centre for Mathematics, Science and Technology Education in Africa (CEMASTEA) to equip Junior School Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) teachers with gender-responsive pedagogy. Through the [Regional Teachers' Initiative for Africa](#) (RTIA), teachers are trained to identify and challenge gender stereotypes, design inclusive lesson plans and implement classroom practices that give all learners, girls and boys, equal opportunities to participate and excel. By strengthening teachers' capacity to create equitable learning environments, VVOB ensures that education is not only about knowledge acquisition but also a tool for justice, inclusion and the full realisation of every child's potential, bringing the principles of Human Rights Day to life in classrooms across the region.

Strengthening School Leadership for Inclusive Learning

VVOB also partners with the [Kenya Education Management Institute](#) (KEMI) to strengthen school leadership as a driver of better teaching and learning. Through focused continuous professional development, school leaders gain practical skills to build inclusive school cultures, support teachers and apply equitable policies.

When school leaders prioritise participation, dialogue and shared responsibility, they create environments where learners feel safe, respected and motivated. In these settings, human rights shift from policy statements to everyday practice.

Human Rights Begin with Everyday Actions

The right to education begins with us. With the small, everyday choices we make to value learning, share knowledge and ensure that everyone has the chance to grow. It takes shape when we treat others with respect in the classroom, listen to diverse perspectives and speak up when someone is denied the opportunity to learn.

At [VVOB in Kenya](#), we work to promote and model sustainable and scalable solutions for teachers' and school leaders' professional development. By exchanging learning, strengthening local capacities and implementing evidence-informed practices together, we help build a more inclusive and equitable education system.

On [Human Rights Day](#), we reaffirmed our commitment to education as a universal human right. A right that underpins dignity, freedom and justice for all. Through our work with teachers and school leaders, we provide professional development that ensures every learner can access quality education. By strengthening educators' capacity to create equitable, rights-based learning environments, we help build a fairer, more peaceful, and more inclusive world.



Human rights are our everyday essentials and education is the key that unlocks them.

Interview Features





Dr. Samuel Ngaruiya

Chairperson, INCREASE¹

Technical Working Group² (TWG)

¹ The INCREASE project centres on strengthening the professional development of school leaders to effectively implement the competence-based education (CBE) in junior school education.

² A committee comprising of technical officers from key Ministry departments and relevant Semi-Autonomous Government Agencies (SAGAs) who ensure the effective implementation of the INCREASE programme.

Q. Could you briefly introduce yourself and your role as Chairperson of the INCREASE Technical Working Group?

A: I serve as the Chairperson of the INCREASE Technical Working Group, which brings stakeholders from the Ministry of Education, the Teachers Service Commission (TSC), county governments and partners such as VVOB. My role involves providing strategic leadership, coordinating technical inputs and ensuring that programme decisions align with national priorities and education sector policies and reforms. I guide the TWG to offer oversight, quality assurance, and direction for successful implementation of the INCREASE programme.

Q. What has been the TWG's main focus or priority in guiding the implementation of the INCREASE programme?

A: Our main focus has been aligning programme interventions with the competency-based curriculum, national education policies and leadership frameworks. We prioritise strengthening instructional leadership, promoting evidence-based decisions and ensuring that capacity-building models reflect Kenya's realities. We also provide technical support and oversight to ensure quality, relevance and sustainability of the programme activities.

Q. What has been most transformative about the blended learning approach of the INCREASE programme for continuous professional development?

A: Blended learning combines the strengths of face-to-face training with the flexibility of digital learning. It reduces costs, increases reach, especially in remote counties. Digital platforms help school leaders access resources, monitor improvement activities and engage in professional learning communities, strengthening reflective and data-informed leadership. This promotes continuous learning and better application of skills in schools.

Q. How is INCREASE helping redefine school leadership within Kenya's competency-based education reforms?

A: INCREASE emphasises instructional leadership, a shift from administrative oversight to leadership focused on teaching and learning. The programme integrates digital tools to support lesson observation, coaching and school improvement planning. This aligns with Competency Based Education (CBE), where leaders play a key role in nurturing competencies and ensuring inclusive learning environments.

