



Sustaining and Improving

School-based Professional Development for Teachers



Key lessons and recommendations

In support of the Government of Sierra Leone's efforts to improve teaching quality, Leh Wi Lan (LWL) has been working with the Teaching Service Commission (TSC) and the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to deliver teacher professional development. During the programme's first phase, LWL led an innovative research project that supported a group of teachers to conduct action research in their own classrooms and schools. The programme also delivered school-based continuing professional development (CPD) focused on teaching English and mathematics.

School-based CPD refers to systems established in a school that deliver professional development opportunities within schools and typically include structured meetings and discussion, peer mentoring and coaching, classroom observation, and feedback. Creating opportunities for collaboration, professional exchanges, and interaction are especially important in school-based CPD.

In the second phase, LWL focused on creating school-based CPD routines that school leaders can implement and sustain with minimal external support, while strengthening wider school-based CPD systems. Working with TSC at national and district levels, LWL supported more than 500 Junior (JSS) and Senior Secondary Schools (SSS) to establish school-based CPD routines that include:

- Two Teacher Learning Circles (TLCs) per term, focused on developing skills related to a chosen topic. One TLC is held at the start of term and one towards the end, facilitated by a school leader or teacher with relevant expertise.
- Observation and coaching by school leaders (for example, Heads of Department)

Initially, schools were provided with materials to guide their TLCs. These covered: Strengthening Literacy Skills Across the Curriculum, School Safety and Inclusion, Assessing Student Learning and Making Lessons Interactive and Participatory. After completing four rounds of school-based CPD using materials provided by LWL and TSC, schools were invited to follow the same routine on topics of their own choosing.

These routines are described in the TSC's Framework for School-based CPD (currently under consultation). The framework has been shared with schools, District Education Offices, and with the TSC partners working with secondary schools.

More than 500 JSS and SSS supported to establish school-based CPD routines

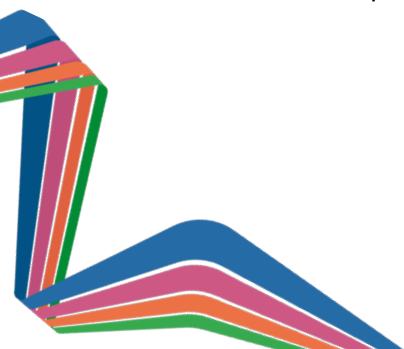
What We've Learned

Schools can benefit from access to structured TLC content

While some schools have staff with the expertise to design and deliver TLCs based on topics of their own choosing, structured CPD materials can still add value by introducing new ideas, up to date information and practical activities. Also, there may be priority topics that the TSC wants all schools to engage on.

A simple system is needed to track school-based CPD

LWL tested a system using Kobo to gather information on school-based CPD implementation. Schools used a simple form to record when TLCs were held and the topics covered. Initially, the aim was to track teacher attendance, but this proved to be too demanding. Even reporting accurate and timely information about date and topics was challenging for some schools.



Effective school leaders are key to school-based CPD

School leaders play a critical role in ensuring the success of school-based CPD. In schools where leaders actively organise CPD activities and encourage everyone to attend, the routine of two TLCs per term, alongside with classroom observation and coaching is achievable. This is supported by the flexibility schools have in scheduling TLCs. The Leading Teaching and Learning module in the School Leadership Programme helps school leaders lead school-based CPD, while TSC's recently developed School Leadership Policy lays out their responsibility for organising these activities.

Schools need resources to sustain school-based CPD

The model introduced for school-based CPD is very low cost, but it is not no-cost. Schools might require flip-chart paper, sticky tape, scissors etc which many schools do not have. Also, although TLCs are intended to be short (two to three hours), refreshments are a good way of encouraging teachers to attend. Some schools use their subsidies to support school-based CPD, but it is not sufficient.

Recommendations

Sustain progress made	Improve progress further
School Level	
500 schools to continue conducting at least two TLCs per term in line with the TSC's Framework for School-based CPD Framework	Strengthen school leaders' facilitation skills through additional coaching and leadership development opportunities
District Level	
Deputy Directors (DD) to continue to encourage schools to conduct school-based CPD	TSC DDs to encourage creation of district communities of practice where school leaders can share experiences, challenges, and best practices in school-based CPD
School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs) to use school visits to collect data on the frequency of school-based CPD using the School Quality Assurance (SQA) tool	
Analyse frequency of school-based CPD using the new SQA and plan action to increase it	
National Level	
Disseminate the Framework for School-based CPD and make sure that all schools are aware of it and what they are required to do	Set up a national system for schools to record school-based CPD events
Continue collaboration between TSC, MBSSE, CPD service providers and donors to support implementation	Encourage partners to support the implementation of the Framework for school-based CPD and to create new materials to support school-based CPD
	TSC and its partners to continue exploring the role that technology can play – from online videos demonstrating classroom practice through to the use of AI to help teachers improve their practice or to help school leaders be better coaches
	TSC and its partners to build on work already underway to strengthen classroom observation and coaching

Where to get more information

Teacher Research Project: [Leh Wi Lan Teacher Researchers video](#) - SL Education KP and [LWL Teacher-Research-Book.pdf](#)

Materials developed to support school-based CPD during the second phase of Leh Wi Lan: [Whole School-Based CPD – Facilitator Guides](#) - SL Education KP

TSC Framework for school-based CPD: <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/material/framework-for-school-based-continuing-professional-development-in-secondary-schools-in-sierra-leone/>

Piloting the Lesson Observation Tool_Report_July2025: <https://mbsseknowledgeplatform.gov.sl/material/piloting-the-lesson-observation-tool-report-july-2025/>



The second phase of Leh Wi Lan is part of the Sierra Leone Secondary Education Improvement Programme II (SSEIP II), funded by UK International Development. This programme supports the Ministry of Basic and Senior Secondary Education (MBSSE) to deliver improved education outcomes at secondary level. Leh Wi Lan is implemented by a consortium of organisations led by Cambridge Education.