

Teacher Continuous Professional Development (TCCD) Cohort Two Pilot Report

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Authors

Lydia Namatende-Sakwa (PhD)

Endale Kabede (PhD)

Davis Muli Musyoki

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List of Acronyms

- APHRC – African Population and Health Research Center
- CoP – Communities of Practice
- DRS – Department of Refugee Services (if referenced elsewhere)
- FAK – Film Aid Kenya
- FGD – Focus Group Discussion
- IRC – International Rescue Committee
- JSS – Junior Secondary School
- KEMIS – Kenya Education Management Information System (if relevant)
- KICD – Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development
- KII – Key Informant Interview
- LtP – Learning through Play
- LWF – Lutheran World Federation
- MoE – Ministry of Education
- MHPSS – Mental Health and Psychosocial Support
- PMU – Project Management Unit (if included in risk mgmt. section)
- RLO – Refugee-Led Organisation
- RTCoP – Refugee Teacher Community of Practice (if referenced elsewhere)
- RTI – Research Triangle International
- SCDE – Sub-County Director of Education
- SEL – Social and Emotional Learning
- TCCD – Teacher Continuous Capacity Development
- TSC – Teachers Service Commission
- TWG – Technical Working Group
- UDL – Universal Design for Learning
- WASH – Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene

Executive Summary

The TeachWell pilot assessed classroom practices across five pedagogical domains—lesson structure, Learning through Play (LtP), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and learner experience—through lesson observations, teacher surveys, and qualitative feedback in both host and refugee schools.

Findings show strong teacher uptake of UDL, with 93.8% reporting confidence and ease in applying its principles, and high enthusiasm for LtP. However, its classroom use was more limited than teachers' self-reports suggest. While confidence is high and practices are widespread, there are nuanced differences in the application of UDL's three pillars between host and refugee schools. SEL emerged as the weakest domain: while 75% of teachers found the training understandable, only 56.3% felt confident applying SEL, with uptake particularly low in refugee schools. Learner experience was rated especially positively in refugee classrooms, where lessons were more frequently observed as engaging, joyful, and transformative.

Teachers valued Communities of Practice (CoPs) for peer learning, but highlighted persistent barriers, including large class sizes, limited materials, time constraints, socio-cultural norms that affect play, and limited access to digital platforms. Despite these challenges, 93.8% of teachers reported finding the enhancements (UDL, LtP, SEL) useful, reflecting strong overall buy-in.

The findings point to promising progress in structured pedagogy and inclusive practices, alongside clear needs for deeper SEL capacity-building, resource provision, digital access, and ongoing coaching to sustain and scale the TeachWell model across both host and refugee contexts.

Key Highlights

- Structured teaching practices improving: Most teachers met expectations in lesson planning, materials readiness, and practice activities, though lesson openings and conclusions remain weaker.
- Learning through Play uptake uneven: While teachers reported confidence in LtP, observed classroom use of games and storytelling was limited—indicating a gap between perception and practice.
- UDL as strongest enhancement: UDL was widely adopted across classrooms, with high teacher confidence and learner feedback confirming inclusivity and engagement.
- SEL weakest area: Only 56.3% of teachers felt confident applying SEL, with low uptake in refugee schools; teachers found it more challenging to integrate compared to UDL and LtP.
- Positive learner experiences: Refugee classrooms stood out for creating engaging, joyful, and transformative lessons, despite contextual challenges.
- Communities of Practice valued: CoPs provided peer learning and problem-solving spaces, though participation was inconsistent.
- Systemic barriers persist: Large class sizes, limited teaching materials, gendered participation norms, and poor digital access constrain the application of enhancements.



Background

Teachers are the single most important school-level factor influencing student learning, well-being, and holistic development, a role that becomes even more critical in conflict-affected settings where resources and family support are limited (Braun et al., 2020). Schooling in such contexts can restore a sense of stability by offering physical, cognitive, and psychosocial protection, with teachers leading efforts to create inclusive and supportive learning environments (Kirk & Winthrop, 2013; Soylu, 2020).

However, teachers in humanitarian settings, many of whom are refugees themselves (Kirk & Winthrop, 2008)—face immense challenges. They must master the host country's curriculum while managing overcrowded classrooms, student-teacher ratios that sometimes exceed 180:1, and limited infrastructure and resources. Opportunities for certified, credentialed Teacher Professional Development (TPD) are scarce, further compounding the difficulties (Mendenhall et al., 2021). Teacher turnover is high, driven by low pay, heavy workloads, and the overwhelming academic, linguistic, and psychosocial needs of learners (Falk et al., 2019; Wa-Mbaleka, 2012). At the same time, teachers are expected to provide psychosocial support to children experiencing trauma, often without adequate attention to their own emotional well-being (Kirk & Winthrop, 2013; Mendenhall et al., 2015).

Meeting children's learning and developmental needs, therefore, requires significant investment in teachers. This includes strengthening their knowledge, skills, and motivation, as well as improving policies that govern their work, and ensuring healthy, safe, and supportive environments that enable them to thrive.



The TeachWell Unlocking Playful Learning Project (TeachWell)

The TeachWell project, funded by the LEGO Foundation and the Grundfos Foundation and led by the International Rescue Committee (IRC), seeks to strengthen the quality, equity, and inclusivity of teacher continuous capacity development (TCCD) and supportive school environments for teachers and learners in Turkana and Garissa refugee camps and refugee-hosting communities in Kenya. This will be achieved through strengthened competencies and resilience of teachers, creating an enabling policy and environment, developing safe and supportive school environments, and increasing resources and resilience in schools during crises. This five-year initiative (September 2023–August 2028) will cover 100% of Primary and Junior School teachers in the refugee-hosting counties of Turkana and Garissa.

Project implementation is supported by a consortium of partners with complementary expertise to support holistic education programming:

- International Rescue Committee (IRC): Water, Sanitation & Hygiene (WASH) component; health interventions in education and crisis modifier activities to mitigate learning disruptions in the event of disasters.
- Research Triangle International (RTI) with its partners (M-Shule and Dignitas): teacher capacity development.
- Lutheran World Federation (LWF): capacity development for teachers in refugee camp schools.
- Film Aid Kenya (FAK): mobilize communities to support teachers and implement the messaging aspects of the project.
- African Population and Health Research Center (APHRC): Generate evidence for adaptive programming towards impact as informed by a research and learning agenda.

To ensure success and sustainability, the project is working collaboratively and in alignment with the Ministry of Education's (MoE) and the Teacher Service Commission's (TSC) priorities.

Teacher Continuous Capacity Development (TCCD)

This report reviews the implementation of TCCD initiatives led by RTI, which has provided teacher training in both refugee camps and host communities in Garissa and Turkana. The training centered on pedagogical approaches, including Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), Learning through Play (LtP), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), and Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS). To guide this work, a multi-agency Technical Working Group (TWG) was established in May 2024, bringing together officers from the MoE, Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD), TSC, and consortium partners. Since its formation, the TWG has overseen the rollout of the TCCD package for cohort 1 (grades 1–3), co-developed training materials for cohort 2 (grades 4–6), and piloted these materials in 40 schools—10 located in refugee camps and 30 in host communities.