Q. As the programme moves towards national scaling in 2026, what steps are being taken to ensure sustainability and ownership within Ministry and county structures?

A: We are embedding programme components within existing Ministry and TSC structures, aligning them with national guidelines and capacity-building models. Counties are being equipped through training-of-trainers, integration of resources into CPD frameworks, and involving quality assurance officers in programme activities. Strengthening data systems and clarifying institutional roles is also central to long-term sustainability.

Q. What role do you see the TWG playing in ensuring a smooth transition from pilot to scale-up?

A: The TWG will continue providing technical oversight, harmonising materials and ensuring policy alignment. We will also guide the

sequencing of scale-up, monitor readiness across counties and support resource mobilisation. Coordination across agencies will be critical to maintaining quality at scale.

Q. How can ICT continue to support this scaling process?

A: ICT can reduce the costs and logistical barriers of face-to-face training, enabling nationwide reach. Digital learning platforms will support continuous professional development, while data dashboards will help track progress. ICT also provides opportunities for virtual mentorship, cross-county collaboration, and rapid dissemination of materials.

Q. What has stood out about collaboration among partners in INCREASE?

A: The shared commitment to improving learning outcomes and the respect for each partner's strengths. Open communication, joint planning and evidence-driven decisions have strengthened ownership and accelerated innovation. Ministries, counties and partners have functioned as one ecosystem which has accelerated innovation and strengthened ownership.

Q. How can this collaborative model be strengthened or replicated in future education initiatives?

A: Future initiatives can benefit from early co-design, shared accountability frameworks, and sustained engagement across all levels, from national to school level. Strengthening communities of practice and institutionalising collaboration structures will ensure continuity beyond project cycles.

Q. What excites you most about the next phase of the programme?

A: I am most excited about the opportunity to scale the ESL4JS model nationally and pilot Effective School Leadership for Senior Schools (ESL4SS). This next phase will further solidify instructional leadership practices and bring digital innovation closer to every school. The scale-up is an opportunity to transform leadership culture across Kenya's education system.

Martin Kisilu

INCREASE

Focal Point

Q: How would you describe the INCREASE programme's progress so far, and what stands out from the three ESL4JS³ cohorts?

A: It has been a remarkable journey of growth, innovation and collaboration. From the early co-design workshops to implementing three cohorts of ESL4JS, each stage has shown the value of evidence-based leadership development. Developing a context-relevant leadership curriculum for Junior School leaders, rolling out a blended training model across counties and putting in place monitoring systems that track quality have been central achievements. The three ESL4JS cohorts reflect this progression. The first

3 A professional development course under the INCREASE programme designed to strengthen the leadership skills of Junior School leaders. It equips them with practical tools to create inclusive, supportive and high-quality learning environments and ensures smoother curriculum implementation and improved learner outcomes in the Competency-Based Education (CBE).

clarified the realities of different school contexts, the second sharpened digital engagement and coaching and the third showed a more confident facilitation team, stronger tools and greater participant ownership. Across the cohorts, the programme has adapted to feedback and used ICT more effectively, making the course practical, responsive and easier to apply in schools.

Q: From your perspective, how has ICT enhanced school leadership training, both for participants and for KEMI as an institution?

A: ICT has made leadership training more flexible and accessible. Participants can learn alongside their school duties, access resources, reflect and engage with peers virtually. For KEMI, ICT has improved monitoring, streamlined administration and strengthened data management. It has opened new opportunities for scaling CPD without compromising quality.

Q: How do you see technology shaping the future of CPD and education leadership in Kenya?

A: Technology will enable personalised learning pathways, support data-driven decisions and expand leadership training to all counties. ICT will strengthen mentorship, build professional communities and improve real-time monitoring. As digital transformation accelerates, CPD must ensure school leaders can confidently use these tools to improve teaching and learning.

