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POLICY BRIEF

Equity and Agency in Technology-Supported Teacher Professional Development in Tanzania

Phase 2 Round 2 Recommendations

Date October 2025

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DOI 10.53832/edtechhub.1118

About this document

Recommended citation

Chachage, K., Swai, C., Hennessy, S., Adam, T., Koomar, S., Paskali, J. H; Massam, W., Mtenzi, F., Komba, A., Jacob Mrope, W., Anthony, G., Malibiche, M., Mrosso, V., Mutura, E., Mwakabungu, F., Komba, P., & Simmons, H. (2025). *Equity and Agency in Technology-Supported Teacher Professional Development in Tanzania: Phase 2 Round 2 Recommendations* [Policy Brief]. EdTech Hub. https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.1118. Available at https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/ZXGZK3XS,

See also

Swai et al. (2024). *TCPD in Tanzania: Phase 2 Round 1 Recommendations* [Policy Brief]. EdTech Hub. https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.1060.

Reviewers

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Contents

Abbreviations and acronyms

BOOST	Boost Primary Student Learning Project
CoL	Community of Learning
DEO	District Education Officer
DSNEO	District Special Needs Education Officer
DSQA	District School Quality Assurance
ETI	Empowering Teachers Initiative
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
LGA	Local Government Authority
LMS	Learning Management System
MEWAKA	Mafunzo Endelevu kwa Walimu Kazini
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science, and Technology
NECTA	National Examinations Council of Tanzania
PF	Peer Facilitator
PO-RALG	President's Office - Regional Administration and Local Government
RAO	Regional Academic Officer
REO	Regional Education Officer
TCPD	Teacher Continuous Professional Development
TIE	Tanzania Institute of Education
TPD	Teacher Professional Development
WEO	Ward Education Officer

1. Background

The findings reported here are from the second and final round of data collection and analysis for the Empowering Teachers Initiative[1] (ETI) study entitled 'Assessing the scale-up of a technology-supported, government-led teacher professional development programme in Tanzania: Considering issues of equity, agency, and adaptation'. ETI is a global programme comprising 10 country projects focusing on similar themes. Our project is part of a larger group of studies focused on 'The Impact of a Tech-Supported, School-Based Teacher Continuous Professional Development Model on Learning Outcomes in Tanzania'.[2] The study is closely aligned with the implementation of the Tanzania National TCPD implementation plan[3] and 'MEWAKA' (Mafunzo Endelevu kwa Walimu Kazini) or Teacher Continuous Professional Development (TCPD), an innovative, school-based, technology-supported programme currently being implemented by the Government of Tanzania in schools nationwide. The research was co-developed and designed collaboratively between EdTech Hub, the Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), and Aga Khan University, with consultation from key stakeholders at the ministry level.

The second round of data collection for Phase 2 of this project took place in schools between September and November 2024, in the same 12 rural sites (11 primary schools and one Teacher Resource Centre in Dodoma, Iringa, Mwanza, and Lindi regions as in Round 1.[4] Methods comprised observations of classroom lessons and community of learning (CoL) sessions, as well as interviews and focus group discussions utilising participatory activities with key stakeholders (See Table 1). These included soliciting their reactions to the Round 1 findings and engaging them in prioritising the emerging recommendations; their key concerns were to increase access and use of the learning management system (LMS) and

[1] See https://eti.tpdatscalecoalition.org/ Retrieved May 2, 2025.

[2] See https://edtechhub.org/evidence/edtech-hub-research-portfolio/impact-of-tech-supported-tpd-model-on-learning-tanzania/ Retrieved May 2, 2025.

[3] Ministry of Education, Science & Technology. (2021). Tanzania National Teacher Continuous Professional Development Implementation Guide.

[4] Swai, C., Chachage, K., Koomar, S., Hennessy, S., Massam, W., Komba, A., Mwakabungu, F., Paskali, J. H., Anthony, G., Mrope, W. J., Malibichi, M., Mutura, E., Mrosso, V., Komba, P., Nkya, H., Mtenzi, F., Adam, T., & Simmons, H. (2024). *TCPD in Tanzania: Phase 2 Round 1 Recommendations* [Policy Brief]. EdTech Hub. https://doi.org/10.53832/edtechhub.1060
Available at https://docs.edtechhub.org/lib/ZAKFGN9M.

CoL modules, and for District Special Needs Education Officers (DSNEOs), to expand the concept of disability and ensure education officials have accurate data (see detailed outcomes in Appendix 1).

Table 1. *Data sources*

24 CoL Observations (12 per round)	16 WEO participatory interviews (n=12)
22 Classroom observations (11 per round)	8 DSNEO or DSQA participatory interviews (n=8)
22 Participatory Teacher focus group discussions (Round 1 n=69, Round 2 n=65)	8 REO or RAO participatory interviews (n=7)
6 Small group discussions with teachers who have disabilities or chronic illness (n=18)	5 national-level participatory interviews (n=4)
Teacher surveys (Round 1 only, n=125)	6 complementary TPD programme coordinators and officers interviews (Round 2 only, n=6)
School tech surveys (Round 1 only, n=12)	22 School TPD team [headteachers, academic teachers, peer facilitators] interviews (n=31 per round)
Note: Many teachers, TCPD team members and education officers participated in **both** rounds, hence numbers of individuals in parentheses are lower than interview numbers	

The interview and focus group tools were adapted in Round 2 to gather more in-depth information on the three main facets of teachers' equitable engagement in MEWAKA that emerged from Round 1: access to technology, teachers with special needs (disabilities and chronic illnesses),[5] and gender.

[5] Note that the broad term 'special needs' is the common and preferred terminology in Tanzania so we use that throughout the brief, although the more specific term 'disability' is prevalent in the international literature and is used instead in much of our writing.

2. Overview of key findings

Phase 1 of this research began as MEWAKA implementation was first rolling out in 2022. At the time of writing, CoLs function at the school and cluster levels, supporting all teachers in engaging in continuous professional development throughout their careers. Our findings indicate that this has generated a shift in teaching culture whereby some teachers are sharing strategies and resources and are more likely to collaboratively find solutions for teaching and learning challenges in their context (see Round 1 policy brief).[6] Teachers and education officers feel that this, in turn, has contributed to improved teaching, learning, and student performance. However, the CoL modules produced by TIE are still not yet being used by most teachers, owing to technical issues in accessing the LMS, data costs and lack of awareness of the offering.[7] The CoL experience in many schools is limited, without external support, and our classroom observations suggest pedagogical change is slow. There are several ways in which the implementation could be improved to ensure all teachers can equitably engage in CoLs and to further enhance their quality. These include widening access to the internet and LMS and promoting the use of CoL modules; improving feedback loops to address teacher needs that cannot be met at the school level; improving the inclusivity of MEWAKA for teachers with special needs (disabilities and chronic illnesses); and addressing gender disparities that affect some female teachers' engagement with MEWAKA and technology. Addressing these challenges will help ensure that, rather than merely adding to the numerous demands on teachers' time, MEWAKA and CoLs continue to add value to teachers' careers and improve teaching and learning outcomes.

