

**From Global Dependency to Local Empowerment: A Paradigm
Shift for Sustainable Teacher Professional Development
Programmes in the Global South**

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Abstract

This dissertation explores how the sustainability of Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programmes in the Global South can be strengthened through autonomy-respecting capacity-building, participatory processes, and grassroots strategies. It examines the opportunities and limitations of TPD by focusing on how local ownership, peer collaboration, and culturally responsive facilitation can be embedded into programme design and implementation. The research reflects on a shift from conventional knowledge-based frameworks towards a model centred on reciprocal and relational approaches that recognise teachers as co-learners and co-creators. After identifying a lack of research on grassroots-driven or smaller, deep-scale TPD within International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs), especially in primary education and Global South development settings, this study addresses that gap. While much literature critiques the influence of large INGOs, smaller-scale or grassroots approaches are often discussed collectively, without detailed case-level analysis. The literature addresses capacity-building in international development, but sustainable and locally driven strategies in primary education remain underexplored. As most studies focus on large-scale, donor-driven models, grassroots TPD initiatives offer valuable insights to inform more participatory and sustainable INGO strategies. The research investigates how international volunteers (IVs) and local participants engage in capacity-building through a qualitative case study on the INGO Teachers4Teachers operating in Kwale County, Kenya.

Data were collected through focus groups, semi-structured interviews, observations, and document analysis. In total, 22 participants were involved: two focus groups, one with 7 local teachers and one with 7 IV teachers, and interviews with 2 head teachers, 2 curriculum support officers, an Education Officer, and 3 board members. Thematic analysis and Ripple Effects Mapping were used to identify themes and patterns across seven dimensions: autonomy-respecting capacity-building, empowerment and mutual learning, relationships and collaboration, expectations and preparedness, participatory processes, alignment with local needs and challenges, and programme scope and scalability. These dimensions emerged through a combined inductive (data-driven) and deductive (theory-driven) approach. Themes were partially derived from the literature and research questions, guiding the interview structure while allowing new insights to emerge through data collection. The research is framed within participatory and

empowerment-based development approaches, drawing on Freirean pedagogy, Ellerman's autonomy theory, and capacity-building literature. While the case study promotes co-learning and reciprocal capacity-building between local and international teachers, crucial challenges persist in implementing bottom-up participatory processes and robust follow-up activities. Empowering classroom teachers to take on facilitation or mentoring roles, integrating reflective and structured peer exchange, strengthening downward accountability, and consolidating capacity-building for IVs emerged as opportunities to enhance sustainability.

This research contributes to development literature by offering practical insights into how localised TPD initiatives can inform broader INGO practices. It emphasises the need to focus on and revise alternative models while balancing scale with relational depth. The study advocates for long-term, participatory structures and follow-up mechanisms that respect local agency and enable meaningful professional growth for both local and international participants.

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List of Acronyms

Acronym	Definition
CBC	Competency-Based Curriculum
CSO(s)	Curriculum Support Officer(s)
INGO(s)	International Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
IV(s)	International Volunteer(s)
LMICs	Low- and Middle-Income Countries
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MAXQDA	MAX Qualitative Data Analysis (Software)
NGO(s)	Non-Governmental Organisation(s)
PE	Primary Education
PDI(s)	Private Development Initiative(s)
REM	Ripple Effects Mapping
T4T	Teachers4Teachers
ToT	Training of Trainers
TPD	Teacher Professional Development

1. Introduction

This research investigates capacity-building within Teacher Professional Development (TPD) programmes in state-provided Primary Education (PE). Specifically, programmes led by International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs) from the Global North. This in collaboration with partners in the Global South and involving international volunteers (IVs) to enhance educational practices in low- and middle-income countries (LMICs). The case study for this research is Teachers4Teachers (T4T), a Dutch NGO operating in Kenya, whose approach is explored more in depth in Chapter 3. Personal experiences with government-funded TPD programmes revealed challenges in their sustainability. Rigid structures, low motivation, and donor-driven priorities limit local ownership and long-term impact (Chambers 2010; Ellerman, 2006; Power et al., 2002; Wallace et al., 2006). Despite investments, TPD initiatives often struggle to achieve meaningful change. One key challenge lies in top-down models, where goals, strategies, and structures are defined from above without input or ownership from local educators (Bawole & Langnel, 2016; Chambers, 1997; Eade, 2007; Ellerman, 2006; Kinsbergen, 2019; McGee, 2010; Wallace et al., 2006). These challenges highlight the necessity to analyse autonomy-respecting, participatory, and localised approaches in TPD programmes. Current dynamics not only undermine teacher autonomy but also suppress the intrinsic motivation required for educational change (Eade, 2007; Ellerman, 2006; Makuwira, 2018; Malunga & Holcombe, 2014; McGee, 2010). The case study T4T provides an opportunity to explore smaller-scale, localised approaches as well as IV involvement in education. T4T's strategies of short-term volunteer engagement, collaborative learning, lack of financial incentives, and a long-term vision offer insights into the impact and effectiveness of TPD and the ways to address the limitations of larger INGOs. By exploring T4T's approach, this research aims to identify practical strategies for enhancing sustainability in TPD programmes. It also aims to contribute to broader discussions on scaling practices and participatory development.

This dissertation is guided by the central question: *How can TPD programmes in the Global South be strengthened to incorporate autonomy-respecting principles for sustainable capacity-building and foster empowerment?* To address this, the research explores four sub-questions:

1. How does T4T implement autonomy-respecting principles in its TPD programme?

2. What are the key components of effective indirect capacity-building for sustainable outcomes?
3. Which participatory framework can emphasise realistic expectations, local autonomy and gradual progress in TPD programmes enhancing sustainability in the Global South?
4. How can deep-scale and locally focused strategies inform larger INGOs to enhance sustainability and local empowerment in diverse contexts in the Global South?

The sub-questions collectively explore how T4T implements autonomy-respecting principles, the role of indirect capacity-building in fostering sustainability, and the integration of participatory frameworks to support gradual progress and local autonomy. They evaluate the programme's current strengths and identify areas for improvement. Additionally, the study examines how locally focused strategies can inform participatory frameworks for larger INGOs. To ensure sustainability through locally led facilitation and promoting empowerment across diverse contexts.

Several core concepts frame this research and are central to its arguments. These will be further elaborated in the literature review. While the international development literature offers a wide range of interpretations, there is no single consensus on how these concepts should be defined. The definitions below are drawn from different sources and reflect how they are most often used in research related to development work by INGOs in the Global South.

- Teacher Professional Development Programmes: Initiatives designed for teachers learning how to learn, grow professionally and implementing that knowledge in practice to enhance educational outcomes and support the growth of their learners (Avalos, 2011).
- Capacity can be understood as the shared competence of individuals, organisations, institutions, and communities to autonomously handle their development processes and decision-making in an effective way (OECD, 2006). Capacity-Building involves strategies to enhance the abilities, a specific skill or competence of individuals, organisations or communities to manage and sustain improvements (Coryell et al., 2016; Eade, 2007). Indirect Capacity-Building fosters intrinsic motivation, self-reliance and autonomy by empowering beneficiaries without directly intervening in their decisions (Ellerman, 2006).