Q: As the ESL4JS pilot comes to a close, what are the key lessons informing the nationwide rollout in 2026?

A: Several lessons stand out: blended learning works best when flexibility is paired with strong support; school leaders value practical, context-based content; coaching and follow-up are essential; and partnerships across the system are crucial for quality. Digital tools must remain user-friendly and responsive. These lessons form a solid foundation for national scale-up.





Martin Kisilu supporting school leaders during an in-person ESL4JS session.

Q: What will scaling look like in practice? What are the priorities and expectations for KEMI?

A: Scaling will mean expanding nationwide while maintaining quality. This requires building county-level training capacity, increasing the pool of facilitators, strengthening the LMS and digital systems and keeping monitoring strong. KEMI will focus on standardising delivery, ensuring consistent trainer quality and working closely with the Ministry of Education to align with national CPD frameworks.

Q: How is the programme preparing to ensure sustainability beyond INCREASE support?

A: Sustainability is being ensured through institutionalisation. ESL4JS is being integrated into KEMI's mainstream CPD and internal capacity-building is creating lasting expertise. The digital systems built for the programme will support future CPD. Partnerships with county offices are being strengthened and alignment with national priorities will support long-term policy and resource backing.

Q: What excites you most about the next phase of this work?

A: I am excited to see effective school leadership take root nationwide. With the upcoming rollout, thousands of school leaders will access impactful leadership development that can transform learner outcomes. Our strong digital foundation also opens opportunities for more innovative coaching, better use of data and more personalised learning. The next phase is a chance to scale impact and strengthen leadership culture across Kenya.

Q: If you could share one message with the school leaders who have completed or will join the course, what would it be?

A: My message is simple: embrace this learning journey with openness and commitment, because strong leadership is the foundation of strong schools. The tools and insights from this programme are only the beginning; your daily decisions, willingness to reflect and courage to innovate are what will truly transform your school. Lead with integrity, support your teachers, and keep learners at the centre of everything you do. Kenya's education future depends on leaders like you.



Nicole Mwende providing hands-on technical support during an in-person ESL4JS session | Photo by VVOB

Nicole Mwende, KEMI ICT Officer

Q. Can you briefly introduce yourself and your role in the ICT team at KEMI?

My name is Nicole Scarlet Mwende, an ICT Officer at KEMI. I support the ICT Division through technical assistance, system maintenance, software training, data management and network monitoring. I also help with project implementation, documentation, ICT inventory and staying updated on emerging technologies, ensuring our systems run efficiently and support both staff and school leaders.

Q. What has been your involvement with the ESL4JS course and the KEMI app⁴?

My work on the ESL4JS course and the KEMI app has been both hands-on and highly rewarding. I helped upload and refine learning content, collaborated with trainers on interactive modules, tested usability and gathered user feedback for improvements. I also supported the integration of tools like Zoom, Nearpod, Slido, and Mentimeter to enrich the learning experience. In addition, I help maintain the app, which is a key resource for school leaders engaging with CBE and ongoing professional development.

Q. Why do you think the blended learning approach model works well for school leaders?

It seamlessly combines the flexibility of online learning with the invaluable benefits of face-to-face interactions. School leaders have the flexibility to learn at their own pace, allowing them to tailor their educational experience to fit their

⁴ A Moodle-based mobile application by KEMI for Kenyan school leaders, providing self-paced online learning for courses like ESL4JS. It features interactive content, assignments and progress tracking.

individual needs. It also encourages collaborative activities that foster networking and peer support, which are essential elements for personal and professional growth in leadership development. By engaging with both online resources and in-person discussions, school leaders can cultivate meaningful connections and share insights that enhance their leadership skills.

Q. What makes the KEMI app unique in delivering professional development for school leaders compared to traditional methods?

The KEMI app offers an interactive, user-friendly platform tailored for school leaders. It blends multimedia content, offline access, real-time feedback and networking opportunities. This makes learning more engaging and immediately relevant compared to traditional lectures and printed materials.

Q. How has the app evolved since it was first developed, and are there any new features you are particularly excited about?