3. Summary of key findings

The key findings from the Round 2 data, as well as findings from the aggregated data of both rounds of data collection, are summarised in Figure 1 below; more details are presented in Appendix 2.

[6] See Footnote 3 for full bibliographical details and links.

[7] Our observations are corroborated by national data from the LMS, showing that in May 2025, just under 10,000 teachers (3.3%) of the approximately 300,000 teachers in Tanzania had logged in during the previous 6 months.

Figure 1. *Key findings from Round 2 data collection*

CoL implementation

Average attendance in observed CoLs was 82% of teachers per school, with differences noted between regions. CoL scheduling was continually identified as an issue by multiple stakeholders across both rounds of data collection. A range of topics was covered, based on challenges identified by teachers at the school level. Taking both rounds of observations together, the quality of CoLs varied greatly, with some being pedagogically focused, involving a high level of teacher interaction, and others still reflecting a lecture-style explanation of syllabus content. There was no directly observable use of the TIE LMS during CoL sessions, although 2–3 peer facilitators reported referring to CoL modules to plan their sessions. During Round 1, technology use was observed; however, in Round 2, only one CoL session utilised technology (desktop computers) and no basic phones, smartphones, tablets, or laptops were used in any of the observed CoLs.

Changes in teachers' practices

Teachers and WEOs across schools and regions could readily provide examples of specific practices that had changed as a result of MEWAKA. Almost all the examples fell into three categories:

1. **Strategies:** teachers reportedly use more participatory strategies, including group work, discussion and debates, songs, riddles and games;
2. **Teaching aids:** teachers creating and using a wider variety of aids, drawing on locally available materials;
3. **Increased use of technology:** teachers reported mainly finding more materials or in-depth content online; a few teachers mentioned using projectors to teach with technology in class.

In addition, WEOs also reported changes in teachers' professionalism, including improved teacher accountability and teacher confidence in teaching various grade levels (especially early grades) or topics perceived as difficult.

Classroom practices

In our classroom observations, items concerning student engagement, teachers treating students respectfully and not showing bias, and teachers giving clear explanations of content, were rated high in the majority of lessons in both rounds. However, over half of observed lessons

(in both rounds) were rated 'low' for students asking questions, having opportunities to share their own experiences, being given choices or opportunities to assume classroom roles, and engaging with each other's ideas. This suggests that while teachers report using more interactive teaching strategies, they are not utilised daily or to an extent that they are evident in random observations.

Agency

Teachers continue to use agency to identify their own needs and challenges related to CoLs. School-level TCPD teams have agency in deciding how to fit CoLs into the weekly school schedule and to form a calendar of topics, as laid out in the design of MEWAKA. Individual or relational agency[8] was observed, with teachers taking initiative to ensure CoL sessions were inclusive of teachers with disabilities, as in Round 1. Group agency was reported in Iringa, where teachers with vision impairments organised a visit to the Regional Education Officer (REO) to request assistive technology that would enable them to use their government-issued tablets. Most other examples of agency may be characterised as 'administrative agency', where action was taken on the basis of a role. For example, several DSNEOs have identified and/or formed support networks of teachers with disabilities in their jurisdiction, and a WEO convened a cluster CoL of academic teachers and early grade teachers in order to improve '3Rs' teaching practices. However, the examples of administrative agency were relatively few compared to relational agency.

Access to the LMS and use of TIE's materials for CoLs that are available through the LMS

Teachers reported that in the few cases where they were used, the CoL modules from TIE added value to their weekly CoLs. However, most schools/teachers were unaware of and did not use the modules in their CoLs. Technical obstacles included connectivity issues, a lack of suitable devices, a lack of digital skills, data costs, and a lack of sustained funding for password reset messaging and LMS technical support and maintenance.

Teachers in two schools that received Raspberry Pi devices (one school) or internet bundles reported increased access to the LMS and TIE modules compared to before receiving these resources. However, only

[8] Edwards, A. (2005). Relational agency: learning to be a resourceful practitioner. *International Journal of Educational Research, 43* (1005), 166-182. https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0883035506000565

one of these schools was observed using a CoL module during a CoL session.

Feedback loops to address teachers' professional learning needs

Teacher motivation to engage in CoLs depends on how well CoLs actually meet their needs. When teachers' pedagogical or learning needs cannot be met at the school level, this information is passed up the chain to ward, district, and regional officials through monthly reports. If no action is then taken, teachers feel unheard or undervalued. Moreover, teachers' unmet needs continue to hinder student learning. Our findings indicate that, in all regions, schools report CoL sessions and TCPD needs to WEOs, and WEOs report them up the chain to the national level via District Education Officers (DEOs) and REOs. School-level and Local Government Authority (LGA) responses (ward, district, regional) generally aligned, and indicated that:

- In two of the four regions, there are ward and/or district-level responses (e.g., cluster-level CoLs, or bringing in national trainers for a whole district to provide training on a specific challenge).
- In the other two regions, the LGA officers were concerned about whether teacher needs were being channelled properly or were unsure if responses were implemented. The school-level participants in these two regions also perceived a lack of response to the needs they reported.
- The district in the study where CoL attendance was highest and strong feedback loops were reported coincided with the presence of WEOs, DEOS, and REOs who saw teachers as central decision-makers in MEWAKA and who used administrative agency (by virtue of their roles) to take proactive measures promoting CoLs and following up teachers' needs.

Ensuring MEWAKA is inclusive of teachers with special needs

In Round 1, we found that teachers with special needs (mainly physical or related to visual or hearing impairments) are supported by their colleagues in ways that enable them to participate in CoL activities. This support is at the individual teacher and school level (relational agency) and is not institutionalised. In Round 2, we found that special needs impact teachers' engagement with MEWAKA in different ways:

- Teachers with physical disabilities are affected, but can usually engage in sessions more readily if the CoL spaces are conducive to their mobility and seating needs. Vision or hearing impairments

have a stronger impact on teachers' engagement because most TCPD materials are inaccessible due to a lack of accommodations or assistive technologies.

