

## Whole School Development

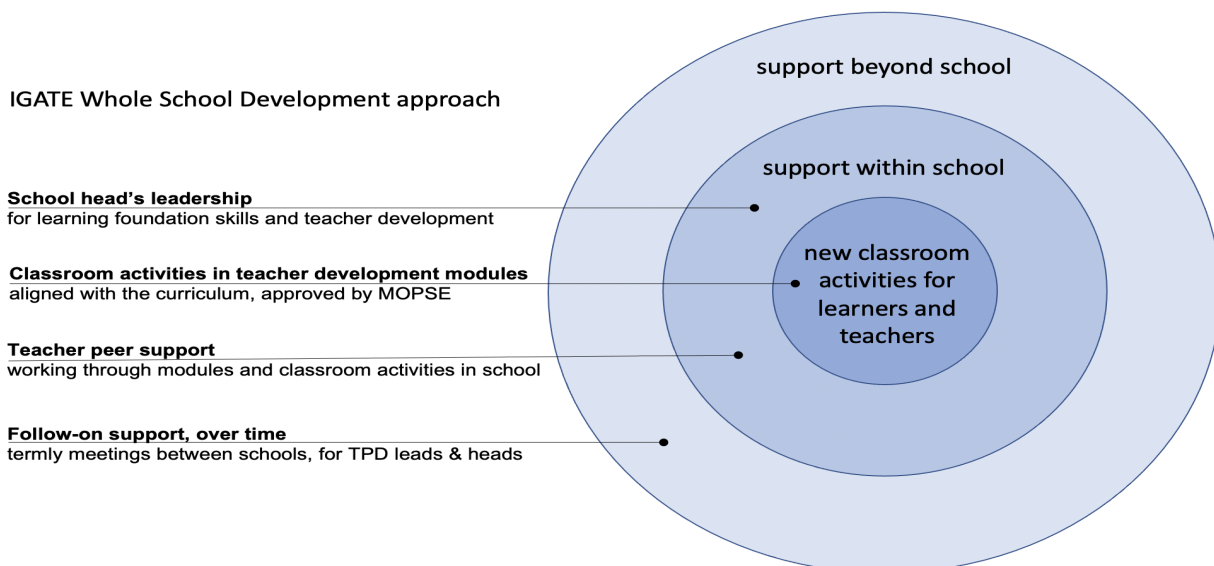
### Why whole school development for literacy and numeracy?

International evidence shows that half of all children worldwide don't have strong foundations in literacy and numeracy by the end of their primary years, with the problem being greatest in low-income communities. In disadvantaged rural primary and secondary schools in Zimbabwe (P3 and S3 schools), baseline studies showed that most learners needed help with foundation skills—for example, only 7% of learners were proficient in reading with understanding by Form 2. Teachers in upper primary and in secondary schools are often unsure how to teach such skills to older learners, resulting in learners falling further behind with each successive year of education.

The IGATE whole school development programme set out to empower learners with strong foundations. IGATE literacy activities combine the four skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening—emphasising understanding. IGATE numeracy activities combine manipulating symbols (i.e. numerals), words, objects, and images (e.g. number lines)—emphasising making connections.

### The IGATE approach to Whole School Development

IGATE's Whole School Development (WSD) programme is a form of *supported open learning* for teacher development. Teachers learn by carrying out new activities in their classrooms, guided by professional development modules. The modules show short and simple teaching techniques, aligned with the national curriculum. All teachers have access to the materials in print, so there is no dilution of the programme's core messages by an intermediary. Teachers are supported within their school by the School Head and nominated Teacher Professional Development (TPD) leads for literacy and for numeracy. TPD leads and school heads share experiences and practices between schools at termly workshops, where the modules and activities for the next term are introduced.



This approach is capable of greater scale and impact than common alternatives, namely:

- *Boutique programmes*—taking teachers out of school for several weeks or months to be trained by national or international experts—don't take place in the 'real world' of classrooms and schools and, because of high costs, only reach small numbers of teachers.

- *Cascade programmes*—using levels of ‘master trainers’ and ‘teacher trainers’ to reach large numbers of teachers—can achieve scale at low cost but are usually ineffective as key messages become diluted or distorted with each successive step of the cascade.

