

Transforming Teaching, Education & Learning (T-TEL)

Ghana District Change Project: Communities of Excellence Programme Quarter 5 Progress Report

Summarized Report

15th May 2023

Executive Summary (Q5 – 1st February 2023 – 30th April 2023)

The Communities of Excellence Programme (CEP) is implemented by Ghana Education Service (GES) with technical support from T-TEL and funding from Jacobs Foundation. CEP has a total duration of 18 months, from 1st February 2022 until 31st July 2023 and this quarter five (Q5) report covers the period from 1st February 2023 to 30th April 2023.

In Q5, the programme has focused on:

- Enhancing **skills** by ensuring that teachers are regularly attending weekly Professional Learning Community (PLC) sessions and, through regular lesson observation by district staff, checking that these PLC sessions are impacting teaching and learning in the classroom, this has included development of a new PLC Handbook focused on ‘Literacy Across the Curriculum’;
- Encouraging development of a learning-focused **culture** in schools through the development and implementation of School Performance Improvement Plans (SPIPs) and strengthening of School Management Committee (SMC) engagement with school communities and the generation and use of data for decision making by District Education Offices and schools;
- Enhanced **collaboration** and community engagement through the use of community drama to sensitize parents, the ongoing work of Change Leaders and Quarterly Stakeholder Review meetings.

1. Enhancing Skills

1.1 Holding weekly school-level PLC sessions and conducting regular lesson observation.

District teams focused their attention on ensuring that all basic schools across the three districts have been holding weekly PLC sessions, where teachers come together to discuss and share their experience on specific themes related to delivery of the new standards-based curriculum.

In total, during the quarter, 1,829 PLC sessions were held in 220 out of the 235 basic schools in the three districts. during this quarter. The teacher attendance rate at these sessions increased from 67% in the previous quarter to 82% in the current quarter, meaning that 1,787 teachers in the three districts are regularly attending PLC sessions. This means that CEP delivered 1,829 hours of structured school-based CPD training during the quarter.

District teams observed 1,262 lessons in 213 schools between January and April 2023, a significant increase on the 505 lessons observed between September and December 2022. Strengthening the culture of lesson observation is critical to transforming classroom practices by teachers and improving learning outcomes across the schools.

Headteachers and teachers across the three districts have provided positive feedback on the PLC sessions. In Berekusu Presby ‘B’ Basic school in Akuapem South district, the headteacher had the following to say:

“To be honest with you, I did not know anything about the NTS until we went for a workshop by T-TEL, where it was mentioned. The PLC sessions have indeed come to enlighten us very well. It has also opened up our appreciation of GESI issues. We have now come to know what it takes to involve all learners in the classroom lesson delivery.”

A class 3 teacher from the same school noted that *“Aside us acquiring new ideas and knowledge, the PLC meetings have brought unity among teachers in the school.”*

Reports from monitoring and support visits by SISOs, schedule officers and DEOCs, indicate that there have been notable improvements in teacher’s lesson preparation and delivery in the classroom. More teachers are practicing concepts related to differentiated learning and teaching at the right level, improving in the use of GESI pedagogies and attending school regularly.

1.2 Development of PLC Handbook 2 on ‘Literacy Across the Curriculum’ and Award of CPD points

As most of the schools have now completed all eleven sessions of PLC Handbook 1 on the National Teachers’ Standards (NTS) GES has collaborated with the National Teaching Council (NTC), tutors of Colleges of Education, SISOs, headteachers and teachers from selected Basic Schools within Akuapem South, Bosome Freho and Lambussie districts to develop a second PLC handbook focused on improving literacy skills across all subjects in the curriculum and teaching at the right level. This PLC Handbook will help teachers to understand and demonstrate the use of relevant pedagogies that can support the delivery of the standard based curriculum, whilst also enabling teachers to apply a variety of teaching strategies to meet the needs of all learners.

GES, with support from T-TEL, is working with NTC to ensure teachers attending PLC sessions are awarded CPD points. The accumulation of these CPD points will contribute to the renewal of teachers’ licenses. Districts have engaged with all teachers to provide their names and license numbers so this can be linked to PLC attendance records by the headteachers. The data collection has been scheduled to be completed by end of May so NTC can award CPD points for participating teachers. Attendance at PLC sessions in Akuapem South and Lambussie can now be monitored through the GES PLC app (available to download from Pay Store on all Android phones) whilst the app will be rolled out to Bosome Freho later this year. As part of the resources on the GES PLC platform, the PLC Handbooks 1 and 2 and the NTS will also be loaded on the platform. This approach will facilitate the scaling up of the PLC handbooks across all schools in Ghana and also guarantee sustainability.