- Chronic illnesses, when severe, cause teachers to miss CoL sessions, and often, there are no mechanisms for teachers to catch up on sessions.
- Teachers with disabilities or chronic illnesses encounter significant stigma from some peers and educational leaders and feel that they are denied opportunities (e.g., for external training) because of their special needs. Language used by many participants also reflects a deficit view of disabilities.
- Stigma and data privacy affect teachers' willingness to disclose their needs.
- There are some disconnects between the health and education sectors (see examples provided by teachers in the detailed findings in Appendix 2).

Addressing the underlying causes of gender inequalities that affect teachers' engagement in MEWAKA

Gender and access to CoLs

Gender stereotyping and inequity within schools mean female teachers are more likely than male teachers to be given responsibilities such as welcoming guests, overseeing refreshments within schools, or supervising students during CoL sessions, which takes them away from TPD and other teaching tasks. In addition, women who care for chronically ill family members suffer the same problem of missing CoLs/TPD opportunities as teachers who are ill themselves.

Gender and technology

The Round 1 findings showed that female teachers tend to engage less meaningfully in CoLs or professional development involving technology. In Round 2, teachers, TCPD teams, and education officers were asked why this might be the case. Causes identified by participants included:

- **Social roles and attitudes:** Women have more social responsibilities and less time to "play around" with technology than men, and female teachers' home responsibilities may make them less likely to spend money on tech or internet bundles.
- **Systemic issues:** When workshops on technology are held, teachers who are already familiar or comfortable with tech are

selected to represent schools, and these are often men, thereby reinforcing the gender gap.

- **Mitigating factors:** Female teachers with university degrees were more likely to have higher levels of digital literacy. Digital literacy also tends to differ depending on a teacher's age and gender.

Gender, leadership, and participation

Women are less likely to hold leadership roles: In both Rounds 1 and 2, although two-thirds of primary school teachers in the (qualitative) sample were women and one-third were men, the ratio of peer facilitators, head teachers, WEOs, and DEOs was reversed — two-thirds were men and one-third were women. In addition, the Round 2 CoL observation data reveals gendered patterns in CoL contributions, with male teachers averaging 1.21 total contributions and 1.13 substantial contributions, while female teachers averaged 0.95 and 0.85, respectively, highlighting a notable gender gap in participation.

4. Recommendations

The following recommendations were discussed and prioritised during a stakeholder workshop that included TIE, MoEST, President's Office-Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG), and research team members. The four highest-ranked priorities were:

1. MoEST to ensure that policies promote inclusive TPD materials that are accessible to all teachers
2. PO-RALG to encourage LGA officers to strengthen the dissemination and uptake of good practices/innovations to more schools
3. LGAs to set aside a budget for MEWAKA/LMS/CoLs
4. TIE to ensure sustained funding is in place to provide immediate LMS user support and maintenance, as well as annual development of new and/or updated CoL modules.

The recommendations were then discussed in a workshop with a wide array of education stakeholders.[9] The full set of

[9] The wider dissemination workshop included representatives from the national Head Teachers Association, the Teacher Service Commission, DEOs and REOs,

recommendations is presented below, under the lead institutions identified for each action. **The actions for each institution, which were deemed highest priority in the national workshop and the wider dissemination workshop,** are in **bold** text.[10]

Recommendations for schools

1. Consider what measures can help teachers who miss CoL sessions for health or disability-related reasons to catch up on what was covered, e.g., set up a system for recording what was discussed so it can be reviewed afterwards by teachers who need more time and/or shared with teachers who missed the CoL due to illness.
2. Explicitly acknowledge social tasks in school (such as preparation of refreshments, serving guests, supervising children) and assign them equitably, avoiding gender inequity (e.g., rotating among all teachers, using parent or community volunteers, etc).
3. Ensure the school has a proportionate number of female and male peer facilitators and both have equal opportunities to develop their skills and facilitate CoL sessions.
4. Encourage and support female teachers to attend and participate in CoL sessions, and ensure peer facilitators engage male and female teachers during CoL sessions.

Recommendations for TIE

1. Reduce the cost of accessing the LMS for all teachers by continuing to publicise Vodacom's zero-rating and finalising the negotiation of zero-rating by all mobile networks as a matter of urgency.
2. Continue CoL module awareness-building strategies such as:
    - Social media and SMS campaigns should target different stakeholders: teachers, peer facilitators, head teachers, Academic Teachers, WEOs, etc.
    - Consistent promotion of the LMS through all teacher workshops and programmes.

development partners, and non-governmental organisations providing TPD in Tanzania.

[10] Note, some of the top priorities from the national government workshop and the wider stakeholders' workshop overlapped and others differed, so there may be three or more recommendations highlighted for a particularl institution.

3. Reach schools without internet connectivity/network coverage through offline versions of the LMS (e.g., through offline Moodle provision or Raspberry Pi devices).
4. **Ensure sustained funding is in place to provide immediate password reset support, LMS maintenance, upgrades, and troubleshooting, as well as annual development of new and/or updated CoL modules.**
5. Make basic digital/technological competence one of the requirements of initial teacher education by promoting the use of the Tanzania 2025 ICT Competency Standards for Teachers (ICT-CSTT).
6. **Support in-service teachers in developing technology skills for the LMS, especially in accessing and viewing module materials.** For example, disseminating links to the LMS-use tutorial video, ensuring teachers engage with CoL modules during training workshops that introduce the LMS, or having ICT champions to promote the use of the LMS to other teachers.
7. **Ensure that all TPD providers (including TIE) promote accessibility for all teachers,** for example, by including alternative text for images and closed captioning of videos in digital materials. TIE should recommend appropriate assistive software (especially screen readers) for TPD providers and teachers to use.
8. Utilise the LMS and CoL modules to build teachers' understanding of the new curriculum, to ensure ongoing relevance and increase teacher motivation to use modules and attend CoLs.
9. Track the use of the LMS by gender.
10. Work more closely with the Teacher Service Commission in implementing MEWAKA, to ensure that the initiative is responsive to teachers' actual needs, including those with disabilities and chronic illnesses, by listening to their voices.

Recommendations for LGAs

1. **Set aside a budget for MEWAKA, LMS usage, and CoLs (including refreshments and device maintenance).**
2. Strengthen the dissemination and uptake of good practices/innovations to more schools.
3. Check and ensure there is a gender balance and inclusion of teachers with disabilities (when relevant) when teachers are selected for technology-related seminars /workshops/training.