Joint Monitoring and Sensitization

To strengthen county-level collaboration, the consortium organized joint monitoring and sensitization from July 14 to 18, 2025. The activities included lesson observations, teacher surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs), learner focus group discussions (FGDs), and orientation meetings with Sub-County Directors of Education (SCDEs), with the aim to:

- 1. Gather feedback on the draft cohort 2 training materials from teachers and learners to inform revisions.
- 2. Identify the support teachers need to effectively implement Math, English, Science, and Technology lessons.
- 3. Assess training-of-trainers requirements ahead of the 2026 full rollout.
- 4. Orient SCDEs on TeachWell, clarify their roles, and secure buy-in for project implementation.

Sample and Study Setting

The Cohort 2 TeachWell pilot study was conducted in 28 primary schools (six refugee camp schools in Dadaab, Garissa County, and 22 host community schools in Turkana County). Data collection combined both quantitative and qualitative methods: 28 structured classroom observations, a teacher survey administered to a sub-sample of 16 teachers, 28KIIs with teachers (one per school), 28 KIIs with instructional leaders, and 28 learner FGDs involving a total of 168 learners. Table 1 summarizes the sample composition. Participants were purposively selected to ensure coverage of all study schools and core subject areas (English, Mathematics, Science & Technology)

Table 1: Sample Size of the Study

	Sample
Teachers (survey)	16
Teachers (KIIs)	28
Instructional leader	28
Learners	168
Total	240



Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted from Cohort teams during the pilot phase of teacher training for Grades 4 to 6. The team used both quantitative and qualitative methods to capture classroom application of TeachWell competencies, changes in practices, learner responses, and training relevance. The tools were designed to capture the extent to which classroom practices reflect the pedagogical strategies emphasized in the teacher training curriculum, in terms of lesson design, delivery methods, and teacher–learner interactions across several core instructional domains. The analysis generated a report that will guide the rollout of Cohort 2, highlighting areas for improvement and strategic lessons.

Quantitative Data Collection and Analysis

Quantitative data were collected through a classroom observation tool (one observation per school, totaling 28 observations) and a Likert-scale teacher questionnaire 16 teachers were purposively selected for diversity in experience and subject taught). Both tools covered five instructional domains: lesson structure, Learning through Play (LtP), Universal Design for Learning (UDL), Social and Emotional Learning (SEL), and learner experience.

Qualitative Data Collection and Analysis

The qualitative data were generated through KIIs with instructional leaders (one from each school) and teachers (one from each school), as well as one FGD comprising six learners from each of the selected 28 schools. The data were transcribed, coded, and analyzed using a thematic analysis. These findings triangulated the quantitative data to provide a comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of the TCCD training.

Findings from the Pilot

This section presents descriptive findings structured around six key pedagogical domains inductively derived from the tools and aligned with the pilot’s learning objectives. For each domain, we describe the specific indicators observed, summarize any missingness (if relevant), and present the proportion of lessons in which each indicator was observed. Results are disaggregated by school setting, comparing host community schools and refugee camp schools to identify patterns of divergence. The qualitative data were used to triangulate the findings.

First, we assess the extent to which classroom practices reflect the pedagogical strategies emphasized in the teacher training. Second, we present findings on the challenges of implementing the TCCD training. Third, we explore the support teachers need to optimize the benefits of the training.



Dimensions of the TCCD Training

We capture five dimensions of the TCCD training:

- Lesson Structure
- Learning Through Play (LtP)
- Universal Design for Learning (UDL)
- Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)
- Learner Experience
- Communities of Practice

Lesson Structure

The first domain assessed in the classroom observations focused on the structural integrity of lesson delivery. Five key components were evaluated to determine whether teachers followed a coherent pedagogical flow: the use of a lesson plan, preparedness of materials, quality of the lesson introduction, effectiveness of instructional development, and the presence of a clear conclusion. Each of the five indicators was scored on a four-point scale: (1 = Below Expectation, 2 = Approaching, 3 = Meeting, and 4 = Exceeding Expectations). Importantly, all items in this domain were fully completed, with no missing responses.

Figure 1 displays the distribution of scores across each item. The data show that most teachers were rated as 'meeting expectations' in all five components, with practice activities, materials readiness, and lesson planning standing out as areas of strength. For these three indicators, over 75% of teachers met or exceeded expectations, reflecting generally solid preparation and instructional follow-through.

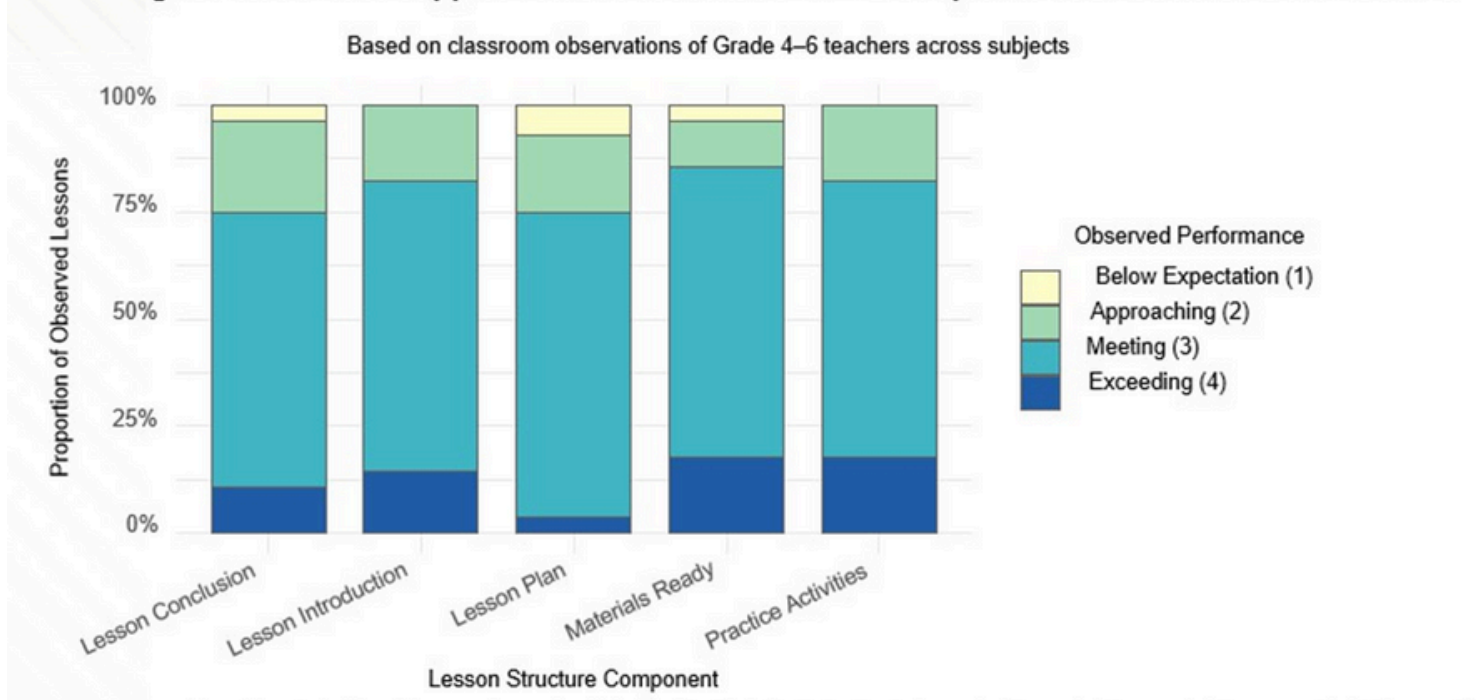
The competences gained in lesson planning and practice activities were not only confirmed in the survey data, in which 87.6% of the teachers found the sample lesson plans easy to understand and apply, but also in the qualitative data, as several teachers highlighted improvements in their planning and learner engagement. A teacher from Hillaac Primary School in Dadaab noted, "The April training changed my attitude in teaching. I am able to plan my teaching and engage my learners better in class." The training was described as interactive and hands-on, enabling teachers to design lessons more effectively. This was echoed by the instructional leader of Boystown Primary School in Garissa Township, who affirmed that teachers demonstrated stronger planning skills following the training. This included competences to develop personal lesson outcomes, as confirmed by 81.3% of the survey with the teachers.