By contrast, in IGATE’s whole school development programme, **every teacher** with responsibility for English and Mathematics participates—all teachers in primary schools and all English and Mathematics teachers in secondary schools. The school head ensures teachers attend **regular TPD sessions, in school**, usually led by the literacy and numeracy TPD leads. The head also ensures that every teacher has a plan to use **diagnostic assessment** to identify which groups of children need help with literacy and numeracy, and that the school allocates enough **time for literacy and numeracy** so that **all learners get the support they need** to progress. In P3 and S3 schools, teachers are often surprised to find that almost all learners benefit from stronger foundations.

In the TPD sessions, teachers **read** effective classroom activities within the professional development modules, practice them and **plan** how to use these in their lessons. After teachers **do** the activities with learners, they **reflect** on what they learned and **share** their experiences with other teachers in the next TPD session.



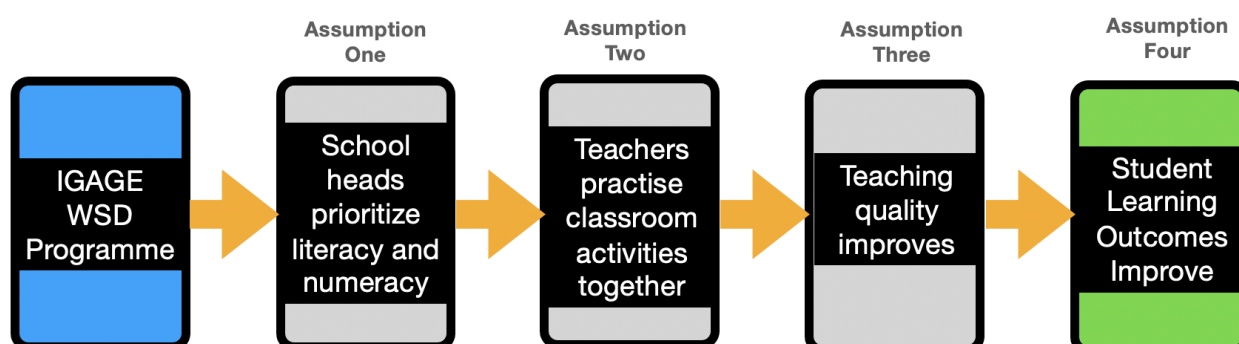
Every week, school heads conduct **classroom learning walks**, spending five to ten minutes observing a literacy or numeracy lesson. Heads focus on what they want to see more of, for example, positive attitude and behaviour by teachers and learners, use of the classroom activities, all learners being actively engaged. School heads then meet teachers for a **coaching conversation** where they encourage teachers to do more of the good behaviours they have seen.

Beyond equipping teachers with the professional knowledge and practices they need to strengthen learners’ foundation skills, the whole-school development approach asked school heads, leadership, and teachers to publicly make three **overarching commitments**—to ensure that in their school: *Every learner* is becoming literate and numerate, *Every teacher* is improving their teaching skills, and *Everybody* is respected and valued, in particular, regardless of gender

## Key findings

Independent external evaluation provides robust impact evaluation evidence—through outcome harvesting, qualitative methods, and quantitative causal analysis techniques—which validates each step in the theory of change linking the WSD programme to improved learning.

### IGATE Whole School Development programme - theory of change



**1. School heads prioritise literacy and numeracy.** There is a consistent, strong emphasis on supporting struggling learners. Headteachers cite regular use of practices such as headteacher walks, teacher professional development and demonstration lessons. *‘We chose to spread literacy and numeracy across the timetable so it wasn’t isolated...’* (Head and TPD leads, Insiza District)

**2. Teachers practise classroom activities together, guided by TPD modules.** By midline, 95% of school heads reported teachers regularly participating in peer learning—significantly higher than in non-IGATE schools.

*“If you look at the modules there are some teaching methods that we were not aware of, but when that program was done, it really showed us that there were other teaching methods out there which could help with improving teaching quality”* (Teacher, Insiza District).

*‘Now, after commenting as staff members, we sit down [together] and evaluate ... the outcome of the learners and we discover that some of the learners ... miss some points... we then agree to go back to the Modules and refer to where the missed concepts are found. Then we advise each other to go and teach these particular concepts.’* (School Head, Mangwe District)

At the end-line, there is strong qualitative and quantitative evidence that teachers are still well-versed in the participatory learning methods covered in the IGATE modules and continue to find the methods very useful. The most useful aspect of TPD was reported as *“The child participation... that child-to-child interaction... engaging in the hands-on approach”* (Headteacher, Mberengwa).