4. Establish a system for repairing teacher tablets over time, possibly involving District IT officers to regularly visit schools, assess tablets, and provide support.
5. Ensure district-level SQA officers receive MEWAKA implementation reports and annual plans, so that implementation can be quality assured.
6. Institute inclusive practices for teachers with disabilities:
    a. **Form support networks (e.g., via WhatsApp groups) at ward and/or district levels for teachers with disabilities** to meet regularly to share ideas and experiences.
    b. Provide a transport allowance for teachers with disabilities to enable them to attend cluster meetings, training, etc. (similar to the extra capitation funds for students with disabilities).
    c. Track the participation of teachers with disabilities in cluster, district, and regional-level CoLs or workshops to ensure they are not denied opportunities.
    d. **Provide training for teachers with disabilities on how to use assistive technologies, including how to use, maintain, and store them.**
    e. **Offer incentives, recognition or awards for schools with inclusive CoL participation and for teachers who use ICT for MEWAKA and professional learning**.
7. Strengthen feedback mechanisms to ensure teachers' concerns are heard and responded to.

Recommendations for PO-RALG

1. Facilitate all LGAs to have effective feedback loops to address teacher needs:
    a. Require LGAs to report how they responded to school and ward-level MEWAKA reports.
    b. Implement the instructions in MEWAKA supervision guides and national plans that each district and region should prepare an annual MEWAKA action plan.
    c. **Learn from LGAs that are currently effective—identify and promote key features of the environment (e.g, presence of Teacher Resource Centre), and the practices of stakeholders in key roles (e.g., REOs, DEOs).**

d. **Encourage LGA officers to strengthen the dissemination and uptake of good practices/innovations to more schools.**

e. Improve systems to identify and respond to teachers' special needs, including the roles of DSNOs and school heads, while taking data privacy into account.

2. **Explicitly acknowledge social tasks (such as preparation of refreshments, serving guests, supervising children) within schools and require schools to find equitable ways to assign them** (e.g., rotating among all teachers, using parent or community volunteers, etc.).

3. Create a supportive environment for teachers with disabilities and chronic illnesses to engage in MEWAKA.

    a. Recognise LGAs for supporting teachers with disabilities and chronic illnesses.

    b. Establish a help desk for teachers with disabilities.

Recommendations for MoEST

1. Develop quality assurance and evaluation systems that support effective and consistent implementation of quality CoL sessions, for example:

    a. Provide guidance for quality assurance of the implementation of CoL sessions at the school- and cluster-level

    b. Embed specific indicators, such as LMS usage disaggregated by gender and disability, or measurable improvements in CoL facilitation quality, into existing national monitoring and evaluation systems to ensure effective tracking.

    c. Ensure that policies promote accessible TCPD materials for all teachers by requiring alternative text for images and closed captioning for videos in digital materials.

    d. Ensure teachers with disabilities have access to assistive technologies, including computers or tablets with speech output, to facilitate their use of technological tools.

    e. Establish or strengthen a centralised and coordinated procurement mechanism for assistive technologies.

    f. **Train WEOs and head teachers on supporting teachers with disabilities, including sensitisation to reduce stigma.**

2. Work collaboratively with the Ministry of Health to support teachers with chronic illnesses by providing clear guidelines, and ensuring

school administrators and doctors know what kind of leave teachers are eligible for.

3. Make basic digital/technological competences one of the requirements for a teaching qualification so that all teachers (male or female) enter the workforce with the requisite digital skills as outlined in the Tanzania 2025 ICT Competency Standards for Teachers (ICT-CSTT).

4. **Institute mitigation measures to increase the digital skills of teachers who are already in the workforce,** especially women.

    a. Consider measures such as nominating female ICT champions and hands-on workshops for women, as well as policy guidance explicitly mentioning the need for equal distribution of responsibilities by gender within schools.

5. Take concrete steps to address gender gaps in leadership and technology, e.g.:

    a. Develop pathways to leadership for women teachers (e.g., review qualifications for promotion, mentorship of promising teachers, etc.).

    b. Set Key Performance Indicators or quotas for at least 50% of peer facilitators and education leaders/officers to be women in each school/ward/district/region/ministry/institute—in rural and urban areas.

6. **Build the capacity of head teachers and WEOs to improve management of MEWAKA** through existing mechanisms such as Agency for the Development of Educational Management, and MEWAKA training by TIE or CoLs specifically for head teachers and LGA officers.

Appendix 1: Participants' responses to Round 1 findings and recommendations

The key findings from Round 1 were first validated and approved at a national workshop comprising officials from the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and the President's Office for Regional Administration and Local Government (PO-RALG). A summary of the key findings from Round 1 was shared with all participants during Round 2 visits. The findings which drew the most reaction and discussion from participants were the identification and challenges for engaging in MEWAKA faced by teachers with disabilities and chronic illnesses, the differing levels of effectiveness by district in feedback loops to address teachers' TCPD needs, and the findings that female teachers are less engaged in some schools and CoLs, particularly in taking leadership or facilitation roles and using technology.

Participants were also asked to prioritise the nine key recommendations from Round 1, and to add any recommendations they felt were missing. The recommendation most often given top priority by teachers, TCPD teams, and RAOs was "providing offline or free access to the LMS". The highest priority for WEOs was "increasing awareness of the CoL modules", which was ranked second highest for other participants. TCPD teams also ranked "strategies to increase women teachers' engagement in CoLs" as the second-highest priority. The lowest priority for all stakeholders was "to encourage the sharing of tech devices." These rankings suggest that implementers across the MEWAKA ecosystem see a need to make the LMS and CoL modules more accessible and increase their use.

DSNEOs were asked to rank a shorter, more specific list of recommendations for teachers with special needs. The top priority of all four DSNEOs was: "expanding the concept of disability and ensuring education officials have accurate data". In discussing this finding, officers particularly noted the need to consider "invisible" disabilities and chronic illnesses. Two recommendations tied for second priority, namely: "Provide and support assistive technologies" and "implement support strategies to ensure teachers with disabilities can engage in CoL sessions", demonstrating the importance of support systems that enable teachers with special needs to fully engage in MEWAKA.

Appendix 2: Detailed findings

CoL implementation and facilitation

CoL attendance

CoL attendance varied across ETI regions, with 4 out of 12 CoLs achieving 100% participation in Round 2. Mwanza demonstrated the strongest engagement, with full teacher attendance across all three of its CoLs. In contrast, Iringa recorded the lowest average attendance at 60%, with female teacher attendance particularly low at 53%. At School 6, for example, some teachers did not attend CoL sessions due to overlapping TPD commitments, including attending training from the Jifunze Uelewe programme. Overall, average teacher participation declined by 6%, from 88% in Round 1 to 82% in Round 2. This indicates a need to explore underlying causes and enhance strategies for sustaining engagement.