This notwithstanding, competences in lesson planning and conclusion emerged as a relative weakness as compared to lesson introduction and delivery/practice activities. About one-quarter of teachers either did not plan or conclude the lesson at all or did so ineffectively (rated 1 or 2).

Together, the findings suggest that Cohort 2 teachers demonstrate a promising baseline of structured teaching practices. At the same time, they reveal gaps in strengthening the flow of lessons—especially in planning the opening and closing moments, which are essential for setting clear objectives and reinforcing learning.



Figure 1: Observed Application of Lesson Structure Competencies in Cohort 2 Classrooms



Learning Through Play (LtP)

Learning Through Play (LtP) was a central domain in the TeachWell Cohort 2 pilot, examined through both direct classroom observations and structured teacher surveys. LtP practices were assessed using a range of observed indicators, including storytelling, role-playing, songs, group work, problem-solving, and experiential learning. However, due to extensive missing responses across several items—especially singing (missing in 20 out of 28 observations), dramatization/role play (17 missing), and experiential learning (12 missing)—only two indicators with complete data were retained for analysis for the observational data: use of storytelling and use of games during lessons.

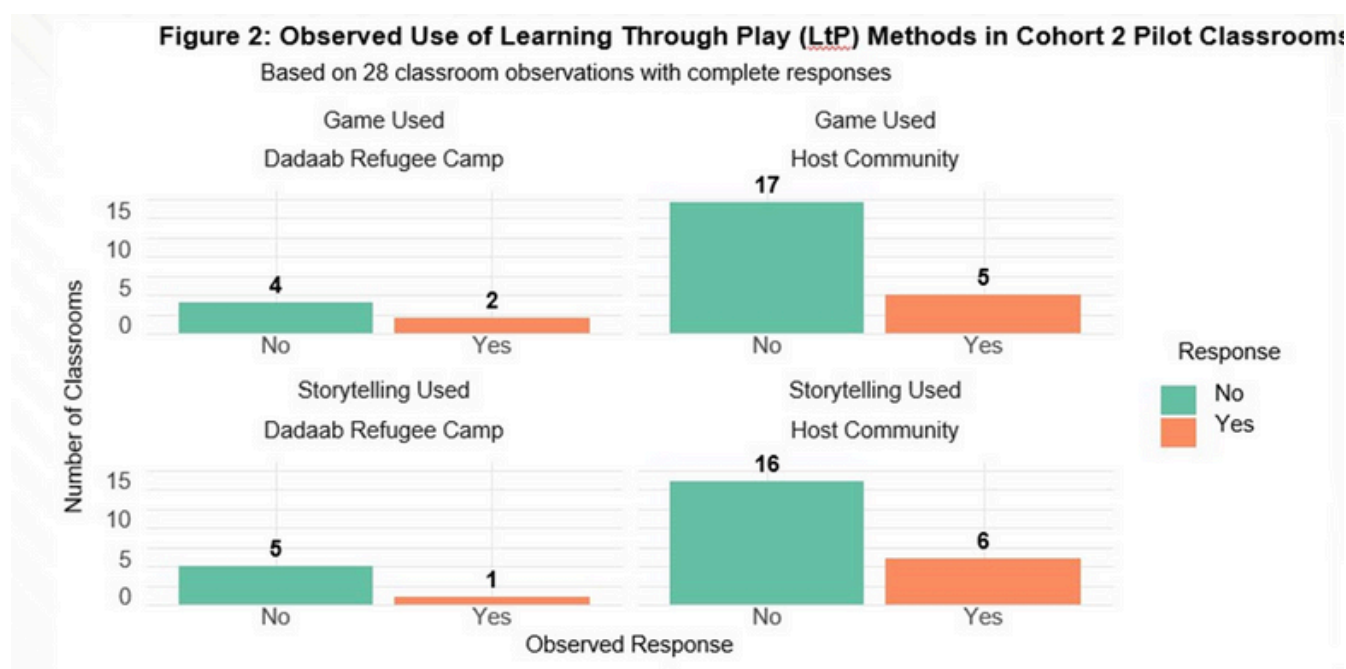
Figure 2 demonstrates that the actual use of LtP methods—specifically games and storytelling— remained limited in practice, with only 8 out of 28 classrooms (29%) integrating games, and just 7 classrooms (25%) incorporating storytelling or related activities. Disaggregated by school setting, host community schools exhibited slightly higher frequencies than refugee schools, but overall these interactive pedagogies were not yet mainstream in either context. In contrast, Table 2 paints a more optimistic picture of teacher readiness and conceptual comfort: 75% of teachers agreed or strongly agreed that the LtP section of the training was easy to understand, and large proportions reported high confidence in applying specific LtP strategies such as group work (100 percent), storytelling (87.5 percent), and games (83.5 percent) in their lessons.

However, the relatively lower perceived ease of applying songs (62.6%) and problem-solving activities (68.8%) indicates that certain strategies may require additional guidance or modeling. This variation highlights the importance of differentiated support within LtP, ensuring that teachers not only adopt the more accessible techniques but also develop competence in those approaches that require greater pedagogical skill or creativity.

