



Leh Wi Lan Teacher Videos

INFORMATION BRIEF



Introduction

The quality of teachers in Sierra Leone varies greatly in terms of skills, knowledge, and qualifications. Working with MBSSE and the Teaching Service Commission (TSC), Leh Wi Lan (LWL) recognised these needs can be supported through a blended approach with the provision of paper and digital materials as well as face-to-face coaching and training.

In early 2019, LWL took this further and commissioned three professional development videos as part of a pilot project. The videos covered: Teaching secondary mathematics; Teaching secondary English; and conducting a lesson observation.

This Brief explains the details of the films themselves and how they were used in practice and sets out the experience of LWL based on feedback from 200 teacher participants.

Designing and producing the videos

Content: The 20-minute videos were designed for use by teachers, Heads of Department (HoDs) and School Support Officers (SSOs) for professional development and to support teachers to improve their teaching and pupil learning.

The videos used English as the language of instruction (with Krio used to highlight points) and featured real government teachers teaching JSS/SSS Maths and English lessons in genuine Sierra Leone classrooms (the team commissioning the videos were keen to present a realistic scenario and show what was achievable within existing resources). The edited films used audio narration, subtitles and still pictures as well as film of classroom activities led by teachers.

Production: Strict child safeguarding policies and practices were followed during briefing, filming and working with the children at the schools and all individuals filmed or interviewed signed Cambridge Education video and consent forms. Each day of filming involved one or two batches of approximately 50 real students from different grades (JSS 1 to SSS3) taking part with their own teachers, in their own schools. Filming was directed by LWL representatives and supported by experts to ensure the expected pedagogical output was portrayed in the video footage.

Distribution: The three edited films were converted into appropriate formats (3GP, MP4 etc) and given to SSS teachers with an SD card for use in their phones; emailed to DSOs; and provided to SSOs for use on their tablets. It was also possible to share the films through WhatsApp, WeTransfer, and Bluetooth.

How the videos were used

Teachers were introduced to the videos during cluster subject training and were encouraged to watch them back, in their own time, as part of their ongoing teaching and reflection. It was recommended that they watch them back multiple times, so they could focus on different aspects of pedagogy, or use them to help them reflect on trying something new out in the classroom.

A key technique was to make sure that teachers did not watch the video alone but with other teachers, with HoDs or, during Lesson Observation and Feedback Sessions with SSOs, so they could discuss and share what they had learned and apply it to their own teaching.

Teaching staff were also encouraged to use the videos as reference material and re-watch excerpts which addressed any specific queries or needs that they had.

SSOs were encouraged to watch each video several times so they could give maximum support to teachers and help direct them to the videos or excerpts that would best help them.

Feedback from teachers

- Almost a third of teachers followed guidance to watch the video with other teachers. A similar proportion watched it with SSOs and 12% watched it with HoDs. Almost one in five teachers said they had watched the video alone.
- More than half (54%) of teachers shared the videos with others (other teachers within department, from same school, from other schools, trainee teachers, Principal). They typically used phones, Bluetooth, or SD cards (WhatsApp was a less popular mechanism).
- Teachers found the videos far more useful for preparing before a lesson than for anything else. Eighty teachers cited this as the primary use. Almost 30 teachers said it was most useful for guided/independent practice. Fewer than 20 teachers said it was most useful for group work, working with HoDs, pupil participation or introductions.
- SSOs said lesson planning using the Lesson Plan Manual, using praise, groupwork and preparation were the most improved aspects of teacher practice as a result of watching the videos.

- Almost half of respondents said better quality of voice, sound and pictures would be the biggest possible improvement to the videos.
- Teachers also said showing it on a bigger screen and having the videos play out in real time, like a lesson, so that the timings align with those in the Lesson Plan Manual would have been helpful.
- Teachers said the watching the videos had changed their practices in a range of ways, from involving HoDs more in lesson preparation to making lessons themselves more interactive.

Conclusions

The pilot confirms the benefits of developing and using videos to support teachers' professional development, with the videos produced having impact on using Lesson Plan Manual and lesson preparation. The set-up of the videos, having a teaching and SSO or HoD planning a lesson together modelled how preparation for lessons could take place in schools.

Improved production quality and screenings, and more sharing by teachers, will increase the impact that they ultimately have and roll out of similar schemes elsewhere should recognise that access to technology is a real issue in some areas and reflect this by making videos available on different platforms - SSO tablets, websites, WhatsApp groups, memory cards which can be inserted into mobile phones.