CoL facilitation and length

Among the 14 peer facilitators (PFs) who facilitated the observed CoLs in Round 2, 64% (9) were male and 36% (5) were female. One PF was identified as having a disability (hearing impairment). This demonstrates efforts for equitable PF selection, while also pointing to the need to give female teachers opportunities to facilitate CoL sessions.

The duration of CoL sessions across the observed groups in Round 2 ranged from 8 to 85 minutes, with an average length of 44 minutes. Three CoLs lasted less than 30 minutes, four sessions fell within the 30-to 59-minute range, while five CoLs extended to 60 minutes or more. The longer sessions were recorded in Dodoma (3 CoLs), Mwanza (1 CoL), and Iringa (1 CoL) indicating regional differences in the length of CoL sessions.

CoL focus

The focus of observed CoL sessions varied across visited schools. Three CoLs (2 in Dodoma and 1 in Iringa) centred on specific subject content, while another in Iringa focused on technology use for a curricular topic (letter writing), and one in Dodoma concentrated on socio-emotional support. Pedagogical focus was the most common theme, with five CoLs dedicated to this area, which shows an increase from three in Round 1. One of the pedagogically-focused CoLs in Iringa addressed an issue raised by the REO based on NECTA's Pupils Item Response Analysis of student exam results, suggesting that CoLs can be an effective mechanism to address regional and school-level priorities. One observed CoL in a school in Lindi

focused on basic needs, namely, better ways to ensure the provision of food at school. Two CoLs in Mwanza focused on inclusive education, one of which was guided by the Elimu Jumuishi CoL module from the LMS.

Quality of CoL facilitation

CoL facilitation was assessed using 10 quality indicators, which revealed both strengths and areas for improvement. Strong performance was noted in inclusivity and professionalism, with 92% of CoLs (n=11) scoring high for facilitators not exhibiting bias in their language, examples, or materials. Similarly, 83% (n=10) created an atmosphere of trust, and 75% (n=9) effectively kept discussions focused on instructional matters. Over half of the CoLs (58%, n=7) were rated low for encouraging teacher reflection on strategies shared. A third of CoLs (33%, n=4) were scored low in making time to address teachers' needs. Regionally, Mwanza led in facilitation performance with 22 high scores, followed closely by Iringa with 21.

CoL engagement

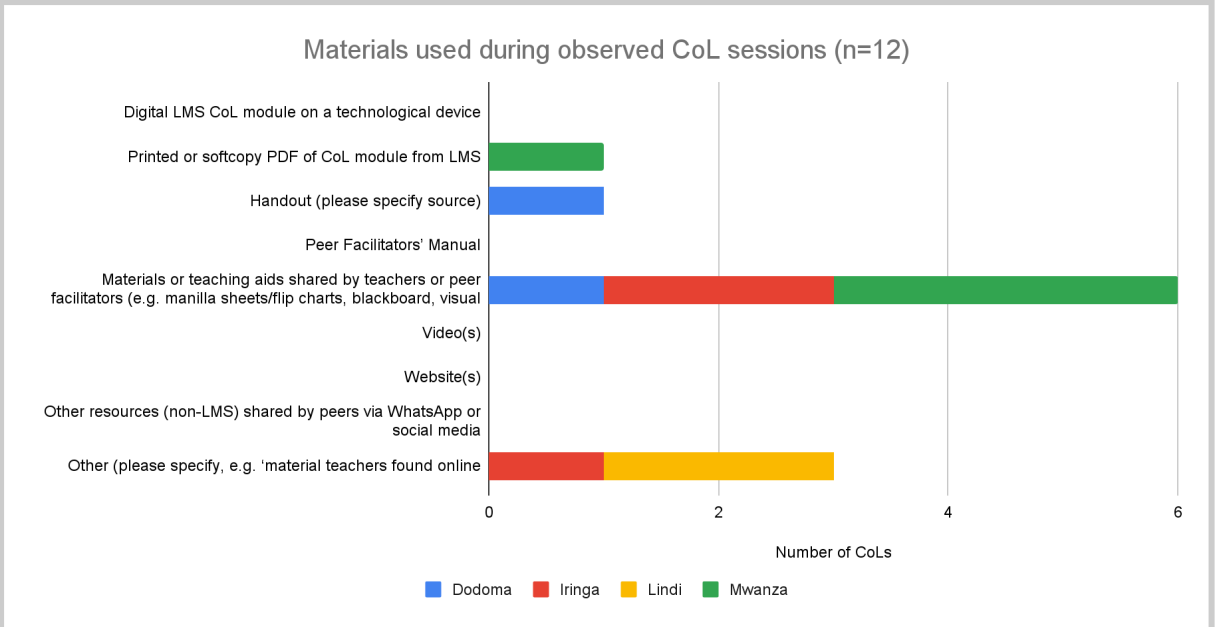
CoL engagement was assessed across five key categories. Most CoLs demonstrated strong teacher involvement, with 67% (n=8) scoring high for active participation in discussions and activities. Similarly, 75% (n=9) showed strong relevance to classroom practice, as reflected in teacher discussions that connected CoL content to their own students and teaching practices. Engagement in collaborative thinking was also notable, with 67% (n=8) of CoLs rated high for teachers' responsiveness to peers. However, engagement could be strengthened further: 42% (n=5) scored at the medium level for grounding discussions in classroom experiences and outputs. Discussions on pedagogy received mixed ratings, with 33% (n=4) scoring low and 50% (n=6) scoring high. Overall, high engagement across the five weighted categories was assessed at 58% in Round 2. Stakeholders noted that having all teachers in a school attend a CoL, regardless of the topic and its relation to their own teaching assignments, may lead some teachers to be less interested and engaged, despite the potential to gain confidence in teaching different subjects or grade levels.

Use of materials and technology in CoLs

The use of technology and digital resources in CoL sessions was lower in Round 2. Unlike Round 1, which recorded 17 instances of technology use (including 6 smartphones and 5 tablets), no basic phones, smartphones, tablets, or laptops were used in any of the observed CoLs in Round 2. Tech resources such as the LMS CoL module and the PF manual were absent, except for one CoL in Mwanza (8%, n=12) that used a soft copy PDF of the CoL module. This was one of the schools that received internet vouchers to

encourage use of the LMS. This marks a drop from Round 1, when two observed CoLs used the LMS modules and one used the Peer Facilitator Manual. In the school that had received a Raspberry Pi device and three of the four schools that received internet bundles, digital tools were not used during CoL sessions, although a PF from the school with a Raspberry Pi mentioned using the modules for preparation. On a more positive note, 50% (6 of 12) of CoLs incorporated teaching aids such as manila sheets, flip charts, books, and syllabi, up from 5 in Round 1. Technology use was observed in only one CoL in Iringa (8%, n=12), where a projector and three desktop computers were used during a session on letter writing in MS Word. This was possible because the school was a BOOST ICT hub with a functioning computer lab. Challenges with materials and technology were reported, with schools citing a lack of internet bundles and limited skills to use ICT facilities. Figure 2 **shows the materials and technology used per region.**