1.3 Collaboration to Improve teacher capacity in the preparation and use of no cost/low cost Teaching and Learning Resources (TLRs) in their lesson delivery.

TLRs, if used appropriately, can help teachers to explain abstract concepts to students in ways which they understand. One of the focus of the Learning Transformation Agendas (LTAs) in the three districts was helping teachers to prepare no cost and low cost TLRs given the fact that many schools lack the resources to purchase TLRs. Akuapem South DEO collaborated with the Presbyterian College of Education (PWCE), KOICA and Sabre Education to build the capacity of headteachers and teachers from Kindergartens and Primary Schools in the Municipality on effective ways to use no-cost and low-cost materials which are accessible in their communities. This was a two-day circuit-level training for 367 teachers (283 females and 84 males) held in three clusters within the district from the 27th of March to the 4th of April 2023. In Lambussie a similar training was done in December for all 221 teachers from KG and Primary Schools. SISOs in Lambussie have confirmed that teachers are practicing the knowledge acquired from this training to improve their lesson delivery.

1.3 Supported Teaching in Schools Partnership with Colleges of Education and District Education Offices

In Bosome Freho, Akrokerri CoE and Agogo PWCE deployed 58 student teachers to 17 partner schools and 200 student teachers to 26 partner schools respectively for 16 weeks of extended teaching from January to end of April 2023. In Lambussie the 44 level 400 student teachers posted from McCoy CoE for 16 weeks in January 2023 have completed their assignment. During the conduct of Lambussie's stakeholder review meeting, many stakeholders were full of praise for the student teachers and requested that the district continues the partnership with McCoy College of Education. Their presence has helped to mitigate the acute understaffing in some schools especially in the hard-to-reach areas whilst field monitoring reports from SISOs and schedule officers, have pointed to the good work these student teachers did in their respective schools. The college field supervisors who monitored and mentored these student-teachers have described the partnership as very successful. Akrokerri CoE have requested an extension of the STS partnership programme as the agreement reached between the three colleges of education and GES/T-TEL, ended at the end of April 2023. The District Education Offices will continue to engage with the CoEs to discuss sustainable approaches to continue these partnerships.

2. Promoting a Learning-focused culture

2.1 Development of learning-focused School Performance Improvement Plans (SPIPs)

As part of efforts to improve a culture of learning, all headteachers and School Management Committees (SMCs) who attended last quarter's leadership training were tasked to lead their schools to develop learning-focused School Improvement Plans (SPIPs). This required a shift in mindset and behaviour, because previous SPIPs were mostly focused on procurement of school level inputs without much attention being paid as to how this would improve learning outcomes.

With support from SISOs and School Improvement Advisors, who were mostly tutors from local CoEs, basic schools across the three districts were supported to develop learning focused SPIPs. At the time of writing this report 161 schools had submitted SPIPs out of which only 47 have passed vetting by GES and T-TEL as being sufficiently focused on learning. This relatively low percentage demonstrates how difficult it has been for many schools to shift their mindset away from the provision of inputs to focus on how these inputs can be used to improve teaching and learning.

The 47 schools which have submitted acceptable SPIPs have been provided with funds for implementation. Although this represents just 20% of the total number of schools across the three districts, both GES and T-TEL believe it is the beginning of awareness and behavior change that will be strengthened in coming quarters to ensure all schools develop SPIPs that are learning focused and drive improvement in teaching and learning. Feedback has been provided to the schools whose SPIPs were not approved so they can revise and resubmit.

The leadership training provided to SMCs on their roles and responsibilities in supporting their schools and headteachers deepened the culture of learning within the schools and has empowered the SMCs to engage more closely with their schools. Examples from all the three districts confirm the SMCs are now actively supporting their schools to improve the conditions of school infrastructure to aid teaching and learning, holding their headteachers accountable, contributing funds to build teachers quarters or repair school infrastructure and organising fund raising events for the school. The change leaders who participated in the training are also embarking on similar efforts to support their schools.

2.2 Improved use of data in decision making

In order to strengthen the use of data to inform decision making, the DEOs organized capacity building for their EMIS teams and the programme provided them with tablets¹ to enable them to generate, manage, analyse data and report findings on a monthly basis to improve decision-making. Additionally, all SISOs and other schedule officers were trained on effective ways to upload information gathered from their regular field monitoring and support visits onto various platforms. In Akuapem South, in the month of February, the EMIS unit analysed and shared their findings on data uploaded by headteachers on the mobile School Report Cards (mSRC) system with the Municipal Director of Education and her team. This is the first time that the EMIS unit has done this and 13 headteachers were identified as having not submitted data. Each headteacher was made to write an undertaking to submit data from their unto the mSRC each week. As a result of this action taken by the directorate, the months of March and April saw a significant improvement in headteachers' submission of their mSRC data.