**3. Teaching quality improves.** There were marked improvements in teaching quality since baseline—by midline, 48% of teachers in classroom observations demonstrated application of skills to support learning. By end-line IGATE had successfully influenced teachers, headteachers, and community volunteers to adopt more participatory and inclusive methods of teaching in school and the community. *“Most of the teachers and most of the lessons being delivered now have changed... to learner-centred lessons”* (Headteacher, Chivi). Teachers are able to adjust their support in class to the level of learners’ performance. *“...you test them... and check their last point of success... Then from there you can assist them because you know that this is a grade 5 student but they are at grade 2 level, this is a grade 5 they are at grade 3 level...”* (resident teacher, Insiza District). Girls report *“There has been a change... before, they would just let us all write our work, whether everyone understood or not”* whereas now there is improved support for struggling learners *“we do group work and help each other”* (FDGs with in-school girls, Mangwe and Insiza).

**4. Student learning outcomes improve.** Learners experienced significant, positive improvements in literacy (0.26 SD<sup>1</sup>) and numeracy (0.29 SD) since midline. Scores improved most for those who had been the weakest learners. IGATE headteachers report that training contributed to improved learning outcomes. *“If you get into a class and check the number of children that can be called non-readers, you will find that... the readers are increasing and the non-readers are decreasing”* (Headteacher, Mberengwa District). Learners and communities widely report improvements in literacy and numeracy as a result of the IGATE interventions.

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<sup>1</sup> Test scores are presented in “standard deviations” for comparison. 0.1 SD is considered a small effect, 0.3 SD medium.

## Reflections and Policy Recommendations

IGATE experience of whole school development and the evidence of change in teaching and learning has informed the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education's *Implementation Framework* (MOPSE, 2021). The framework promotes strong foundations in literacy and numeracy for all learners. MOPSE will use supported open learning for teacher development (framework sections 3.1.3 and 3.2.2) to strengthen inclusive teaching of literacy and numeracy. Inclusive teaching is good for *all* learners, not just those who need to 'catch-up'.<sup>2</sup> Many of the materials MOPSE will use for learners and teachers were developed through IGATE.

Below are key evidence-based recommendations about *how* to use these effectively, from the experience of the IGATE project.

### School-level policy recommendations

1. Teacher-led diagnostic assessments of literacy and numeracy provide essential data for teachers. Small samples of 5-10 learners from each class make assessment manageable.
2. Having a toolkit of classroom learning activities for literacy and numeracy, from the TPD modules, helps teachers adopt more participatory methods and respond to learners' level.
3. Learners need sufficient time for literacy and numeracy learning—this can be achieved by allocating time-tabled English and Maths lessons for literacy and numeracy, and supplementing this through clubs as necessary.
4. Teachers need regular time and space for teacher development activities, using the professional development modules, to learn and apply new teaching and learning methods.
5. Heads need to make strong foundation skills central to their School Development Plans, with specifics about what they will do, for which learners, and how they will monitor progress.
6. Heads can support learning beyond the school, by cultivating 'community learning champions' and sharing learning resources for use in the home and in the community

### System Level Policy Recommendations

1. Prioritise the timely printing and distribution of materials for learners, community champions, teachers, and school heads. Supported Open Learning depends upon everyone having access to the learning resources they need, as well as support.
2. Ensure officers at every level understand and promote the crucial role of home-school-community partnerships for learning. School heads and School Development Committees should look beyond school infrastructure to learning, working to improve literacy and numeracy within their School Development Plans.
3. Ensure district education officers promote a focus on learning—are learners making progress in literacy and numeracy—across schools and districts.
4. Address the specific issues of adolescent learners and those who educate them in secondary schools and in the community. Secondary teachers and schools need strong guidance and support to address the gap most learners will have in foundation skills, especially since the COVID crisis. Remind schools of MOPSE's guidance to set aside two lessons of English and two lessons of Mathematics for foundation skills, with extra support outside lessons for those who need it most.

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<sup>2</sup> For example, Commonwealth of Learning (2021, p4) <http://oasis.col.org/handle/11599/3684>