Figure 2. *Materials used during observed CoL sessions*



Participation by gender and disability status

Across the 12 observed CoLs, teachers known to have disabilities accounted for 4.4% (n=7) of the 160 participants (the true figure was likely higher). Although they did not take on secretarial roles, their participation was notable, as they exceeded their proportional representation in four contribution categories. When disaggregated by gender and disability status, male teachers contributed more frequently than females, with male teachers with disabilities showing particularly high levels of engagement,

especially in the category “answering another’s question without sharing an idea.” On average, male teachers without disabilities contributed slightly more than female teachers, both with and without disabilities. Male teachers with disabilities contributed the most, with rates more than twice those of other males and nearly three times those of females. Participation aligned with gender ratios in 67% (8 of 12) of the sessions. In contrast, two schools, in Dodoma and Iringa showed lower female participation. In one school in Dodoma, the only female teacher was unable to engage fully due to competing school responsibilities, highlighting how gender imbalance and workload can limit active involvement.

The data reveals gendered patterns in CoL contributions, with male teachers averaging 1.21 total contributions and 1.13 substantial contributions, while female teachers averaged 0.95 and 0.85, respectively, highlighting a notable gender gap in participation. Detailed findings are shown in Table 2 below.

Table 2. *CoL Observations Round 2 contribution patterns by gender and disability*

CoL Observation Round 2	Number of contributions per sub-group (raw numbers)				
	Male (no disability) Total n = 65	**Male (disability) Total n = 3**	**Female (no disability) Total n = 88**	**Female (disability) Total n = 4**	**Total Total n = 160**
Asks a question about the CoL topic/activities/ material	14	1	11	1	27
Shares an idea, strategy or resource from their own classroom/ experience/knowledge or contributes to discussion about another's idea (spontaneously or by invitation)	30	1	25	1	57
Answers another's question without sharing an idea, strategy or resource or contributing to discussion about another's idea—e.g., they answer a factual or theoretical question	15	4	16	0	35
Presents on behalf of a group (e.g., following a group work activity)	7	1	12	1	21
Shares a concern or challenge for which they want advice from other teachers or contributes to discussion about another's concern or challenge	3	1	11	0	15
Carries out purely secretarial tasks, e.g. records others' contributions on manila sheets or board, posts up manilla sheets for display or takes notes	4	0	4	0	8
Other activity or contribution	1	0	5	0	6
TOTAL	74	8	84	3	169
Average no. per teacher	1.14	2.67	0.95	0.75	1.06

CoL Observation Round 2	Number of contributions per sub-group (raw numbers)				
	Male (no disability) Total n = 65	**Male (disability) Total n = 3**	**Female (no disability) Total n = 88**	**Female (disability) Total n = 4**	**Total Total n = 160**
TOTAL excluding unsubstantive contributions	69	8	75	3	155
Average no. per teacher excluding unsubstantive contributions	1.06	2.67	0.85	0.75	0.97

Teacher practices and classroom observations

Overview

A total of 11 classroom observations were conducted in Round 2, with three per region (except Mwanza, where one site was a Teacher Resource Centre). All observed classes began and ended on time. The teacher gender distribution was 8 males and 3 females. The subject focus was primarily on mathematics, with 6 lessons observed, followed by 2 science lessons, and 1 each of literacy, social studies, and history. Regarding teaching materials, 6 lessons incorporated books, while in 10 lessons, artefacts and other teaching aids were used. No lessons utilised technology during the observations. Many observations (9 out of 11) were conducted in Standard 6 classrooms, with one lesson each in Standards 5 and 3.

Classroom climate and environment

The overall climate and classroom environment showed moderate strength in Round 2, with 45% of the 7 weighted categories scoring high. Dodoma scored higher ratings than Lindi, Mwanza, and Iringa. Positive engagement was observed in the category “Students participate actively and engage”, with 73% of observations rating this highly. However, two key areas showed the need for strengthening: 64% of observations (n=7) scored low for “Students actively ask their own questions”. Similarly, 64% (n=7) of observations were scored low for “Teacher provides students with opportunities to share their personal experiences related to the topic”, indicating a need for more opportunities to connect learning with students’ lived experiences.

Classroom facilitation skills and strategies

Facilitation skills and strategies demonstrated both strengths and areas for improvement. Notably, 58% of the 9 weighted categories scored high. A particular strength was observed in the clarity of content delivery, with 91% of observations (n=10) rated high for “The teacher’s explanation of the content is clear”. Similarly, 82% (n=9) scored high for “The teacher adjusts teaching to the levels of students/activities to the levels of students, providing appropriate amounts and levels of content for them.” However, there were areas requiring improvement, particularly in the use of diverse instructional methods. 45% of observations (n=5) were scored medium, and 27% (n=3) were scored low for “The teacher uses multiple modalities

for instruction and repeats instructions as needed", suggesting that there is a need for teachers to engage a broader range of teaching methods.

Supporting positive student development

The classroom observations reveal both strengths and areas for improvement in supporting positive development within the classroom environment. Overall, 43% of the 7 weighted categories scored high. A notable strength was observed in 91% of the sessions (n=10), where teachers treated all students with respect, particularly valuing diversity in backgrounds and cultures. However, there are clear areas for growth: 64% of observations (n=7) scored low for "The teacher provides both girl and boy students with choices and opportunities to take on roles in the classroom", pointing to a possible gender equity gap in role distribution, or a general lack of providing opportunities for different roles in the classroom to girls or boys. 55% (n=6) of the sessions scored low for "Students engage with other students' ideas", suggesting that more opportunities for peer engagement and idea exchange are needed to enhance the classroom dynamic.

Gendered contributions in classroom observations

Gendered contributions across classroom observations revealed significant regional disparities. Dodoma saw much higher participation from both boys and girls, with equal contributions from each gender (boys = 54; girls = 54). In contrast, Mwanza showed much lower participation levels (boys = 11; girls = 15). Across the observed regions, girls contributed slightly more than boys, accounting for 56% of the total classroom contributions, even though they represented only 45% of the students. This indicates that despite boys outnumbering girls in many classrooms, girls were more actively engaged in discussions and activities.

Use of group work in classrooms

Group work was observed in three lessons during Round 1, including one lesson in Dodoma and two in Mwanza. In Round 2, it appeared in two lessons, one in Dodoma and one in Mwanza. In Iringa, students were seated in groups to share books, but no interactive or collaborative activity occurred. This suggests that group work remains limited and inconsistently applied across regions.