Since its initial development, the KEMI app has evolved to better serve its users. It now features a better interface, improved analytics, transcripts for accessibility and enhanced interactive modules. I am especially excited about the e-portfolios option, which allows leaders to document their progress creatively. The course index introduced in Cohort three also helps users navigate their learning more easily.

Q. In your view, how has technology changed the way school leaders learn and interact with the course content?

Technology has transformed how school leaders learn by giving them instant access to resources and enabling real-time collaboration with peers nationwide. This enhanced connectivity not only enriches their learning experience but also builds a strong sense of community among participants.

Q. As ESL4JS scales nationwide and ESL4SS⁵ is piloted, what role do you see ICT playing in this next phase?

As ESL4JS scales and ESL4SS⁵ begins, ICT will be critical for ensuring consistent, high-quality delivery across all counties. It will enable real-time monitoring, streamline communication, and provide scalable professional development tailored to diverse contexts.

Q. How do you envision the KEMI app growing in the future to meet the needs of teachers and school leaders?

I envision the app offering more personalised learning through AI-driven recommendations, enhanced mobile learning, and richer multimedia content such as animations, interactive quizzes, and podcasts, to make learning more engaging and accessible.

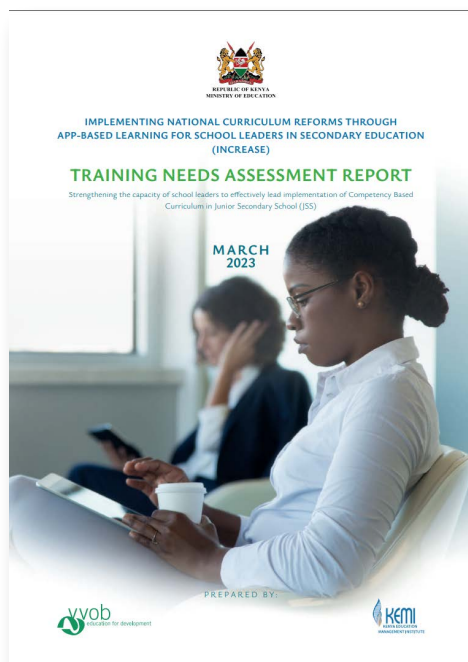
⁵ A professional development course that builds on the ESL4JS pilot and aims to strengthen leadership across senior schools as part of the INCREASE programme, supporting the implementation of Competency-Based Education (CBE).



Nicole Mwende speaking at a training session | Photo by VVOB

Resources





Training Needs Assessment Report 2022

In a training needs assessment on the capacity of school leaders to implement CBC, most school leaders had indicated inadequate capacity to mentor and support teachers on all components of the CBC (Secondary 82.7% & 70.7 % Primary).

- 46.9% of primary school leaders had not enrolled and completed an online course in any field compared to 51.6% of secondary school leaders.
- School leaders both in primary and secondary levels are motivated to enroll for a capacity development course by the desire to improve their competencies and become better leaders.

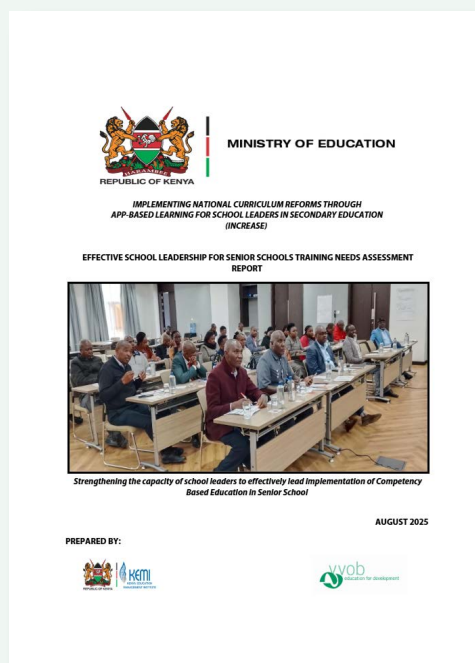
[Read More Here](#)