- Scaling Deep and Scaling Up: Scaling deep focuses on local contexts and community-driven strategies, while scaling up focuses on expanding programmes more broadly by increasing reach or quantity (Archer, 2010; Hartmann & Linn, 2008; Wallace et al., 2006).
- Participatory Approaches: Actively involving local communities in all stages of programme planning, decision-making, implementation and evaluation (Chambers, 1997; Contreras & Roudbari, 2021; Hickey & Mohan, 2005).
- Top-down approaches are marked by centralised control and decision-making, where external actors impose requirements and expectations on local communities. Bottom-up approaches prioritise empowering local stakeholders and primary actors, ensuring that decisions and accountability strategies align with their needs (Chambers, 2010; Bawole & Langnel, 2016; Ellerman, 2006; Power et al., 2002).
- Downward accountability refers to the extent to which an NGO engages with beneficiaries through transparent planning, management, decision-making, and budgeting processes, ensuring that their feedback helps shape the initiative (Bawole & Langnel, 2016; Cavill & Sohail, 2007).

While much literature addresses capacity-building in international development, research on locally driven approaches in primary education in the Global South remains limited. Most current research focuses on large-scale, donor-driven interventions that often neglect local ownership. Grassroots initiatives in TPD can offer valuable lessons in fostering teacher motivation, local leadership, and participatory learning. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining how grassroots-driven models can inform larger INGO programmes.

This thesis does not suggest excluding TPD or INGOs and volunteers in the Global South. However, good intentions alone cannot ensure lasting change. An inefficiency lies in the design and management of TPD programmes, leaving little room for local educators to influence their own development. By focusing on capacity-building in TPD, this research aims to address these challenges within state-provided education. It examines how core principles, such as intrinsic motivation, local leadership, and collaborative learning, can enhance the long-term impact of TPD initiatives. This research highlights the need for INGOs to adopt autonomy-respecting and participatory practices that foster local agency. Studying these elements, the

research aims to contribute to a broader understanding of how TPD programmes can achieve impact. By examining T4T, it explores how a small-scale model can inform broader TPD strategies. The following chapter provides a critical literature review of these concepts and their application in development and education contexts.

2. Literature

This literature review examines sustainability in TPD programmes. While valuable, these insights must be critically assessed within real-world educational complexities to ensure theory is applied practically. Sustainability in TPD is understood as sustained pedagogical change and local ownership that persist beyond donor cycles (Ellerman, 2006). The review is framed by different angles, each linking to the central research question and the sub-questions.

First, a bottom-up, autonomy-respecting approach prioritising learners' agency (Ellerman, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2024). Second, Freirean critical pedagogy centres dialogue and co-learning (Freire, 1970/2005). Third, participatory development and participatory M&E strategies emphasise inclusion of local actors across the entire programme cycle (Hickey & Mohan, 2005; Mitchell et al., 2024; Roberts & Lillis, 2001; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). Fourth, relational approaches and building rapport stress that sustainable capacity-building is grounded in trust, time, and mutual exchange (Girgis, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2024). Fifth, IV involvement and capacity-building recognise that international volunteers and staff themselves require cultural sensitivity, reflective practice, and relational competencies (Devereux, 2008; Loiseau et al., 2016; Thompson et al., 2020). Finally, a scaling and grassroots alternatives lens examines how TPD programmes can scale without undermining local ownership, exploring context-sensitive deep-scaling strategies, small-scale initiatives, and volunteer-driven grassroots models (Hartmann & Linn, 2008; Kinsbergen, 2019; Kipkemai Bett, 2016; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). The theoretical framework guides the analysis and structure of the literature review, informing the research questions.

Paradigms and Frameworks

This subsection examines development paradigms through autonomy-respecting approaches. Development paradigms still rely on rigid, top-down log frames, particularly in large-scale initiatives, which reduce complex social dynamics to measurable targets and fail to adapt to local contexts, undermining flexibility, trust, autonomy, and sustainability (Chambers, 2010; Ellerman, 2006; Makuwira, 2018; Wallace et al., 2006). Tensions between donor-driven external goals and local needs undermine

ownership and autonomy, leaving teacher agency marginalised in programme design and delivery (Makuwira, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2024; Wallace et al., 2006). Distorted or exaggerated statistics in development assistance often reflect the unrealistic expectations imposed by those in power and reinforced by results-based approaches that prioritise measurable outputs over fostering relationship-based change (Chambers, 2010). Makuwira (2018) adds that development efforts frequently overlook the importance of social relationships, especially in non-Western contexts like Africa, where communal connections and trust-building are central to meaningful engagement. INGOs should adopt a mindset of learning as well as confront their colonial legacies and shift towards empowering local actors (Makuwira, 2018; Shivji, 2007). Ellerman (2006) further critiques dominant paradigms as a form of “social engineering,” where externally imposed development initiatives overrule motivation and prevent communities from helping themselves. This reinforces the belief among INGOs that they possess the knowledge to direct development, enforcing plans through conditionalities or frameworks. According to Ellerman (2006), a central shortcoming in development assistance is the assumption that autonomy can be given from the outside. Similarly, Chambers (2010) warns that even well-intentioned strategies, such as immersion visits, can fail if disconnected from adaptive, personalised methodologies, limiting their ability to respond to changing or unpredictable local realities.

Beyond these critiques of autonomy and control, more recent frameworks include increasingly participatory elements. However, they often remain superficial and reduce participation to questionnaires in consultation or feedback surveys without influencing decisions in project design or implementation (Flint & Meyer zu Natrup, 2018; Makuwira, 2018; Mitchell et al., 2024; Powell, 2006; Prinsen & Nijhof, 2015; Wallace et al., 2006). These approaches are often critiqued for their tokenistic approach, serving donor-driven priorities rather than empowering local actors to shape their own development agendas. Hickey and Mohan (2005) highlight that many frameworks fail to move beyond consultation and neglect the changeable nature of development work in educational contexts, which is also supported by Makuwira (2018) and Wallace et al. (2006). This results in passive involvement, where participants comply quietly rather than engaging actively, showcasing deeper issues of dependency and power imbalances (Flint & Meyer zu Natrup, 2018; Makuwira, 2018). In response to the limitations of traditional, Northern-led models, some INGOs have begun shifting their operational approaches (McGee,

2010). Many INGOs decentralise by relocating offices and programme management to the Global South, reducing Northern staff deployment and reflecting a commitment to localisation (McGee, 2010). However, McGee (2010) raises concerns that this decentralisation may merely shift geographic focus without addressing underlying top-down structures or integrating participatory approaches. Challenges remain in power dynamics and adapting programme guidelines to local contexts, creating a mismatch between plans of the INGO and in-country realities (Mitchell et al., 2024; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). Effective participatory methods must engage communities throughout the whole programme lifecycle, from planning to evaluation (Powell, 2006; Wallace et al., 2006).

Funding Structures

This subsection explores funding structures through autonomy-respecting development and downward accountability. Financial dependency is another critical dimension of power imbalance, as donor-driven funding structures frequently constrain the flexibility and responsiveness of TPD programmes. Large-scale TPD programmes often access substantial funding but prioritise measurable outcomes over local responsiveness (Barber & Bowie, 2008; Wallace et al., 2006). Wallace et al. (2006) note that smaller, community-based initiatives struggle to secure funding due to donor standards and reporting requirements. Despite lacking stable funding, grassroots organisations often show greater financial adaptability to emerging needs (Barber & Bowie, 2008; Wallace et al., 2006). Wallace et al. (2006) argue that to enhance sustainability, funding mechanisms must balance accountability with flexibility, allowing local voices to shape decisions and ensuring that context-specific concerns remain central to TPD. Recent African reviews show how the priorities and agendas of funders and ministries of education often implement programmes away from classroom realities and teachers' immediate needs (Mitchell et al., 2024).