Equity

Tech access

Access to technology in rural schools remains a significant challenge, with limited connectivity and the high cost of data bundles posing barriers to teachers' access to CoL modules on the TIE LMS. At the school provided with a Raspberry Pi device, teachers considered it valuable for accessing the modules. Teachers from neighbouring schools expressed interest in accessing it, and some teachers reported using it to support their learning. However, it was noted that the PF was not observed using a CoL module from the Raspberry Pi during the actual CoL session.

Teachers with hearing or visual impairments and using a wheelchair reported that limited access to appropriate technologies and infrastructure significantly hinders their participation in TPD activities. Barriers facing teachers with disabilities in accessing technology include:

- LMS videos are not captioned, making them inaccessible to teachers with hearing impairments, as reported in schools with such teachers. This was reported by teachers with disabilities in two schools (Dodoma and Iringa).
- There is a lack of voice readers or screen-reading software, limiting access for teachers who are blind or have visual impairment. This was reported by teachers with disabilities in two schools (Dodoma and Mwanza regions).

Teachers expressed a need for various assistive technologies and devices to enhance their participation in teacher professional development activities. At one school in Dodoma, there was a request for hearing aids to support teachers with hearing impairments. At another school in Mwanza, a special school, teachers indicated the need for several devices, including the Orbit Reader, Cyker 'top reader' (likely referring to a Braille device or reader), smart Braille machines, and notes and recording software that would allow teachers to record and review CoL sessions.

Furthermore, teachers in another school in Mwanza mentioned the need for local servers to reduce internet costs, similar to the Raspberry Pi or Rachel Pi though no specific name was mentioned.

Inclusion of teachers with disabilities and chronic illnesses

Small group discussions were conducted at six schools with teachers who self-identified as having disabilities or chronic illnesses that affected their participation in TPD activities. These included one group in Mwanza, two in Dodoma, and three in Iringa, totalling 18 participants. Among them were four female teachers with disabilities, four male teachers with disabilities, nine female teachers living with chronic illnesses, and one male teacher with a chronic illness. One additional participant, although not chronically ill herself, reported missing TPD opportunities due to caring for a chronically ill family member. In addition to these focus group discussions, WEOs, DSNEOs, and TCPD teams were also asked about the issue of inconsistent data on teachers with disabilities. Furthermore, discussions about the needs of teachers with disabilities emerged across nearly all key informant interviews and teacher focus group discussions held during the Round 1 findings activity.

Barriers faced by teachers with disabilities

Stigma and identity as barriers to disclosure: Many teachers with disabilities and chronic illnesses reported avoiding disclosing their needs because of fear of exclusion from seminars, workshops, or exam invigilation, which are opportunities often tied to financial benefits. One teacher in Mwanza shared, "This is the 7th year in a row I have not been selected to attend a seminar." Another noted, "My hearing problem causes me to not be selected for certain things … I'm excluded." In Dodoma, a teacher described how stigma shows up in daily interactions:

> *"You ask someone, 'what did he say?' You want them to explain to you, but if you ask again, 'what did he say?' they just comment, 'this guy doesn't listen'. Now, those words, how do they make you feel?—they're not good. They are discouraging, and it is a stigma."*

Systemic exclusion from TPD opportunities: Many teachers with disabilities described a systemic pattern of exclusion from TPD opportunities. While some teachers with physical disabilities who do not require assistance were selected for training, those who use wheelchairs or have hearing impairments were overlooked. A visually impaired teacher in Mwanza explained, "Even if I'm selected for a workshop, I would require a person to accompany me—and there is no allowance for that."

Teachers with chronic illness

Teachers living with chronic illnesses reported missing CoL sessions and TPD opportunities due to their illnesses, but their challenges are even less likely to be acknowledged. These teachers reported refraining from disclosing their conditions, believing them to be temporary or fearing stigmatisation. A female teacher from Iringa shared, “There are people who maybe don’t want their challenge to be known; maybe they think that normally it could be seen as something embarrassing.”

Barriers

Lack of inter-ministerial coordination: The teachers with chronic illnesses reported a lack of stronger collaboration between the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health to better support them in managing their conditions. One teacher in Iringa recounted a specific case where a medically recommended 30-day bed rest for a pregnant teacher was rejected by the headteacher, who questioned the legitimacy of a regional doctor’s certificate. Another teacher with hearing impairment in Dodoma noted that he could not find a hearing aid provider who would accept his government-issued insurance, meaning he had to save up his own money, which was delaying his access to a hearing aid.

Data privacy and teacher identities: Teachers noted confidentiality concerns about disclosing chronic illnesses or disabilities which are not ‘visible’. In addition to the fear of stigma, there is sometimes a lack of trust that head teachers or others delegated to collect data will keep information private. In other cases, teachers themselves do not identify themselves as a ‘disabled person’ even if they have a health issue that impedes their daily functioning. These findings highlight that having data on teachers with chronic illness or disabilities is an important step towards providing them support, but systems for personal data must be approached with sensitivity and respect.

Supports already in place to support teachers with disabilities or chronic illnesses to engage in CoL sessions

Flexible CoL arrangements for teachers with chronic illness: A couple of schools have introduced practical adjustments to support teachers with chronic illnesses in participating in MEWAKA activities. In one school in Iringa, CoL sessions were occasionally rescheduled to accommodate teachers who were unwell, ensuring they did not miss critical discussions.

Meanwhile, School 4 adopted a routine of beginning each CoL session with a recap of the previous one.

Reducing mobility barriers for teachers with disabilities: In Mwanza, a key mitigation strategy involved hosting seminars and exam-preparation meetings at the local special school, minimising the need for teachers with physical disabilities to travel long distances.

Gender

Participants had varied reactions to the finding that women engage less in CoLs related to technology. Some teachers and TCPD teams noted that in their schools, women used technology as competently as men. These responses were more common in Iringa and Mwanza. Others were not surprised, particularly in Lindi and Dodoma, where they felt women used tech less frequently. Regardless of region, however, both viewpoints were found across all locations.