The EMIS teams in Bosome Freho and Lambussie have been encouraged to emulate their colleagues in Akuapem South and ensure such data driven meetings are happening in their districts. This should be part of the monthly/quarterly DEOC meetings.

3. Enhancing Collaboration and Partnerships

3.1 Improved DEOC Monthly Meetings and Monitoring

All DEOC meetings across the three districts have attracted about 90 percent DEOC members attendance. The regular meetings and engagements have contributed significantly to build trustful working relationship among the departments and agencies under the District Assembly and other stakeholders. DEOC participation in educational decision-making has broadened with their participation in education programmes compared to the past. For instance, in Bosome Freho, the district health services department is now collaborating very well with DEOC and Change Leaders in joint health and education community outreach activities.

Regarding school monitoring, the MEOC/DEOCs in the three districts , demonstrated their commitment within the quarter by going on a number of field monitoring and support visits to schools to also engage and interact with the schools on school improvement matters.

In Bosome Freho, 12 members of the DEOC undertook three monitoring visits to selected school-communities in January, February, and March 2023. The committee engaged leaders of school-communities and discussed educational issues with the leaders, interacted with school heads, teachers, and students, inspected school infrastructure. They also sensitized the communities with health and education talks, donated health items to the schools received as support from Access Bank Ghana Ltd. The committee also looked at the schools' and their challenges and opportunities available that could be tapped to improve education outcomes in the communities.

In Lambussie, the DEOC has been actively involved in school monitoring and support visits related issues within the quarter. Members of the DEOC undertook monitoring visits to check on how the CEP was impacting on teachers and pupils school attendance, on the effectiveness of SMCs, on teachers' delivery of lessons, on conduct of PLC sessions, the distribution and use of the furniture the district supplied to the schools as part of the LTA implementation.

¹ In Akuapem South Laptops were also provided to the EMIS teams.

In Akuapem South Municipal, MEOC members conducted field monitoring visits to 28 out of the 34 primary schools in the municipality in April 2023. Some of the key issues identified by the MEOC members during their monitoring were:

- Lack of parental support
- School feeding caterers are not cooking for schools even though the schools are GSFP beneficiaries.
- Pakro Anglican Primary School was infested with bats, making the smell of the school environment unpleasant.
- Some schools were sharing toilet facilities with the communities.

MEOC members developed a number of recommendations following these monitoring visits, including:

- Intensified education of parents on their role in their children's education
- The Municipal Assembly should facilitate the payment of school feeding caterers to ensure they continue to cook for the learners.
- The SMC of Pakro Anglican should engage the community to pool resources to control bats infestation of the school building.

3.2 Sensitizing Parents to support their wards' education using drama

Akuapem South District has continued to use community drama, conducted by learners to sensitize the community and parents on their roles and responsibilities, as an effective engagement tool. Parents whose children were part of the acting group were very pleased to see their wards act in a drama for the first time. The drama, apart from entertaining parents and the community leadership, revealed some of the challenges that learners faced in school, such as inadequate textbooks and supplementary learning materials, and nonpayment of SMC-sanctioned school levies by parents. The community realized the devastating effects of parents' failure to take up their responsibilities regarding their children's education. They were stunned by how much their children knew and how well they articulated the harm they were doing to their education with their unsupportive attitude.

A total of 278 participants (155 females and 123 males) attended the community drama event in two communities (Pakro and Anamenampa) in Akuapem South.

In Bosome Freho, six community drama shows were held in the six circuits, namely Abosamso, Ampento, Anyanso, Domba, Dunkura, and Nsuaem, as part of their community outreach programme. The district also conducted inter-school reading and spelling bee competition as part of its outreach programs to reach out to traditional authority, parents, community members, teachers, and the children themselves to support the drive to improve learning outcomes.

3.3. Community Engagement by Change Leaders

The change leaders who completed their capacity building training in December 2022, have proven to be very valuable assets in their respective districts and communities. They have organized a range of fundraising durbars which have raised funds for their various school communities and have helped to engage students who have dropped out of school, enabling them to continue their formal education.