Empowerment and Autonomy

In this subsection empowerment and autonomy are analysed through Freirean co-learning, relational approaches, and participatory involvement in decision-making. A challenge lies in fostering intrinsic

motivation among local participants, as dependency and treating local teachers as passive participants contests lasting change (Ellerman, 2006; Hassler et al., 2018). Therefore, Ellerman (2006) suggests that intrinsic motivation must be prioritised over providing resources and knowledge. Participatory approaches should go beyond consultations, such as determining what to implement next in capacity-building sessions, by involving local actors in decision-making throughout design and implementation to foster autonomy and ownership (Ellerman, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2024; Powell, 2006). Mitchell et al. (2024) note that consultations are often with stakeholders further away from the day-to-day realities in the classroom such as district officials, reflecting the agendas of INGOs or African national governments. This results in a one-size-fits-all approach, which is often drawn from a Western context and undermines local autonomy by seeing teachers as exchangeable (Mitchell et al., 2024; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). Simpson and Gill (2007) emphasise the importance of transparency in the design process, urging INGOs to indicate explicitly which perspectives were considered and why certain inputs were included or excluded. Simpson and Gill (2007) highlight that effective participatory methods must include both external and local experiences, yet conflicts arise when beliefs differ. They advocate ongoing dialogue and clear, jargon-free communication to minimise power imbalances.

Downward accountability can encourage this as it shapes how funds are used, emphasising transparency, mutual consultation, relationships, and learning between INGOs and beneficiaries from project planning to management (Bawole & Langnel, 2016). Bawole and Langnel (2016) argue that true downward accountability involves placing communities at the centre of development processes, enabling them to define their own priorities and shape solutions, while remaining actively involved during every step as a project or programme develops. However, INGOs often limit beneficiaries' influence on key decisions like budgeting and planning (Cavill & Sohail, 2007). Accountability requires recognition of diverse community backgrounds, including age, gender, and ethnicity, and open communication about resources and conflicting perspectives (Cavill & Sohail, 2007). This requires INGOs to create robust feedback loops to empower communities, ensuring that their perspectives shape the programme direction (Cavill & Sohail, 2007; Power et al., 2002). Power et al. (2002) further stress that weak feedback loops remain in place when community evaluations or reports are rarely translated into change, partly due to limited bottom-up communication, where feedback gathered by field staff or volunteers may not reach decision-makers.

Gumucio Dagron (2006) critiques this top-down approach to knowledge exchange, where communication is limited to information dissemination rather than fostering a genuine two-way exchange, resulting in reports of success that appear after the development assistance. Grassroots approaches focus on dialogue but often struggle to influence larger programmes because practices limit the adoption of learning-oriented processes (Gumucio Dagron, 2006). Gumucio Dagron (2006) proposes a participatory learning model, which involves immersion of staff and volunteers in communities to enhance self-reflection and long-term commitment. INGOs must adopt reflective practices, create safe spaces for feedback, and enable joint learning. Without such approaches, larger INGOs risk maintaining ineffective strategies (Gumucio Dagron, 2006).

While participatory design is often emphasised, the way learning outcomes are assessed remains underdeveloped. Building on the need for authentic participatory processes and reflective learning, it is equally important to reconsider how outcomes are evaluated and validated, ensuring capacity-building efforts are inclusive both in design and in impact assessment. As previously highlighted, evaluations are often limited to standardised forms and questionnaires or brief post-session feedback moments at the end of programme cycles or workshops (Roberts & Lillis, 2001). While these tools can capture immediate ideas, they fall short in understanding whether learning is retained or applied over time, limiting their usefulness in assessing long-term impact or guiding programme improvements. To strengthen participatory evaluation frameworks, Roberts and Lillis (2001) suggest incorporating group assessments, peer feedback, learning portfolios, or even formal accreditation into capacity-building programmes, providing both external validation and increased credibility of learning outcomes. This accreditation model promotes learner-led development, enhances the documentation of learning processes, supports independent evaluation of training quality and raises the standard of education within INGOs' capacity-building programmes (Roberts & Lillis, 2001). Recent research in the African continent highlights how culturally grounded frameworks can strengthen participatory evaluation, ensuring that local stakeholders shape programme design and assessment (Boadu & Ile, 2022). However, INGOs often undervalue teachers' knowledge and judgement; making teachers active stakeholders requires building on their expertise and involving them in design and implementation through collaborative activities (Mitchell et al., 2024; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). Building on participatory pedagogies, Hickey and Mohan's (2005)

REFLECT approach illustrates how Freirean principles can be applied to capacity-building efforts. This method integrates Freirean pedagogy with local knowledge, encouraging dialogue among teachers to identify challenges and solutions.

Ellerman (2006) critiques the conventional model of knowledge-based assistance, which assumes that Northern experts are trainers who hold the information or answers needed to drive change and that this knowledge can simply be transmitted to local actors often at no cost. The INGO pushes for observed results, such as the number of participants in trainings, while expanding the scale of the programme and measuring impact. This approach assumes a one-way stream of learning and instructions from the Northern experts to the passive learners, often disregarding the existing capacity within local communities or among the primary beneficiaries themselves. Ellerman (2006) argues that INGOs should provide resources while allowing communities to be actively involved in their own learning and creating awareness, as external interventions can undermine local capacity and motivation. This aligns with Freire's (1970/2005) philosophy of co-learning, which emphasises dialogue and shared understanding. Powell (2006) and Hickey and Mohan (2005) emphasise that programme data, typically collected for administrative purposes, is underutilised and should inform future interventions. Wallace et al. (2006) note that using English as the primary project language often creates a barrier to community ownership. English as a project tool is often inhibiting, too complex, and poorly used, leading to miscommunication and reduced involvement from local stakeholders.

Alternative Approaches and Models

Alternative approaches draw on relational facilitation, indigenous knowledge and grassroots initiatives as responses to directive frameworks. Building on earlier critiques of directive frameworks, Ellerman (2006) proposes three principles for INGOs in an alternative development approach to support more empowering development practices. First, he emphasises autonomy-respecting development, where INGOs provide resources and support without directing the goals or control actions. Second, meaningful engagement requires INGOs to immerse themselves in the local context and take time to understand the environment from local perspectives. Ellerman (2006), referencing Hirschman's notion of familiarisation,