Perceived factors for lower women's engagement in CoLs involving technology use:

- **Heavier social and domestic responsibilities:** Many participants, both male and female, noted that women often bear a greater burden of domestic chores and caregiving responsibilities. This limits the time they can dedicate to learning and experimenting with technology compared to their male counterparts, who may have more leisure time to explore digital tools.
- **Household spending priorities over TPD-related costs:** Women were said to prioritise household needs—such as food, school fees, or healthcare—over personal development expenses, such as purchasing internet bundles or devices for continuous professional development. This financial prioritisation can limit their ability to engage in online training or digital platforms.
- **Lower interest or motivation in technology:** Some participants observed that women appear less driven to engage with technology, which they referred to as a lack of drive or awakening. This perception might stem from a combination of cultural norms and lack of exposure to inspiring tech-related experiences.
- **Lack of confidence in using technology:** Many teachers said women often doubt their abilities when it comes to using digital tools. This lack of confidence, whether rooted in past negative experiences, insufficient training, or societal expectations, was seen as a key barrier to their active participation in tech-based TPD.

- **Traditional/patriarchal beliefs:** In some communities, longstanding gender norms discourage women from pursuing interests seen as technical or outside the domestic sphere. This cultural context can undermine their participation in ICT-focused learning communities.
- **Male teachers are more often selected for ICT training opportunities:** Often, schools nominate the most tech-savvy teachers for workshops or seminars. Since male teachers are generally perceived to be more proficient with technology, they are more likely to be chosen, perpetuating the gender gap in digital skills and confidence.
- **Greater personal device ownership among men:** Outside of government-issued tablets, male teachers were reported to own laptops and smartphones more often than women. This access advantage gives men more opportunities to practise, learn, and engage in tech-enhanced TPD activities.

Agency

In Round 1, CoL observations revealed numerous instances of individual or 'relational' agency, in which teachers took extra steps to ensure a colleague with special needs could engage in a school-based CoL. For example, a peer facilitator would make sure to speak loudly and face a teacher with a hearing impairment so this colleague could lip-read. Teachers acted as scribes for peers or read aloud materials for them. Such individual acts to adapt CoL proceedings for teachers with disabilities continued during Round 2. In addition, all teachers continue to exercise their agency to identify challenges to be addressed in CoLs. During analysis, another form of agency emerged, which we have termed 'administrative agency'. Administrative agency occurs when an education officer actively takes steps to address a need that cannot be met at the school level. Not all officers in the sample demonstrated such agency, but there were instances at both the local and regional levels.

Local-level administrative agency in addressing teacher needs

At the ward and school levels, a few education officers have shown agency in responding to the challenges teachers face. In Iringa, a WEO identified a gap in the teaching of early grade literacy (3Rs) and responded by organising collaborative meetings between academic and '3Rs' teachers. The same WEO also facilitated regular school-level meetings where teachers could voice their challenges and exchange strategies. Furthermore, realising the digital literacy gap among teachers, the WEO in Iringa trained teachers to use the TIE LMS. Similarly, in Dodoma, WEOs

organised forums for teachers with disabilities to better understand their experiences and to support them, exemplifying inclusive leadership and consultative decision-making. DSNEOs in Iringa and Mwanza also demonstrated agency by advocating for resource allocation, such as providing wheelchairs to teachers with physical disabilities and planning sign language training for those with hearing impairments.

Regional-level administrative agency

At the regional level, some education officers have taken proactive steps to address systemic implementation gaps. In Iringa, the RAO responded to concerns from visually impaired teachers who could not use the census tablets due to a lack of screen readers by reaching out to technology stakeholders for support, although no immediate solutions were provided. Similarly, the RAO in Mwanza collaborated with the Tanzanian English Language Teachers Association to organise curriculum-focused meetings that brought together primary and secondary teachers. These meetings aimed to identify content gaps and mismatches in teaching methods, leading to the development of a peer-teaching model that is being scaled up across the region. Schools in Iringa have also partnered with external organisations, such as IBO Italy, to identify teachers and students with special needs.

Feedback loops and decision-making

Stakeholder mapping

The stakeholder mapping activity, involving 37 interview participants and 11 teacher focus groups, revealed a dominant perception of MEWAKA as a centralised, top-down programme. Nearly two-thirds (30 out of 48) placed MoEST, PO-RALG (Ministry) and TIE at the centre, followed by LGA officers, with teachers on the outer ring. Some even used vertical arrangements to stress the hierarchy. Most participants who endorsed this model trusted ministerial leadership, referring to MoEST as the mother of education and describing the programme's rollout using the term 'top down'.

In contrast, one-fifth (10 out of 48) placed teachers at the centre, highlighting teacher-led decision-making in CoL implementation. It was not only teacher groups who mapped stakeholders this way, but also some LGA officers and head teachers. As one LGA officer noted, "the welfare of MEWAKA starts with the teachers themselves." However, a few participants excluded teachers from decision-making entirely, placing them outside the circles, suggesting that teachers have no voice. A recurring issue, especially among head teachers, was inconsistent guidance from MoEST, PO-RALG, and TIE. Conflicting directives led to confusion and weakened

implementation. As one head teacher put it, “It would be better if the guidelines didn’t pass so many corners,” while another described a disconnect between well-informed central authorities and under-prepared school-level implementers.

Feedback loops

Findings on feedback mechanisms further illustrate the disconnection between system levels. Participants across several regions expressed dissatisfaction with the absence of functional feedback loops. TCPD teams in one region repeatedly reported receiving no feedback from higher authorities. Teachers described continuing their work blindly, without knowing whether they were doing things correctly. One teacher lamented: “I keep going the same way. This is the major issue we face. We try our best, but our colleagues up there are not.” In some cases, this absence of feedback was demoralising, reducing the motivation to actively engage in professional learning or to innovate within the classroom. However, exceptions did exist. In one region, some WEOs and the RAO had established mechanisms to collect teacher needs through school visits, meetings, written communication, and even digital tools like tablets. The RAO, for instance, responded to teacher challenges by hiring an expert from Singida to provide targeted support, indicating a practical use of feedback to drive action. In another region, some WEOs utilised peer support strategies, assigning teachers from other schools to assist where gaps were identified. Mwanza was a notable exception, exhibiting strong feedback loops. The RAO emphasised gathering teacher-reported needs at the regional level and relaying them to national authorities, while the DSNEO conducted follow-ups during school visits and addressed needs where possible. The schools in the visited district in Mwanza also shared a CoL schedule, making it easier for officials to avoid planning other activities that would draw teachers away from CoLs. The presence of strong feedback loops, follow-up visits, and shared CoL schedules coincided with 100% teacher attendance at observed CoLs in Mwanza in both research rounds.

Barriers

Lack of consistency and effectiveness of these feedback mechanisms

One RAO pointed out that some districts were not channelling teacher feedback properly and emphasised the need for more proactive and multichannel approaches, including the use of WhatsApp and direct visits. Meanwhile, LGA-level feedback mechanisms in one of the visited regions remained weak, with little evidence that teacher concerns or feedback were translated into follow-up actions or system-level improvements.

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