Table 2: Learning through Play Section Was Easy to Understand

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree	6	37.5
Agree	6	37.5
Neutral	3	18.8
Disagree	1	6.3
Strongly Disagree	1	6.3
Total	16	100

The juxtaposition of these findings highlights a clear gap between self-reported preparedness and actual classroom application. While most teachers consider themselves well-equipped to use play-based methods, observational data indicate that these methods have yet to be routinely integrated into their daily teaching practices. This suggests that, although awareness and intent are high, practical constraints such as time, resources, class size, and possibly contextual barriers are limiting teachers' ability to implement LtP in full. The qualitative data further illuminated teacher praise of the training for improving their pedagogical skills related to LtP, as one teacher from Dadaab Primary and JSS noted: "The training helped me identify new teaching methods, such as using songs to introduce lessons." Learners also confirmed this shift, as a learner from Kalobeyi shared: "They are using stories mixed in the lessons. They give us freedom to choose from a variety of approaches, especially in mathematics, where many different methods are applied."



Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

The Universal Design for Learning (UDL) framework emphasizes the need for teachers to provide multiple means of presentation, engagement, and expression to accommodate diverse learning needs and styles. The three core dimensions examined were: providing various ways of engagement, multiple ways of expression, and numerous ways of presenting content.

Universal Design for Learning (UDL) emerged as the strongest domain both in terms of observed practice and self-reported teacher confidence during the Cohort 2 pilot. Observation data reveal that a high proportion of teachers in both host and refugee settings provided multiple ways for learners to engage with content, present their understanding, and express themselves. The results, summarized in Figure 3, reveal notable variation across school settings. Host community classrooms reported higher uptake of UDL-aligned practices in two of the three dimensions. Specifically, 90.9 percent of host classrooms were observed to offer multiple ways of engagement, compared to 83.3 percent in refugee classrooms. Similarly, 90.9 percent of host teachers presented content in multiple ways, whereas the corresponding figure in refugee schools was again lower, at 83.3 percent.

Interestingly, refugee classrooms outperformed host communities in the application of multiple ways of expression, with a full 100 percent of observed lessons reflecting this practice, compared to 81.8 percent in host schools. These findings reveal a mixed pattern in implementing UDL strategies across different contexts. While host community teachers generally showed more widespread use of various teaching techniques—possibly due to better access to instructional resources—teachers in refugee settings placed a stronger focus on allowing students to express their understanding in different ways. This contrast highlights the need for context-sensitive training and support strategies as the tool is expanded, ensuring that all three UDL pillars are systematically strengthened in both settings.

Taken together, the results indicate that the UDL domain is one of the stronger areas of observed teaching practice in the pilot cohort. The survey with teachers corroborated the strong uptake of UDL in the classroom, with 93.8% confirming that they had found the training easy to understand, as shown in Table 3.

Table 3: The Universal Design for Learning Section Was Easy to Understand

Response	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Agree (5)	11	68.8
Agree (4)	4	25
Neutral (3)	1	6.3
Total	16	100

As regards confidence in applying UDL in the classroom, 93.8% of teachers reported feeling confident. This strong confidence suggests that UDL is both accessible and practical for teachers, increasing the likelihood of consistent classroom integration and enhancing learner engagement.

The qualitative findings further reinforced the quantitative data on the uptake of UDL, showing its impact in making lessons more engaging and inclusive. A teacher from LWF reflected: “The training was helpful; I gained skills and knowledge to improve my teaching. The enhancements made learning more engaging and interesting through UDL.” Learners also echoed this perspective as a student from Juba Primary School explained: “The lessons are interesting; learners are allowed to ask questions and even given extended lessons.” Similarly, a learner from Hillaac Primary School in Dadaab affirmed: “Our teachers cater for individual learning differences to support us in learning.” Nonetheless, further analysis of the composite UDL score—including its consistency and correlation with observed practices—would strengthen its use as a monitoring indicator in future classroom observations.

Implications of UDL Findings

The findings suggest that UDL is among the strongest areas of pedagogical uptake in the pilot cohort, with both observation and survey data showing widespread adoption. Host community schools generally demonstrated a broader use of diverse teaching strategies, likely due to relatively better access to resources. Refugee classrooms, on the other hand, excelled in enabling learners to express themselves in varied ways. This contrast highlights the importance of context-sensitive training and resource allocation, which involves strengthening resource provision in refugee schools while reinforcing engagement and presentation strategies across both settings.

The qualitative insights emphasize UDL’s tangible benefits in enhancing learner engagement, comprehension, and inclusion, validating its potential as a scalable approach. However, the mixed performance across dimensions suggests that balanced emphasis on all three UDL pillars is needed to avoid uneven uptake. Finally, the relatively high teacher self-reported ease of understanding signals readiness, but future monitoring would benefit from using a composite UDL score to better track consistency and depth of practice over time.



Social Emotional Learning (SEL)

This domain captures the extent to which teachers foster social and emotional learning by promoting competencies such as self-awareness, relationship skills, and decision-making. Observers were asked to identify whether each competency was promoted during the lesson, based on clearly defined criteria.

Figure 4 presents the proportion of lessons in which each of the five SEL competencies was observed, disaggregated by school setting. Across all competencies, lessons in host community schools were more likely to promote SEL than those in refugee camp classrooms. For example, self-awareness was promoted in over 65% of host community lessons, compared to just 20% in refugee settings. Similarly, relationship skills, decision-making, and self-management were each observed in approximately 40–45% of host community lessons, while the corresponding figures in refugee schools were all below 20%. The pattern is consistent across all five competencies.

These findings suggest that learners in host community classrooms might experience more frequent exposure to SEL-related practices. The results raise questions about variations in teacher training, emphasis on lesson planning, or contextual barriers in refugee settings that may limit the integration of SEL.

The relatively low uptake of SEL, as shown in the lesson observation data, is corroborated in the teacher survey data (75.1% see Table 4).

Table 4: Socio and Emotional Learning Was Easy to Understand

Response	Frequency	Percent
Agree (4)	7	43.8
Strongly Agree (5)	5	31.3
Disagree (2)	2	12.5
Neutral (3)	2	12.5
Total	16	100



Survey responses further substantiate these findings. Only 56.3% of teachers reported confidence in applying SEL, while 37.5% felt neutral and 6.3% expressed a lack of confidence. In contrast, confidence levels for UDL and LtP exceeded 90%. This high proportion of neutral responses suggests substantial uncertainty or discomfort among teachers—not merely a lack of exposure. The qualitative data also corroborate the quantitative data as regards the relatively low uptake of SEL compared to LtP and UDL. Teachers acknowledged their continued struggle to address learners’ emotional challenges, a concern also highlighted by instructional leaders. For example, the instructional leader from Buradansa Primary School in Garissa observed: “Teachers are not fully equipped to handle learners’ emotional challenges. The teachers refer such cases to the head teacher.” A further reason for the slower uptake is that many teachers were encountering SEL for the very first time, as one teacher from Hillaac Primary School explained: “Teachers learned SEL for the first time, equipping them to support their students’ social and emotional skills.”

Teachers also expressed the difficulty of integrating SEL into their lessons as compared to LtP and UDL, which were more palatable, as a teacher from Nabulon Secondary School from Turkana Central explained, “We use UDL and LtP. Mainly used games and songs. This is easy because the learners embrace it. SEL is hard to integrate. My class is at puberty. Sometimes they are moody. In such times, the teacher has to come up with a story to make them focus back on the lesson.”