stresses the importance of learning from local experiences to avoid prioritising short-term results over long-term capacity-building. Finally, sustainable change should grow from intrinsic motivation as initiatives are more likely to succeed when communities are actively involved in shaping and pursuing them. INGOs should provide support without altering motivations or imposing their own timelines, otherwise, they risk unintentionally undermining people's confidence in their own abilities (Ellerman, 2006). He advocates for an open learning model in which facilitators do not provide fixed answers but create space for local participants to explore, experiment and engage in trial-and-error problem-solving. This approach aligns with Flint and Meyer zu Natrup's (2018) "design thinking" model, which similarly promotes co-creation at every stage of programme development. In contrast to models that limit participation to consultation stages, both Ellerman's and Flint and Meyer zu Natrup's approaches actively build on local knowledge at every stage of programme development, aiming to reduce power imbalances and co-create context-sensitive solutions. Ellerman (2006) argues that autonomy-respecting aid can only come from organisations that are closely embedded in the local context, where the power differential between the INGO and the beneficiaries is as minimal as possible. He calls for local networks, such as governments, universities, think tanks, NGOs, and foundations, to take the lead in driving change through a decentralised approach, arguing that global development agencies, with their large-scale and top-down approaches, are too distant from the lived experiences of those implementing change. Wallace et al. (2006) emphasise that development processes are not merely technical or rational but shaped by emotional experiences and subjective interpretations. These less visible dynamics significantly shape cross-cultural relationships and influence power dynamics between external and local actors. The dynamics that shape power, politics and history in development work are critical for empowerment and sustainability. Sandercock (1998, as cited in Wallace et al., 2006) introduced the concept of "therapeutic planning," an alternative approach that emphasises practitioners' reflective awareness and responsiveness to the emotions and histories of the local communities. Similarly, Freire (1970/2005) and Chambers (2010) both emphasise that meaningful change requires practitioner self-reflection.

Beside calls for practitioner self-reflection, localised grassroots initiatives emerged as another alternative model. Grassroots INGOs, described by Kinsbergen (2019) as Private Development Initiatives (PDIs), emphasise volunteer-driven, informal origins and small-scale efforts that prioritise flexibility and localised

impact (Contreras & Roudbari, 2021; Schnable, 2015). These initiatives often arise from personal experiences, such as tourism or volunteer placements, and are usually led by individuals with limited development training (Appe & Telch, 2019; Kinsbergen, 2019). They typically rely on private donations, operate independently of bureaucratic systems, and maintain low operational costs while delivering services in public sectors such as education and health. The flexibility of these initiatives allows them to respond directly to local needs, avoiding the challenges with government involvement and offering an alternative to the rigid structures of large-scale INGOs (Contreras & Roudbari, 2021; Kinsbergen, 2019). However, their informal structures and limited needs assessments can lead to interventions addressing immediate challenges but failing to achieve long-term sustainability (Contreras & Roudbari, 2021; Kinsbergen et al., 2017). Bypassing local systems risks creating dependency rather than self-reliance. For lasting impact, grassroots initiatives must as well involve communities at all stages, align efforts with local priorities, and at the same time collaborate with governance structures to enhance legitimacy (Kinsbergen, 2019; Kinsbergen et al., 2017). Kinsbergen et al. (2011) further highlight that volunteers tend to be more engaged when they feel a closer psychological or geographical connection to the beneficiaries. Personal relationships with communities and a sense of direct impact can enhance volunteer commitment, ultimately improving the sustainability of grassroots initiatives (Kinsbergen et al., 2011).

Capacity-Building in TPD Programmes

This subsection investigates capacity-building in TPD programmes through relational, cultural, and IV development, focusing on sustainable knowledge transfer. Capacity-building efforts are shaped not only by material resources but also by relational power dynamics, such as who is seen as an information-holder, who facilitates learning, and whose voice is prioritised in design and delivery (Girgis, 2007; Eade, 2007). Yeboah and Daniel (2020) highlight the importance of integrating indigenous knowledge into educational programmes, especially in rural Africa as this plays a crucial role in how children are educated in these communities. They highlight that such expertise is often overlooked by INGOs in favour of Western models. By integrating indigenous understandings, TPD programmes can align with local cultural contexts, improving relevance and effectiveness of teaching methods. Both teachers and INGO staff must

be trained to understand and respect indigenous knowledge to enhance children's learning experiences (Yeboah & Daniel, 2020).

Capacity-building empowers local communities by strengthening their skills and resources to drive social change (Eade, 2007). However, INGOs frequently undervalue existing knowledge, treating it as something to be filled by external expertise (Eade, 2007; Girgis, 2007; Hall, 1992; Mitchell et al., 2024). Eade (2007) further argues that effective capacity-building should involve both material inputs and human efforts, tailored to the specific needs of the community. This process requires time, patience, and continuous engagement, along with respect for local priorities through active listening, integrating community perspectives, and enabling individuals to define their own values and objectives (Eade, 2007). Gender and age dynamics, especially when international participants are involved, are often ignored, yet they complicate both relationship-building and equitable participation (Girgis, 2007). She critiques conventional capacity-building by contrasting "friendship work" with "dependent work". While the latter is characterised by rigid timelines and control over outcomes that often suppress local empowerment, friendship work centres on mutual trust, shared experiences, sufficient time, and the co-creation of knowledge to build meaningful IV-local participant relationships. Friendship work goes beyond collaboration; it requires IVs to be self-aware, culturally sensitive, and physically present for extended periods, allowing time for relationships to develop through informal moments, such as sharing meals or drinks (Girgis, 2007). She emphasises that practitioners must adapt culturally rather than impose pre-structured tools developed by agencies. Girgis (2007) outlines three instruments to define friendship work. First the suggestive dialogue, where IVs and local participants collaborate to integrate local insights and capacities into suggestions and ideas, rather than through instruction. Secondly the discussion dialogue, which fosters open exchanges and involves negotiation and shared reflection. Lastly sensitivity, which involves active listening skills, local environmental awareness, and creativity in applying different environments to create unique relationships. Together, these three instruments foster capacity-building environments where learners are respected as co-creators rather than recipients of knowledge. Friendship work provides an alternative that prioritises relational learning over hierarchical instruction, allowing local actors to not only apply knowledge but reshape it in ways that align with their cultural, institutional, and educational contexts (Girgis, 2007). Importantly, Girgis (2007) notes that capacity-

building efforts are frequently undermined by external factors, including short funding cycles, pressure for quick results, and limited cultural experience or unconscious bias among IVs. These constraints often cause practitioners to fall into dependent work relationships. For true transformation, capacity-building must shift from transactional models to relational ones, where capacity is built not for communities but with them, through sustained dialogue, shared space, and cultural humility (Girgis, 2007).

These relational insights challenge dominant capacity-building approaches that prioritise replication over reflection, such as the Training of Trainers (ToT) model. Despite being a scalable solution, the ToT model has drawn critiques from several scholars for its limitations. Ellerman (2006) assesses the model where trainees are rebranded as potential trainers. He argues that the ‘best learners’, those who most effectively copy external trainers, are recruited as future trainers, reinforcing dependency and undermining local capacity. The justification for these programmes is often that local training institutions might not meet the required quality standards. However, by maintaining control over training processes, external agencies continue to inhibit the development of local expertise resulting in deficient capacity-building (Ellerman, 2006; Harper et al., 2024; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). Girgis (2007) and Mitchell et al. (2024) further critique the ToT model for neglecting the relational and cultural aspects of capacity-building, arguing that such models rarely engage with the lived realities of local participants. Harper et al. (2024) show that relational approaches in ToT, with careful attention to group norms and ongoing support, reduces cascade dilution. Mitchell et al. (2024) further emphasise that teachers particularly value the knowledge of their peers, calling for structured opportunities to engage in problem-solving and pedagogy with senior colleagues.