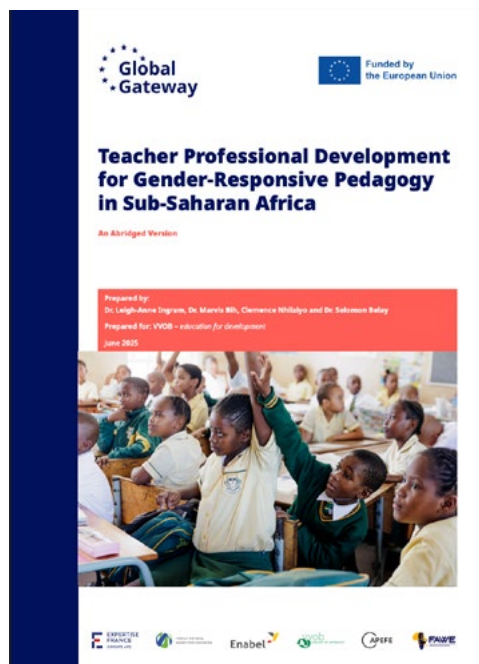
Training Needs Assessment Report 2025

From a training needs assessment on implementation of CBE in senior schools, school leaders require advanced, context specific competencies for an effective CBE transition.

- The current effective school leadership for junior school instructional leadership framework has strengths but also significant content gaps for effective school leadership at senior school level.
- Blended learning remains a highly effective model for school leadership development both at junior and senior school levels.

[Read More Here](#)





Highlights from the RTIA Evidence Review report

Key highlights from the Teacher Professional Development for Gender- Responsive Pedagogy in Sub-Saharan Africa: An Evidence Review:

- Gender-responsive pedagogy (GRP) strengthens learning outcomes and inclusion for all learners, but only when teachers receive sustained, practical support that challenges biases and transforms classroom practice.
- Lasting impact comes from integrated approaches that embed GRP in teacher education systems, combine training with coaching and are culturally responsive.
- Major gaps remain in long-term impact evidence, teacher wellbeing and scalable models, making continued learning and investment essential.

[Read More Here](#)

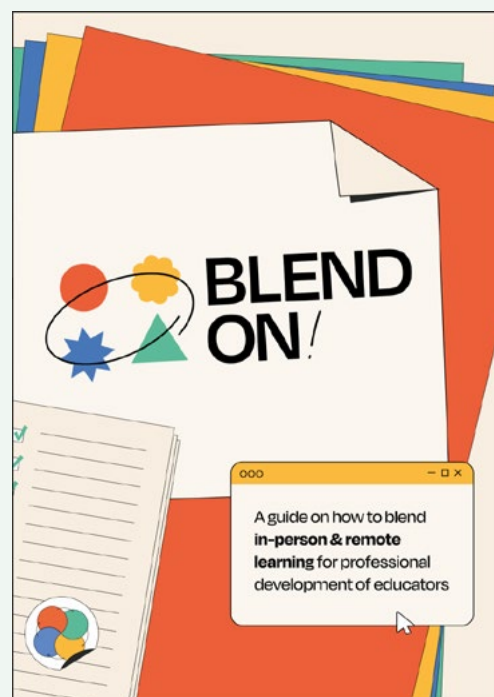
Blend ON! Guide: A Practical Roadmap for Effective Blended CPD

The Blend ON! Guide is a hands-on resource developed by VVOB to support education actors in designing, delivering and scaling high-quality blended continuous professional development for teachers and school leaders.

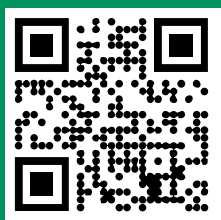
At a glance:

- A framework that takes users from needs analysis and design through to implementation and evaluation of blended CPD.
- Emphasis on CPD that responds to time, connectivity and workload constraints faced by teachers and school leaders.
- Guidance on building quality, scalable and cost-effective blended programmes without losing the human element of professional learning.

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