Despite these challenges, SEL training proved valuable in building competencies. Teachers reported gaining a better understanding of their diverse learners and the difficulties they face. A teacher from Nabulon Primary School noted: “SEL has enabled me to know how to teach my learners who have different challenges and are from different cultures.” Learners echoed these views, with one from Hillaac Primary School in Dadaab affirming: “There is increased interaction between teachers and learners, and teachers are more understanding.”

Teachers also became better equipped to help learners manage emotions and express themselves. A teacher from Bulla College Primary School in Garissa Township observed: “Learners were able to get their emotions.” Similarly, a teacher from Yathrib Primary and JSS emphasized the gains in learner confidence and engagement: “Learners express themselves better and are fully engaged...learners are now more self-aware. Learners are more confident in their presentations. The lessons are very stimulating.”

Finally, SEL training was credited with improving learners’ self-management and relationship skills, strengthening classroom collaboration and participation. As one teacher from Yathrib Primary and JSS explained: “Learners self-manage well and develop relationship skills. Every group has a leader and collaborates well. When you perform an activity, all enhancements automatically come in.”



Implications of SEL Findings

The SEL findings reveal that this domain lags behind UDL and LtP in both understanding and classroom uptake. While most teachers agreed that the training was helpful, the observation data show that SEL competencies were integrated inconsistently, with refugee classrooms demonstrating low adoption rates. This gap suggests that teachers may require deeper capacity-building and ongoing coaching to confidently integrate SEL into their lesson delivery.

The qualitative data confirm that many teachers were encountering SEL for the first time and found it more complex to apply than methods like games or songs, which may explain its limited classroom visibility.

Despite these challenges, the training was still credited with equipping teachers with foundational SEL knowledge and with enhancing learners' self-awareness, self-management, and confidence. This highlights SEL's transformative potential when adequately supported, particularly in contexts where learners encounter emotional and cultural challenges. Moving forward, SEL integration would benefit from more practical strategies, structured scaffolding, and context-sensitive tools that make it as accessible and usable as UDL and LtP. Targeted attention to refugee classrooms, where uptake is lowest, will also be critical for ensuring equity in access to these competencies.

Overall, 93.8% of teachers reported finding the enhancements on UDL, LtP, and SEL useful. This high level of perceived usefulness indicates strong teacher buy-in, which is critical for sustaining integration of these approaches in classroom practice and ensuring positive learner outcomes.



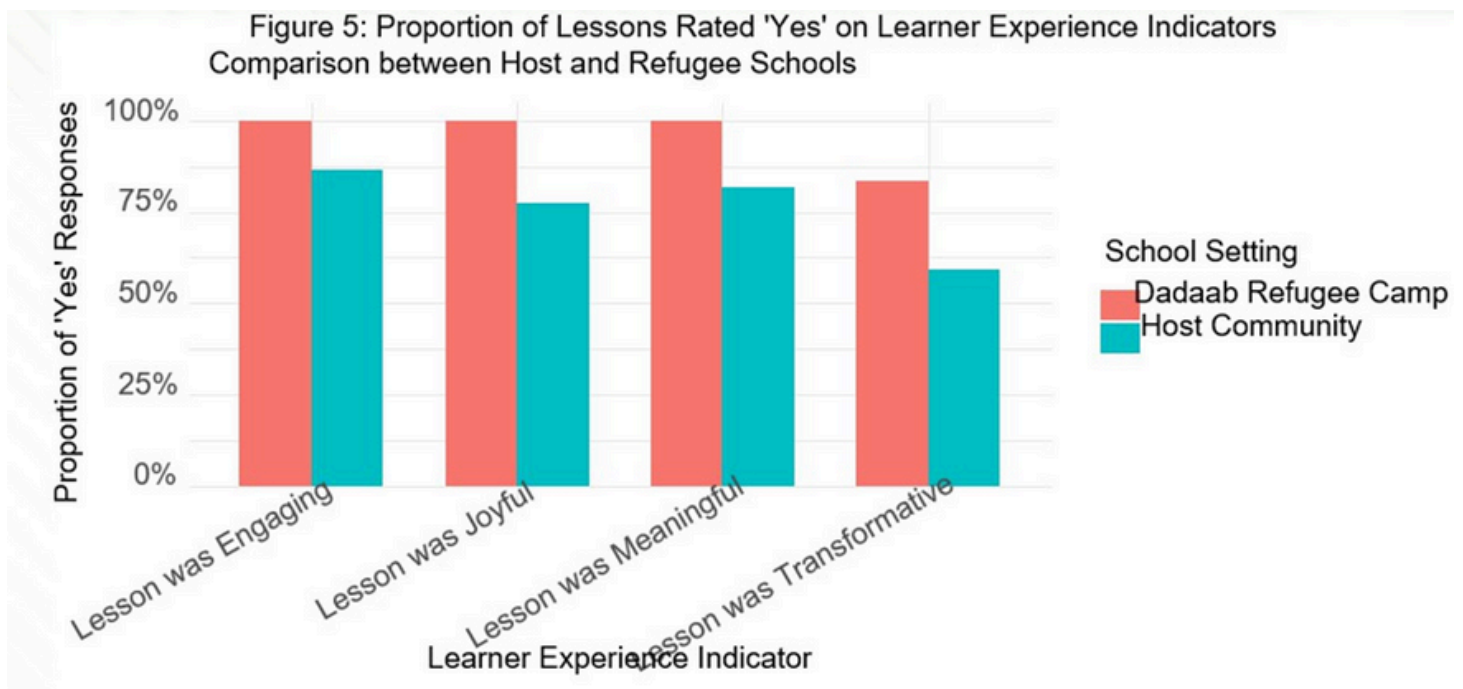
Learner Experience

This domain focuses on the perceived quality of the learning experience from the learner's perspective, as judged by the observer. Specifically, lessons were rated on whether they were engaging, joyful, meaningful, and transformative. Each indicator was captured through a binary (Yes/No) response.

Figure 5 presents the proportion of lessons rated positively on each learner experience indicator, disaggregated by school setting. Overall, lessons observed in refugee camp classrooms received more favorable ratings across all four dimensions of learner experience compared to host community schools.

In Dadaab refugee schools, nearly all the observed lessons were rated as engaging, joyful, and meaningful—approaching or reaching 100% in each case. Even the "transformative" dimension, which is often harder to observe, was identified in over 80% of refugee classrooms. In contrast, host community schools had lower proportions of lessons meeting each criterion, especially in the areas of joy and transformation. For instance, only about 55% of lessons in host settings were rated as transformative.

These findings suggest that, despite contextual challenges, refugee classrooms may be excelling in creating emotionally resonant and learner-centered experiences—at least according to observer ratings. The results also raise important questions about differences in teaching approaches or classroom dynamics across settings.



The qualitative findings align with the quantitative data, showing that teachers’ adoption of new methods enhanced learner engagement and overall classroom experience. One teacher affirmed, “Yes, it has changed my practice. Previously, I didn’t understand the enhancements, but after training, I’ve changed how I engage with learners, including using group work and new seating arrangements.”