Girgis's (2007) concept of “friendship work” also moves beyond this model by emphasising shared experiences, and relational sensitivity as key to better address the complexities of local educational environments. Creating dependency and failing to integrate community knowledge effectively (Ellerman, 2006; Girgis, 2007) echoes also with Freirean principles which emphasise empowerment through co-learning, dialogue, and contextually rooted relationships. James (2018) advocates for the formation of collaborative learning networks. These networks connect facilitators across regions to share resources, experiences, and locally grounded knowledge. Rather than relying on a few selected individuals to

disseminate expertise, this model supports peer-to-peer learning in the community. This approach also helps to address the chronic shortage of qualified facilitators by strengthening the local capacity from within.

As earlier noted, Wallace et al. (2006) highlight that the dominance of the English language in development work undermines meaningful dialogue and reduces the effectiveness of capacity-building efforts. This underscores the need for both cultural and linguistic inclusivity to ensure community participation. Malunga and Holcombe (2014) also stress that language and cultural inclusion are crucial, particularly in African contexts, where foreign languages and ignoring traditional knowledge can hinder engagement. Practitioners need to engage with local communities on their terms and respect local traditions, while blending them with modern solutions (Malunga & Holcombe, 2014). Mugisha (2015) emphasises as well that effective capacity-building must be culturally sensitive and engaging. However, considering that while Western adult learners may thrive in environments that emphasise independence and direct feedback, African adult learners often benefit more from structured guidance and support. This difference highlights the need for training that aligns with local learning styles (Mugisha, 2015).

Given the frequent use of IVs to deliver TPD, their role in shaping capacity-building outcomes also deserves attention. In TPD programmes involving IVs, capacity-building must also extend to the volunteers themselves. Girgis (2007) and Thompson et al. (2020) emphasise the meaning of IVs developing skills in cultural sensitivity, reflective practice and relational competencies in effective, collaborative relationships. Training before, during, and after placements is essential to mitigate stereotypes and foster cross-cultural understanding (Thompson et al., 2020). Long-term volunteer placements are especially effective as they allow deeper relationship-building and cultural exchange (Loiseau et al., 2016). In contrast, short-term placements often face challenges such as mismatched skills, repeated efforts, and reinforcing stereotypes. South-South volunteering, which fosters solidarity among Southern countries, provides an alternative to the traditional North-South model (Baillie Smith et al., 2017). Another alternative inspired by Freire's philosophy is reciprocal capacity-building which emphasises mutual benefit, where meaningful relationships built on trust and active engagement enable mutual learning for both volunteers and local participants. Devereux (2008) highlights the potential of international

volunteering to complement local expertise but warns against poorly structured, paternalistic initiatives that prioritise volunteers' experiences over community needs. According to Devereux (2008), thoughtfully designed programmes can promote cross-cultural exchange and technical support while addressing power imbalances through motivation, shared responsibility, and local accountability. This requires long-term commitment, with practitioners actively engaging in the everyday living and working conditions of local communities.

These contextual and relational aspects of capacity-building have implications for how programmes are scaled, raising the question of how to grow without losing depth, responsiveness, or local ownership. Balancing scaling up with scaling deep is a challenge, especially in LMICs. Scaling up refers to expanding programmes across broader populations or regions, often emphasising measurable outcomes but risking reduced relevance and programme quality at local level (Hartmann & Linn, 2008; Hassler et al., 2018; Mitchell et al., 2024; Sutoris, 2018; Thomson, 2014). This approach can lead to bureaucratic inefficiencies, staff taking on larger areas, greater reliance on standardised models, and reduced teacher motivation (Hassler et al., 2018; Scott-Smith, 2014). For scaling up to succeed, Eade (2007) stresses the need for context-sensitive approaches and long-term relationships, rather than reliance on quick, visible outcomes. Scaling deep, in contrast, focuses on embedding sustainable practices within local systems, prioritising ownership and long-term impact through participatory methods (Archer, 2010; Hartmann & Linn, 2008; Mitchell et al., 2024). Ellerman (2014) proposes a decentralised method of parallel experimentation that tests diverse strategies simultaneously to identify effective projects which are suited best to varied contexts. This can enhance creativity and cross-learning. Hassler et al. (2018) and Mitchell et al. (2024) propose peer facilitators within schools to cascade TPD, modelling interactive teaching methods and fostering local agency and trust among teachers, thereby reducing reliance on external actors. However, Kipkemai Bett (2016) critiques this approach, noting that the cascade model is frequently used in Sub-Saharan Africa to address gaps in teacher education. In this context, many teachers enter the profession underprepared and lack sufficient ongoing support, a challenge common across numerous African nations. While cost-effective and able to reach many teachers, Kipkemai Bett (2016) argues that the real challenge lies not in cascading itself, but in scaling up without considering the needs of individual school environments. This process often dilutes training content, resulting in the weakening of its impact. He

advocates for smaller strategies tailored to individual schools, emphasising horizontal peer collaboration and the development of values and attitudes over technical skills. By integrating action research, teachers collaboratively investigate challenges in their practice through continuous self-reflection and problem-solving (Kipkemoi Bett, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2024). Combining the adaptability and localised focus of deep-scaling approaches with scaled-up initiatives requires a shift towards grassroots engagement based on mutual learning and collaboration (Hassler et al., 2018; Kipkemoi Bett, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2024).

The literature reveals tensions between top-down frameworks and the need for participatory, autonomy-respecting capacity-building. While grassroots approaches based on building relationships offer promising alternatives, they face structural barriers to scaling. The case study of T4T investigates whether and how participatory and autonomy-respecting approaches are implemented in practice within a small-scale initiative. Additionally, it explores how such strategies may inform broader TPD practices.

3. Case Study Teachers4Teachers

Kwale County's Educational Landscape

The INGO T4T operates currently solely in one county in Kenya, Kwale. Kwale County is located on the southern coast of Kenya and presents several sharp contrasts. While the tourism sector generates significant income, approximately 71% of the population is still classified as living in poverty (Kinsbergen, 2019). In the education sector, challenges include teacher shortages, overcrowded classrooms, and limited resources, particularly in rural areas (Teachers4Teachers [T4T], 2023a; 2024a). Following the 2010 constitutional reforms, Kwale introduced a County Integrated Development Plan, but resource shortages continue to hinder progress (Kinsbergen, 2019).

The 2018 introduction of the Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) aimed to promote skills-based learning, yet implementation has been hindered by insufficient teacher preparation and limited infrastructure (T4T, 2022; 2023b). Numerous development (I)NGOs, including both established organisations and emerging PDIs, address local needs in sectors such as education and health, but their efforts often lack coordination and alignment with government priorities or policies (Kinsbergen, 2019). The Kenyan education system is organised into three main levels: early years education (comprising pre-primary and lower primary for ages 4–8), middle school (upper primary and lower secondary for ages 9–14), and senior school followed by tertiary education (Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development [KICD], 2017). PE is free and compulsory, managed by the Ministry of Education and the Teachers Service Commission, which oversees the curriculum, teacher training, and educational policies (KICD, 2017). English gradually becomes the dominant language of instruction in higher grades, posing challenges for students who begin their education in Swahili or local languages (T4T, 2024a).