3.4 Quarterly LTA Review Meetings across all three districts

In April 2023 Akuapem South district organized its 3rd quarterly stakeholder review forum to review its LTA implementation. A total number of 117 participants (49 females and 68 males) attended the forum. The PRO who moderated the meeting, presented the updates on the LTA implementation including the financial report, also highlighted the key findings of the classroom lesson observation and the PLC session observation embarked upon by the SISO and other schedule Officers and the DEOC. The stakeholders expressed their appreciation for the work the DEO, DEOC and Change Leaders were doing to improve teaching and learning in the schools. They, however, the need for the programme to consciously engage more with the teachers at the JHS also for the wholistic development of education in the district. At the end, the implementation team outlined the following as next steps:

- The implementation team to expedite action on implementing remaining quarter three activities.
- SISOs and the other field officers tasked with debriefing management on the follow-up school monitoring to ascertain how well teachers are implementing the knowledge gained during the training on the production of low- and no-cost TLMs for primary school teachers.
- MIT was also tasked with determining activities, timelines, and budgetary allocations for quarter four activities.

Lambussie district held its quarterly review forum on the 5th of April 2023 and 134 stakeholders (100 males and 34 females) participated in the review meeting. The stakeholders shared their views on the current situation in schools in the district, commending the DEO and DEOC for working hard to ensure improvement in especially the supply of furniture to their schools and helping to improve children school attendance. Teachers expressed their gratitude to the education team for the regular monitoring and support visits they are currently undertaking to the schools and the feedback they give after such visits. Headteachers requested that the district's partnership with McCoy CoE should be sustained as the presence and work of the trainees was greatly helping the district with their teacher shortages and improving the quality of teaching and learning in the district. They acknowledged the good work the student teachers are doing by providing extra classes to learners especially at the JHS level. The stakeholders committed to also extending support in the form of accommodation and foodstuffs to the student teachers. They hoped that they would see significant improvement in the results of the annual survey that the programme will be conducting.

Programme Management

Two newly recruited District Enablers for Lambussie for Johnson Naapi and James Baaba Salifu for Akuapem commenced work on 1st March 2023. Both officers are progressing well in their districts, supporting the district teams to implement activities in their LTAs. Contracts for all CEP staff have been extended till 31st July 2023.

Budget Line	Total Budget (1st Feb 2022-31st July 2023)	Budget Spent (1st Feb 2022-30th April 2023)	Budget Remaining (1st May 2023-31st July 2023)
Communications and stakeholder engagement	\$56,023	\$14,001	\$42,022
Learning Transformation Agenda (LTA)- funds for 3 districts	\$287,407	\$172,483	\$114,924

PLC Materials Development and Training	\$191,605	\$232,200	-\$40,595
School Management Committee (SMC) training and support activities	\$103,972	\$166,858	-\$62,886
District Education Oversight Committee (DEOC) training and support activities	\$28,741	-	\$28,741
College of Education (CoE) partner schools expansion and support	\$19,160	\$9,402	\$9,758
Baseline Survey and Annual Survey	\$47,901	\$40,159	7,742
Vehicle running costs, per diem and accommodation	\$86,211	\$137,105	-\$50,894
District Office running costs	\$9,580	\$4,794	\$4,786
Total	\$830,600	\$777,002	\$53,598

To date the full activity budget of \$830,600 has been received from the Jacobs Foundation and, as of 30th April 2023, \$777,002 had been spent. This means that 95% of the total activity budget has been expended during the first five Quarters of the programme with only 5% of the budget (\$53,598) remaining for the final quarter. Main areas of over-expenditure include PLC materials development and training, where a second PLC Handbook has been developed in addition to Handbook One, 'vehicle running costs, per diem and accommodation' where costs have been higher than anticipated as the programme has visited more schools for monitoring than originally planned and 'SMC training and support activities' where training costs were higher than anticipated.

T-TEL received permission from Jacobs Foundation during the quarter to request a no-cost extension to keep CEP running until 31st July 2023. T-TEL has calculated that it will require a commitment of \$173,830 of our own organisational funding to keep the programme running until the end of July. This commitment of our own resources is our sign of our dedication to the success of the programme and to protect against any reputational damage to T-TEL or Jacobs Foundation which would be caused with the Ministry of Education and GES if we were to suspend CEP in the 3 districts without providing sufficient notice.

As it is, there is a very strong likelihood that, as there is no further commitment of funds forthcoming from Jacobs Foundation, we will have to suspend our work in Lambussie, Akuapem South and Bosome Freho districts from September 2023 onwards. We are hopeful that the annual evaluation survey which is going to be carried out in July 2023 will provide compelling evidence to Jacobs Foundation of the programme's value so that any pause in activities will only be temporary and will resume once Jacobs Foundation feel that they are in a position to commitment funds to T-TEL again.