Additionally, learners appreciated the increased use of learning materials. A teacher from Golicha Primary School highlighted how audio-visual tools and role play enhanced learner engagement: “The use of video engages learners. We also used role play with placards, allowing some to display while others lead...It has become easier for learners to understand. We now teach them with charts, use of group work,” as a teacher from Upendo Primary School in Dadaab explained. Teachers are not only able to choose relevant teaching aids and activities to support learning, but also to make it enjoyable, as asserted by a teacher from Kiwanja Ndege Primary School and JSS:

“I was able to teach using realia and make the learning more enjoyable. How to use groups and materials in teaching...training was good. Very helpful. Learners are active and participating fully.” Indeed, learning has become more enjoyable, with teachers noting that the training has made lessons both interesting and easier to deliver. As one teacher from Nabulon Primary School in Turkana Central explained: “The teacher learned how to use a variety of methods—LtP, SEL, and UDL. It makes learning very interesting and reduces the teacher’s workload.” Learner enthusiasm was also evident, as another teacher from the same school shared: “Learners are very happy. Sometimes they even call me to teach them, even when it is not my lesson.”

Further, learners praised the practical nature of the lessons, echoing their teachers’ appreciation of the varied methods adopted—such as increased group work and hands-on activities. As one learner from Hillac Primary School noted: “Seating arrangements in groups and pairs... There are more practical lessons in science and technology.”

Learner comprehension also improved, as highlighted by a teacher from Upendo Primary School in Dadaab: “We have learned about UDL and SEL. It has become easier for learners to understand.” Teachers further explained that comprehension was enhanced through songs and storytelling that connected learning to everyday, real-life contexts. A teacher from Bulla College Primary School affirmed: “Singing, group work, and storytelling are more commonly used. Singing and group work help learners retain content, while storytelling brings learning into real-life situations, making it easier for learners to relate classroom lessons to activities at home or in society.”

Teachers consistently highlighted active learner participation. A teacher from Juba Primary School noted: “Learners are active and participating fully—lessons are enjoyable.” This was echoed by a teacher from Yathrib Primary and JSS in Garissa Township, who explained: “Learners are fully motivated. They apply all principles, express themselves, and engage. Role play and singing make lessons joyful, and active participation makes learning meaningful.” Instructional leaders also observed this shift. For instance, the instructional leader of Hillac Primary School affirmed: “Positive—the teachers are all informed and have started using the enhancements, which have improved learner participation.”



Teachers also reported improvements in learner performance. As one teacher from LWF explained: “Positive—as the learners improved in their performance and developed interest in learning maths through the enhancements.” Learners themselves echoed this enthusiasm. A student from Mshule Test School in Turkana shared: “We love the way they teach us. We sing a lot and dance too.”

Absenteeism has also declined, driven by learners’ increased enthusiasm and the rise of peer teaching. As a teacher from Bulla College Primary School explained: Learners are no longer missing. They are more occupied, joyful, and engaged. They now get time to do work on their own, unlike before. One learner who understands a concept is able to teach others through peer teaching. The CoP also supports this with micro- teaching, where teachers model lessons for one another.

This observation was corroborated by a learner from Hillac Primary School in Dadaab, who linked improved attendance to the new teaching methods: “There is consistency in class attendance by teachers, unlike the previous term.”

Communities of Practice

According to instructional leaders, most teachers had attended Communities of Practice (CoP) meetings at least twice. These meetings served multiple purposes, including discussing challenges in applying the enhancements—such as inadequate resources and teacher shortages. As one teacher explained: “The last meeting was held in June. The topics discussed were challenges teachers face in implementing the enhancements. They included a lack of an adequate number of teachers and resources.”

CoPs also provided a platform for sharing best practices. One teacher noted, as reported by the instructional head, “All teachers have been participating. Topics discussed include sharing best practices, such as developing science projects for grades 4–6 that go to the KNEC portal.” Overall, CoPs were valued as collaborative spaces for teachers to learn from one another.

Additionally, teachers adopted CoPs by conducting peer lesson observations. However, participation was not universal, with at least nine teachers reported by one instructional leader as having not attended any CoP meetings.

Challenges of the TCCD Training

The challenges associated with the TCCD training included the complexity of integrating SEL, time constraints, socio-cultural dynamics, classroom dynamics, and class size, limited access to learning materials and digital platforms.



Complexity of Integrating SEL

Despite the training, teachers continue to struggle with integrating SEL compared to the other two enhancements. A teacher from Nabulon Primary School highlighted the difficulty, noting: “Mostly I use UDL and LtP—mainly games and songs—because learners embrace them. SEL is hard to integrate. My class is at puberty. Sometimes they are moody, and in such times, I have to come up with a story to help them refocus on the lesson.”

A teacher from Kiwanja Ndege Primary School and JSS echoed this challenge, noting that while UDL and LtP were easy to apply, integrating SEL into subject content was more difficult. “I apply UDL and Learning through Play, but I find it hard to integrate SEL—the lesson content was not relating to SEL.” An instructional head further confirmed that SEL was the least applied enhancement, emphasizing the need for additional training: “SEL was least applied, and teachers need more training on it.”

Teachers attributed these struggles to the inherent complexity of SEL, which deals with human behavior and emotions. As one teacher from Canan Primary School in Turkana Central explained, “UDL is more applicable since it helps with learner participation in learning. Social and Emotional Learning is more complex because behavioral change and attitude take time.” Head teachers who observed lessons corroborated these reflections, with one noting that “the teachers seemed to struggle with SEL.”

Time Constraints

Some teachers expressed hesitation in using games and group work due to their time-consuming nature and the challenges of classroom management. A teacher from Upendo Primary School explained: “Group work and games... I have not been able to use experiential learning and problem-solving. It takes too much time, and I think it will be difficult to control the learners. I think it’s time wastage.”

Similarly, a teacher from Bulla College Primary School problematized the time demands of storytelling compared to UDL, which was more readily embraced: “All principles of UDL are observed. Storytelling is hard to use because it takes time. Role play is also time-consuming in preparation and eats into lesson time, especially in English.” The issue of limited time was further reinforced by an instructional leader, who noted: “There is a time constraint in integrating these enhancements into the lessons.”

Socio-Cultural Dynamics

The implementation of LtP revealed important socio-cultural dynamics, particularly in relation to gender. Teachers observed that girls were generally more hesitant to engage in physical play, often distancing themselves from activities perceived as too energetic or public. A teacher from Bulla College Primary School explained: “Singing, group work, and storytelling were more commonly used... Games were less likely because of the culture. Girls do not easily participate. Even separately, girls are hesitant to play physical games to learn.”

This reflects broader cultural norms that discourage girls from engaging in physically active play, thereby limiting their opportunities to benefit from certain specific LtP strategies. Instead, girls tend to participate more easily in less physically demanding activities such as storytelling, songs, or small group discussions. These patterns highlight the need for gender-transformative adaptations of LtP to ensure that all learners—especially girls—can participate fully and fairly.