Teachers4Teachers Initiative

T4T is a Dutch-based INGO that has been operating in Kwale County since 2006 with the aim to improve educational outcomes through capacity-building initiatives that focus on TPD, school leadership training, and fostering active learning methodologies (T4T, 2022). The initiative is governed through a dual board

structure, with the Dutch board focusing on strategic planning, volunteer recruitment, and fundraising, and the Kenyan board supporting local implementation, stakeholder engagement and ensuring alignment with national and county educational policies (T4T, 2022; 2023b). T4T's programme operates on a four-year cycle, aiming to cover approximately three zones annually and revisit each zone in Kwale County every four years to reinforce relationships, monitor progress, and support continuity (T4T, 2022; 2023b). In 2023, the organisation facilitated 11 workshops across designated zones, engaging over 270 teachers and in 2024 there were 16 workshops organised (2023b; 2024b). T4T runs ten interlinked projects that include early childhood education, special needs education, and primary and secondary education through workshops and leadership courses (T4T, 2022). The autumn trips focus on leadership training for school principals, which directly supports the workshops for teachers delivered in the spring.

While these projects are interdependent, this dissertation focuses on T4T's TPD project in the spring with workshops for classroom teachers in PE, which serves as the central case study for examining capacity-building strategies. Findings from this initiative are explored in detail in Chapter 5. T4T's funding model combines contributions from Dutch participants, matched funding from the Wilde Ganzen Foundation, and local fundraising efforts in Kenya by the Kenyan Board (T4T, 2022; 2023b). Achieving financial independence remains a key objective, with the organisation working to strengthen the Kenyan board's capacity to assume full leadership and ownership of the programme by 2027 (T4T, 2022). This aligns with T4T's goal of "Shifting the Power" by transferring leadership to the Kenyan Board, supported by a four-year sponsorship agreement with Wilde Ganzen. However, according to a board member (2024) financial independence continues to be a challenge, as the capacity-building model remains heavily reliant on funding from IVs and other external funders. Recent strategic planning (T4T, 2022) focuses on expanding the use of active learning methods in classrooms and increasing the capacity of Kenyan facilitators to independently lead TPD workshops. For PE, the goal is to raise the percentage of lessons incorporating active learning strategies to 60% by 2027 (T4T, 2022).

TPD Approach of Teachers4Teachers

T4T's TPD workshops target schoolteachers, delivered by a combination of short-term IVs and headteachers as workshop leaders or facilitators, emphasising participatory methods and collaborative learning. IVs introduce innovative teaching strategies and build rapport with teachers, while local facilitators support in infrastructural topics or ensure contextual relevance (T4T, 2023a; 2024a). This model echoes the concepts of friendship work and co-learning (Freire, 1970/2005; Girgis, 2007) as discussed in the literature review. A component of T4T's approach during the project week is to encourage teachers to apply the knowledge gained during workshops directly in their classrooms, supported by classroom observations and feedback sessions (T4T, 2023a). The programme's focus on joint learning, where both volunteers and local participants engage in reciprocal knowledge exchange, aims to foster mutual professional growth for both IVs and local teachers (T4T, 2023a; 2024a). For IVs, the focus is on cultural exchange, self-reflection, and developing facilitation skills, using tools like the "Stool of Confidence" to enhance coaching capabilities while local teachers enhance active learning techniques (T4T, 2023a; 2024a; 2024b). Headteachers who meet T4T's requirements can be trained to co-lead workshops or otherwise become facilitators as previously mentioned. However, local teachers merely participate as attendees. Similar to other Grassroots INGOs, T4T initiatives, driven by volunteer efforts, focus on community-specific educational projects in the Global South, enabling adaptation to local contexts and responsiveness to community needs (Contreras & Roudbari, 2021). T4T's grassroots-driven approach focuses on a localised "drip effect," emphasising long-term, cyclical engagement with repeated visits to the same communities (T4T, 2022, 2024a; T4T Board Member, personal communication, 2024).

The interconnected nature of T4T's projects highlights a holistic approach to educational development. While this dissertation focuses on the TPD initiative in PE, the school leadership programme and course play a critical role in supporting broader goals as it reinforces other T4T initiatives. This case study chapter provides a foundation for understanding the context of T4T, setting the stage for the research methodology and data collection processes explored in the next chapter. This research examines the participatory methods and locally focussed strategies of T4T and how they empower local educators. By analysing T4T's processes, the study evaluates the dynamics of reciprocal capacity-building, local teacher leadership, and the role of IVs.

4. Methodology

This chapter outlines the qualitative research methods used to examine the T4T initiative in Kwale County, Kenya, as a case study of capacity-building within TPD programmes in the Global South. The chapter explains the rationale behind the chosen methods, the evaluation tool, the thematic analysis and the ethical considerations, as well as discussing the challenges and limitations.

Case Study Approach

The case study approach was chosen to allow an in-depth exploration of a specific educational context. This reflects Chambers' (1997, 2010) call for locally grounded inquiry and Makuwira's (2018) emphasis on understanding development through the lived experiences of those affected by interventions. Bell (2010) highlights that case studies are well-suited for examining specific situations in depth, offering insights into programme design and local implementation dynamics. However, she also cautions about the challenges in generalising findings from case studies, emphasising their value in relatability rather than generalizability. T4T was selected as the case study due to its presentation of a grassroots-oriented TPD model, providing a comprehensive analysis of localised practices, the involvement of IVs, and the initiative to shift power. These characteristics offered an opportunity to examine the impacts of such an approach on sustainability and empowerment in TPD, offering perspectives that could potentially inform larger INGOs. The selection of T4T was further justified by its potential to bridge gaps in existing literature on TPD programmes that often overlook small-scale, localised interventions in favour of more centralised models. By focusing on T4T, the research examined what works and does not in a specific setting, with implications for broader educational initiatives.

Methods

This study adopted a qualitative research approach, including focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and observations. These methods were selected for their potential in capturing the complexity of TPD implementation, participants' lived experiences, and the nuanced impacts of capacity-building efforts.

Bell (2010) and Mwita (2022) highlight that qualitative methods provide deep, context-specific insights essential for understanding dynamics in educational settings, especially in diverse, resource-constrained environments.

- **Focus Groups:** Two focus groups were conducted, one with local Kenyan teachers and another with IVs participating in the T4T project. These focus groups explored themes such as empowerment, participatory practices, power dynamics, and sustainability within capacity-building efforts. Themes reflected the research focus on autonomy-respecting principles, indirect capacity-building, mutual learning, and participatory processes. The focus groups followed a semi-structured format that reflected the core themes of the study (see Appendix A). Bell (2010) emphasises that focus groups encourage participation and offer opportunities to clarify responses, a view supported by Mwita (2022), who highlights the value of gathering a broad range of information. However, both caution that focus groups require skilled facilitation to manage disagreements and ensure productive outcomes (Bell, 2010; Mwita, 2022). The focus groups facilitated detailed discussions and allowed to identify outcomes, challenges and learning experiences. Participants reflected critically on their roles, expectations, and power dynamics between local and international participants, providing a diverse and comparative perspective. The dual-focus group approach captured diverse viewpoints in the experiences and interpretations of both groups, revealing how capacity-building, ownership, and professional learning were experienced.
- **Semi-Structured Interviews:** Interviews with the INGO, two Kenyan board members and one Dutch board member, and key stakeholders, including two school head teachers, two Curriculum Support Officers (CSOs), and one Education Officer, offered deeper insights into project impacts and stakeholder perspectives. The design was informed by the research questions and reflected the same thematic concerns explored in the literature and focus groups; accountability, power dynamics, teacher agency, indirect capacity-building and participatory processes. The interviews were structured around these themes in a question guide (see Appendix A), allowing space for open-ended responses, follow-up questions, and unexpected themes to emerge. Questions were phrased to be non-leading, encouraging participants to reflect on personal experiences with TPD models, perceived power relations, sustainability of the project of T4T, and the role of IVs. The adaptability

of the semi-structured interviews was critical in exploring unexpected thematic areas and the different views that arose. Choy (2014) and Mwita (2022) highlight this method's value for producing detailed data. However, both also note that semi-structured interviews can be time-consuming and caution about potential interviewer bias and its influence on responses. Despite these limitations, the method's depth and capacity for nuance (Choy, 2014; Mwita, 2022) made it particularly effective for exploring complex concepts like empowerment, accountability and ownership transfer, where interpretations can be personal, culturally situated, and multilayered.

- **Observations:** Observations linked research questions to practical dynamics, focusing on the nuances of capacity-building relationships. Observing workshops, training sessions, and interactions provided valuable contextual data, supporting a holistic analysis of the capacity-building process and its real-world implications. Bell (2010) and Mwita (2022) emphasise the importance of obtaining rich, contextual insights through observations, capturing real-time interactions and behaviours.

Example Workshop

Workshops were delivered in collaboration with Kenyan head teachers and other IVs. As an illustration of the workshop approach within this project, one two-day session facilitated by the researcher, together with another IV, is described here. This example offers a sense of the content, structure, and focus, but does not represent a fixed model for all workshops, which varied depending on facilitators, context, and participant needs. Some were led by local head teachers or others by IVs, yet all were grounded in T4T's guiding principle of *To Meet – To Connect – To Learn*.

The workshop began by creating a positive climate through introductory activities, energisers, and group discussions designed to establish rapport, 'To Meet'. Followed by implementing collaborative exercises which allowed teachers to share classroom practices and challenges, with a focus on interactive strategies to increase pupil engagement, 'To Connect'. The first day progressed from "meeting" to "connecting" through reflection and peer exchange, and then towards "learning" by exploring principles of learner-centred pedagogy. The second day built further on these three principles, modelling active learning

strategies in core subjects. The workshop concluded with lesson planning and a planning session for a staff meeting to demonstrate how new practices could be shared with colleagues at school level.

Participant Information

Participants were selected based on their involvement in capacity-building as beneficiaries or key stakeholders. The inclusion of multiple perspectives was essential to capture the complexities of TPD implementation, echoing arguments by Bell (2010) and Choy (2014) that qualitative research offers depth and richness when conducted systematically.

As the research focused on PE, local participants in the focus group were selected from among teachers who had participated in the PE workshops during the project week. Of the eight PE workshops delivered, reaching about 70 teachers, three were selected for logistical reasons. One of which was co-facilitated by the researcher alongside an IV. An open invitation via the INGO Board was issued during the second workshop day, with approximately 20 teachers signing up voluntarily. These included teachers who had only attended the workshops and some who had also joined follow-up school visits. One week later, seven local teachers (mixed gender, approximately 50% male/female) attended the focus group. They ranged in age from their mid-20s to early-50s, with teaching experience from a few months to over 20 years. Several had participated in other professional development initiatives, while for others this was their first T4T engagement. The IV focus group was also recruited via an open invitation during the project week. As only 12 IVs were directly involved in PE workshops, the invitation was extended to those facilitating early childhood, special needs, and secondary education workshops. This group was all-female (reflecting the 2025 project week composition) and included participants with 4 to 30 years of teaching experience. Most were qualified classroom teachers, some were teaching assistants in their home countries. For most, this was their first time in Kenya and first T4T project, while one participant had previously participated in more annual cycles. This ensured a diverse mix of perspectives and enough participants for meaningful discussions. The decision reflected a balance between methodological choices and practical feasibility, acknowledging the possible limitations while drawing on relationships to create an open, participatory dialogue.

For the semi-structured interviews, sampling also aimed for diversity in gender, role, and experience. Kenyan and Dutch board members were included to capture both local and organisational perspectives. Two head teachers were chosen from schools that had participated in PE workshops during the project week. Invitations were issued during IV school visits, via IVs. Both head teachers, as well two CSOs and one Education Officer were selected for their geographical oversight of the most recent project week and their availability during the researcher's extended stay in Kenya. Interviewees varied in professional experience, some were newly appointed and unfamiliar with T4T, while others had long-standing involvement with the INGO.

For clarity, the following terminology is used throughout this research. **Participants** refers to individuals directly involved in the project week, including IVs and local teachers who took part in either the workshops, the school visits, or both. They contributed through two separate focus groups, each consisting of seven participants. References from IVs or local teachers indicate perspectives shared by the group unless otherwise specified (e.g. some or most). When referring to findings from participants, it is always specified whether this concerns both groups collectively or specifically international or local participants. The latter are also described as Kenyan teachers. **Board members** represent the INGO, including the Dutch and Kenyan Boards. When referenced, it will be indicated whether results stem from the Dutch or Kenyan side. **Stakeholders** refers to interviewees in other educational roles: two CSOs, two head teachers, and one Education Officer. When the term stakeholders is used without further clarification, it refers collectively to this group and indicates that a finding was raised by all interviewees. When across stakeholders is used, it implies an insight that emerged in all three of these roles. Importantly, the term stakeholders do not include IVs, local teachers, or board members.

Evaluation tool

An evaluation tool was needed that could be implemented with focus groups and extend beyond the traditional assessment of a project. To address the research questions, it was necessary to align the evaluation with themes such as empowerment, autonomy-respecting principles, indirect capacity-building, and participatory approaches. Therefore, it was essential to apply a tool flexible enough to

integrate these additional themes, which made Ripple Effects Mapping (REM) the primary evaluation tool for the focus groups. Both groups evaluated participants' perceptions, experiences, and motivational factors related to empowerment and participatory methods at different project stages. REM was chosen due to its flexibility, participatory orientation, and ability to surface both intended and unintended effects across diverse cultural and professional contexts (Chazdon et al., 2017; Pamphilon & Nema, 2021).

The chosen "Theming and Rippling" variant of REM integrates Appreciative Inquiry, peer-to-peer interviews, collaborative group reflection, and mind mapping. In the first stage, Appreciative Inquiry, participants through peer-to-peer interviews reflected on project strengths and opportunities. This allowed for a visual representation of programme effects, clustering core themes, and exploring causal chains to gain insights into both immediate and long-term outcomes (Chazdon et al., 2017). The decision to use REM stemmed from practical considerations and alignment with the research questions. I analysed several established frameworks and evaluation tools for qualitative research in the literature. After reviewing alternatives, I determined that REM was the most suitable approach. Unlike technical project evaluation frameworks that often emphasise upward accountability and rely on quantitative metrics, REM proved compatible with the diverse professional and cultural contexts of local participants. Teachers varied in experience and English proficiency, necessitating an adaptable evaluation tool. REM's interactive and visual elements of mind mapping facilitated engagement and accommodated varying levels of literacy and professional backgrounds (Chazdon et al., 2017; Pamphilon & Nema, 2021). Despite its strengths, REM presented some limitations. The reliance on group consensus created challenges in hierarchical or culturally sensitive environments where participants might hesitate to share critical feedback openly. Facilitation techniques created equitable participation and trust (Pamphilon & Nema, 2021). By tailoring this variant of REM to the context of Kwale County, this evaluation tool supported the research questions while promoting a reflective process.