Classroom Dynamics and Large Class Sizes

Large class sizes emerged as a significant barrier to teachers' ability to fully integrate all the pedagogical enhancements. As one instructional leader from Kamarese Primary and JSS in Turkana explained: "Limitations: class size...the number of learners is high—90 on average. Class control and support are limited." With nearly 90 learners per class, teachers struggled to maintain order, provide individualized attention, and manage participatory methods such as group work, role-playing, or experiential activities.

The implications are significant. First, overcrowding diminishes the effectiveness of learner-centered approaches like UDL, LtP, and SEL, which depend on interaction, personalized support, and close tracking of learners' progress. Second, it risks increasing inequalities, as quieter or struggling learners may easily be ignored. Lastly, teachers face greater stress and exhaustion when trying to manage large classes, undermining both their well-being and the consistency of implementation.

Limited access to learning materials and the Digital Platform

Limited access to learning materials continued to be a persistent challenge. As one instructional leader noted: "They have challenges in access to the materials." This shortage not only constrained teaching but also limited teachers' ability to fully implement the pedagogical enhancements introduced during training.

Concerns were also raised around the digital platform, with several instructional leaders reporting difficulties. Some had not enrolled due to transitions or personal circumstances— "did not enroll—new head master"; "Headteacher didn't attend training as he was on sick leave." Others had enrolled but faced technical challenges: "had not been able to access"; "the teacher has not been successful in logging on." In some cases, there was limited awareness of the platform itself, as one leader admitted: "They did not have information on the LeadNow platform."

The effectiveness of the platform was further questioned when one instructional leader gave vague, generic responses, leading the interviewer to conclude: "Note: the responses were general. I'm convinced that he hasn't engaged with the modules on LeadNow." This highlighted the gap between intended digital support and actual uptake.

To bridge these gaps, instructional leaders requested more follow-up and sensitization from the Dignitas team: "They requested some follow-ups... There is a need for more sensitization on this." Practical improvements were also suggested, such as expanding MShule access beyond SMS to include online options for faster, more reliable engagement: "MShule should be online for easier and faster [access]. SMS sometimes takes time for a response to come."

The persistent gaps in access to learning materials and digital platforms have significant implications for teaching and learning. First, they limit teachers' ability to consistently apply training enhancements, leading to uneven learner experiences across schools. Second, reliance on SMS-only platforms risks excluding teachers in areas with connectivity issues or slow response times, widening digital inequalities. Finally, inadequate engagement with platforms like LeadNow weakens the potential for peer learning, monitoring, and ongoing professional development. Without more substantial support, these issues may threaten the scalability and long-term sustainability of the program.

Support Need to Optimize TCCD

The support needed to optimize the TCCD training includes the use of digital technology, access to internet connectivity, extended and targeted training, provision of teaching and learning materials, use of reference guides, coaching and supervisory support, integration of enhancements, as well as teacher well-being and motivation.

Use of Digital Technology

Teachers expressed a strong desire for more support in integrating digital technology into lesson preparation. A teacher from Hillac Primary School highlighted this need, explaining: “The training was quite useful and timely in my school. Training should consider helping us on how to prepare lessons using digital devices.” Similarly, a teacher from Yathrib Primary School and JSS acknowledged his own challenges with technology and requested additional guidance: “I am a slower learner in the use of technology, so I need to be taken through carefully to adopt it fully. I will ask fellow teachers to show me.” This was reiterated by a teacher from the same school, stressing the difficulty of adapting to digital tools at an older age: “I am still analog. I need someone to show me around Mshule. Technology is not easily adoptable at my age.” This call for digital support was echoed by a teacher from Bulla Primary School, who specifically appealed for further training on the M-Shule platform: “More training on the use of MShule.” Learners also reinforced this need, with one student from an LWF school emphasizing the importance of making more technology available to enhance teaching and learning. Together, these reflections highlight that while digital tools are valued, teachers require hands-on, age- and skill-sensitive training and greater access to technology to integrate them into practice meaningfully.

Access to Internet Connectivity

Reliable internet access was highlighted as critical for supporting teaching and learning. Several teachers affirmed this need, including one from LWF who noted challenges related to “accessibility to network and time.” Similarly, a teacher from Kiwanja Ndege Primary School emphasized how poor connectivity hindered timely engagement, pointing out “network issues and delays when getting feedback.” Without stable connectivity, teachers risk losing access to digital platforms, real-time feedback, and interactive resources, limiting the effectiveness of training and classroom integration.

Provision of Teaching and Learning Materials

Both teachers and learners strongly emphasized the need for adequate teaching materials. A teacher from Kiwanja Ndege Primary School in Dadaab recommended, “Provide more materials and training.” Similarly, a teacher from Bulla College Primary School stressed that learners would benefit from simplified textbooks that are easier to comprehend: “Give learners

materials related to TeachWell... like other textbooks. Everything in the materials is well simplified and easy to master.” A teacher from Yathrib Primary School and JSS suggested that science classes would be enhanced through the provision of charts: “Need materials. Teaching charts for science.”

Learners corroborated these views, as evidenced by one from LWF, who affirmed, “Learning materials need to be available, especially textbooks.” Instructional leaders confirmed the scarcity of teaching aids, with one noting, “Limitations faced include teaching and learning materials such as manila papers, digital devices.” Another instructional leader from Dadaab Primary and JSS further emphasized the need to train teachers to create their own resources: “Observed 14 lessons from lower to upper classes. There is need to train teachers on how to make materials.”

Teachers also proposed the use of videos to model good practice, as one from Hillac Primary School explained: “The app should consider use of videos that demonstrate how a teacher models the use of the enhancements.” These reflections emphasize that meaningful integration of enhancements requires a steady supply of simplified and context-appropriate materials, complemented by training on resource creation and multimedia demonstrations.

Use of Reference Guides

While most head teachers commended teachers for using the reference guides, some noted gaps in their utilization. A few teachers reportedly avoided the guides, citing the need for improvement. As one head teacher observed, the materials were “rather skeletal... they need more detailed lessons with the enhancements.” Another instructional leader recommended providing the guides in soft copy to make them more interactive and dynamic: “Improvement—recommends some of the manuals to be in soft to accommodate videos and play.” This was corroborated in the teacher survey, in which 50% of teachers agreed that changes were needed to improve training and reference materials. These findings suggest that while reference guides are valued, enhancing their depth, interactivity, and accessibility—particularly through digital formats—could strengthen teacher engagement and the practical application of training enhancements.



Certification after Training

Teachers strongly recommended that certifications be awarded at the end of training sessions, viewing them not only as recognition of effort but also as motivation to apply new skills. As one teacher from LWF expressed: “I’ll appreciate if trained and awarded certificates.” This was echoed by a teacher from Kiwanja Ndege Primary School, who added: “I like more learning areas to be incorporated and awarded a certificate after training.” Instructional leaders corroborated this request, with one from Horseed Primary School in Dadaab confirming: “Teachers say training was very beneficial but are asking for a certificate of participation.” Certifications can serve both symbolic and practical purposes—boosting teacher morale, providing evidence of professional growth, and strengthening teacher portfolios for career advancement.

Continuous Training, Extended and Targeted Training

Teachers emphasized the importance of extending the TCCD training duration to make it more comprehensive. A teacher from Dadaab Primary and JSS in Dadaab affirmed, “Increase the duration of the training and provide capacity building in teaching methods.”

Additionally, teachers highlighted the need for continuous training to integrate the enhancements into their lessons fully. As one teacher from Kiwanja Ndege Primary School explained, “The training needs to be continuous for me to get used to the practice of enhancements and be able to integrate them while teaching learners.” Instructional leaders echoed this call, stressing that while progress had been made, further capacity building remained critical: “Our teachers did not know about the enhancements prior to TCCD training. We feel like we were blind, but now we have one eye open; but, we need both eyes to be open. In other words, we appreciate the training support, but we request for more training and benchmarking.”

These insights suggest that sustained, iterative, and context-sensitive training is crucial for teachers to confidently adopt and integrate pedagogical enhancements, thereby ensuring lasting improvements in classroom practice.

Coaching and Supervisory Support

Teachers emphasized the value of sustained coaching and supervisory support as a key strategy for strengthening their competencies. A teacher from Karaja Ndege Primary School highlighted the importance of “material support ... coaching ... [and] consistent lesson observation.” Beyond coaching, teachers stressed that regular assessment and feedback on teaching practices are critical to promoting continuous professional growth, accountability, and effective integration of pedagogical enhancements. The implication is that without ongoing mentorship and structured support, the uptake and consistent application of training enhancements may remain limited.

Integration of Enhancements

Gaps in applying the three methods in a complementary and balanced way were also noted. While teachers demonstrated uptake of individual approaches, many found it difficult to weave them together within a single lesson. As one head teacher recommended, “Teachers still need training on how to integrate the three enhancements in class. For example, some teachers only use UDL, but not the other enhancements.” This highlights a tendency for teachers to selectively adopt methods they find more practical or familiar—such as UDL—while sidelining others like SEL or LtP, which may be perceived as more complex or time-consuming. The implication is that without targeted support on how the three enhancements can work synergistically, classroom practice risks becoming fragmented, limiting the full potential of the training.

Strengthening teacher capacity to integrate the methods holistically could help ensure that learners benefit from more inclusive, engaging, and emotionally supportive learning environments.

Teacher Well-Being and Motivation

Teacher well-being should also be strengthened through financial support to further motivate participation and sustain commitment. Several teachers noted that while the training was valuable, the lack of adequate financial facilitation sometimes posed a barrier to full engagement. As one teacher suggested, “At least consider increasing the payment to motivate teachers and provide for accommodation. At least Ksh 2,000 per teacher and Ksh 1,000 for institutions...Always include instructional leaders in future trainings and ToTs.” Such requests reflect the reality that teachers often face financial constraints, including costs for travel, accommodation, and time spent away from other responsibilities. Supporting teacher well-being through stipends, allowances, and inclusion of school leaders in training could enhance motivation, reduce attrition, and foster a more conducive environment for integrating the enhancements into everyday teaching practice.

Conclusion

This pilot analysis provides important insights into how Grade 4–6 teachers participating in the TeachWell project are applying enhanced pedagogical approaches across five domains: lesson structure, LtP, UDL, SEL, and learner experience. Overall, the findings highlight encouraging progress, particularly in lesson planning, the uptake of UDL, and teacher enthusiasm for LtP. Teachers demonstrated strong buy-in, with 93.8% reporting the enhancements as useful, and learners echoed improvements in engagement, joy, and comprehension.

At the same time, the results expose persistent gaps. SEL remains the least consistently integrated, reflecting both teacher confidence challenges and the complexity of embedding emotional and relational skills into everyday lessons. Constraints such as large class sizes, limited teaching materials, socio-cultural barriers, and digital access issues further limit the consistent application of enhancements, especially in refugee contexts.

Taken together, the pilot findings point to three key implications: (i) the need for deeper, more sustained teacher capacity building—particularly around SEL and context-sensitive adaptations of LtP; (ii) stronger investment in resources, digital tools, and supervisory support to ensure equitable classroom uptake; and (iii) ongoing reinforcement through continuous training, coaching, and Communities of Practice to build teacher confidence and sustain momentum.

With these supports, the pilot signals strong potential for scaling the TeachWell model to strengthen inclusive, engaging, and transformative learning in both host and refugee settings.



Recommendations

The following recommendations outline priority actions to strengthen pedagogy, teacher support, and systemic enablers based on the findings from the TeachWell pilot.

1. Strengthen Lesson Structure

- Provide targeted coaching on lesson openings and conclusions since these were weaker compared to introductions and practice activities.
- Share model lesson plans and exemplars to help teachers reinforce objectives and consolidate learning.

2. Deepen Uptake of Learning through Play (LtP)

- Address the gap between teacher confidence and observed practice by offering practical demonstrations and micro-teaching sessions.
- Provide differentiated support on harder-to-apply strategies (songs, problem-solving, role play).
- Adapt LtP to socio-cultural dynamics, ensuring gender-sensitive approaches that encourage girls' full participation.

3. Sustain and Balance Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

- Reinforce all three pillars—engagement, presentation, and expression—to avoid uneven uptake.
- Prioritize resource provision in refugee schools to support diverse teaching methods.
- Track UDL consistently through a composite score for monitoring progress over time.

4. Scale and Support Social and Emotional Learning (SEL)

- Expand SEL training with practical, subject-specific integration strategies.
- Provide sustained coaching, peer learning, and reference guides tailored to SEL.
- Target additional support to refugee schools where SEL uptake was lowest.

5. Enhance Learner Experience

- Leverage strengths observed in refugee classrooms (joyful, transformative learning) by documenting and sharing these practices across host settings.
- Expand the use of participatory and practical methods that learners identified as engaging and motivating.

6. Strengthen Communities of Practice (CoPs)

- Ensure regular, inclusive participation by all teachers through structured schedules and follow-up.
- Encourage CoPs to focus on modeling enhancements, addressing barriers, and peer coaching.

7. Address Systemic Barriers

- Class sizes: Advocate for reduced pupil–teacher ratios or provide strategies and aids for managing large groups.
- Teaching materials: Increase provision of simplified textbooks, charts, and low-cost teaching aids, while training teachers to develop their own.
- Digital access: Improve connectivity, expand MShule access beyond SMS, and strengthen orientation to platforms like LeadNow.

8. Enhance Teacher Capacity and Motivation

- Extend training duration and incorporate continuous professional development cycles.
- Provide hands-on digital literacy support, especially for older or less tech-confident teachers.
- Award certificates to motivate participation and recognize teacher effort.
- Invest in teacher well-being and motivation, including financial or material incentives where feasible.

9. Integrate Enhancements Holistically

- Provide guidance on combining UDL, LtP, and SEL within single lessons to maximize impact rather than applying them in isolation.

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