Thematic Analysis

Braun & Clarke's (2006) approach to thematic analysis was applied to analyse the qualitative data collected through interviews and focus groups. This method was appropriate for its alignment with the

research tool and its flexibility in identifying recurring patterns across diverse focus groups and interviews, especially where understanding the lived experiences and interpretations of participants is crucial (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This allowed exploration of participants' experiences, interpretations of their roles, power dynamics, the intervention's sustainability and allowed for in-depth engagement with the data. Braun and Clarke (2006) outline six distinct phases for thematic analysis: 1) familiarisation with the data, 2) generating initial codes, 3) searching for themes, 4) reviewing themes, 5) defining and naming themes, and 6) producing the report. These steps structured the analysis and helped ensure consistency. The method can be applied using either an inductive (data-driven) or deductive (theory-driven) approach. A combination of both strategies was used. Themes partly derived from the literature review and research questions, which also informed the structure of the focus groups and interviews, while also allowing for themes to develop during the focus groups and from the data itself. The pre-identified themes were developed deductively from the literature review and the research questions. This deductive starting framework reflected the key theoretical concepts identified in the literature. Following Braun and Clarke (2006) and Nowell et al. (2017) several deductive codes as a starting point driven by theory, helped provide a detailed analysis and maintain focus without excluding emerging themes. Braun and Clarke (2006) emphasise that this dual approach allows the researcher to examine specific theoretical interests in detail while also capturing unexpected insights that emerge inductively from the data. This combination was especially appropriate given the participatory aims of the research, while ensuring that key theoretical concerns were addressed.

Pre-identified themes included: Autonomy-Respecting Capacity-Building, Empowerment and Mutual Learning, Relationships and Collaboration, Participatory Processes and Alignment with Local Needs and Challenges. This structure provided a clear foundation and ensured that data collection was aligned with the overall research aim and questions. However, this framework remained flexible throughout the analysis. During the process of reading and coding transcripts, two additional themes, Expectations and Preparedness, and Programme Scope and Scalability, emerged. Recurring concerns around misconceptions and time limitations, particularly in the focus groups, highlighted the importance of adding these themes. Participant responses also often added nuance or challenged existing categories, leading to the creation of sub-themes. When reflections belonged to more than one category, coding

decisions were made by considering the most relevant thematic fit, keeping consistency with earlier choices. Where needed, they were assigned to multiple sub-topics. MAXQDA software was used to organise and code the qualitative data. All comments in transcripts were coded with special attention given to the consistency of code application. Especially with overlapping responses to ensure that coding remained both consistent and aligned with local context. Comments and notes were attached to each coded segment in MAXQDA to record analytical reflections, which were later reviewed. The final set of themes reflected both the framework developed before data collection and the responses of the participants. While most coded comments mirrored themes developed prior to data collection, certain unexpected topics appeared. This allowed a comprehensive analysis that addressed the research questions while staying close to participant perspectives. The flexibility of thematic analysis facilitated both comparison and contrast between IVs and Kenyan teachers, while using MAXQDA ensured that data organisation was traceable and transparent. This approach captured the diversity and complexity of perspectives surrounding TPD in the Global South. However, as Braun and Clarke (2006) point out, a limitation lies in the interpretative nature of thematic analysis, which may present researcher bias, and meaning can be decontextualised when data are categorised into codes. To mitigate this, I coded all comments while reflecting on them through memo-writing and review.

As input often cut across themes, dual coding was applied only when a comment clearly contributed to more than one. This improved clarity and consistency in analysis and shaped the structure of the results chapter, which is organised thematically to reflect this coding logic. Rather than including direct quotations, the results present paraphrased summaries of the responses per theme. This allowed for the integration of diverse perspectives, including contradictions between stakeholders or participants and consensus-based outcomes in focus groups. The same thematic structure was maintained in the discussion chapter to ensure coherence and readability. Cross-references were used to address overlaps in the chapters while arguing how concepts evolved under different themes.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations were central to this research. Informed consent was obtained, with clear explanations of the study's purpose, their role, and participants' rights to withdraw without consequence. Consent forms were provided in English, Swahili, and Dutch to accommodate language needs. Data were anonymised using pseudonyms and securely stored. Measures were implemented to foster trust and mitigate power imbalances during the focus group with Kenyan teachers, by holding the focus group in a neutral setting to encourage open discussions after establishing rapport during the project week in both formal and informal settings. The dual role of the researcher, as both participant and facilitator, was transparently communicated to ensure participants felt respected throughout.

Positionality

Participating in the PE project as both a participant and later as a researcher facilitating the focus group presented distinct advantages and limitations. A key advantage lay in the trust and rapport built with local teachers during the workshops and classroom observations. Building relationships with teachers is critical in the cultural context where the project operates, as trust significantly influences the willingness of participants to engage in focus groups. However, this dual role also introduced limitations. Facilitating a focus group with teachers who were previously part of the workshops may have influenced the dynamics of the discussion. Local participants may have felt inclined to provide socially desirable responses, potentially mirroring perceived INGO expectations rather than offering honest feedback. This might have limited the authenticity of the feedback shared, particularly on sensitive topics such as the power imbalances. Despite this, prioritising relationship-building was made based on a thorough understanding of the cultural importance of trust in this context, as reinforced by the literature. While selecting a focus group from a different group of teachers uninvolved with the researcher's project might have mitigated response bias, it would also risk a lack of participation and engagement.

Ensuring Qualitative Trustworthiness

This research differentiates between generalisation, relatability, and transferability, emphasising the nuanced application of findings. Generalisation refers to applying findings broadly, typically in statistical research (Polit & Beck, 2010). Relatability involves stakeholders recognising and applying insights in similar settings, fostering a sense of shared understanding. Transferability, originally conceptualised by Lincoln and Guba (1985, as cited in Drisko, 2024) and further developed by Nowell et al. (2017), emphasises the importance of applying findings to new contexts while considering their unique characteristics. Given T4T's localised approach, the findings may not generalise to larger INGOs but prioritise transferability, exploring how T4T's practices, such as capacity-building strategies, can inform adaptations for diverse regions in the Global South. Drisko (2024) emphasises that transferability requires abundant, rich descriptions to enable readers to make informed judgments about applying findings to different settings. He argues that the depth of qualitative research enhances its relevance and adaptability, making transferability a strength in ensuring results inform real-world adaptations that fit diverse socio-cultural contexts. The research and findings offer rich descriptions of the setting, participant backgrounds, and project processes so that readers can judge applicability to their own contexts.

Credibility was addressed through triangulation of data from focus groups, semi-structured interviews, and observations to ensure accuracy and depth. A transparent participant recruitment process was used, alongside openness regarding the researcher's positionality as an international participant. Credibility was further strengthened through sustained engagement during the project week and follow-up, which helped build trust between the researcher and participants. Dependability was supported by maintaining a clear trail within MAXQDA, documenting coding decisions, theme development, and reflections in a way that allows others to follow or verify the process. Approaches to enhance credibility and dependability drew on strategies first outlined by Lincoln and Guba (1985, as discussed in Nowell et al., 2022). Confirmability was enhanced through reflexive memo-writing, positionality statements, and minimising researcher bias by maintaining neutrality wherever possible, ensuring that findings were grounded in participant perspectives rather than researcher assumptions. These measures align with trustworthiness criteria for qualitative research defined by Lincoln and Guba (1985, as discussed in Nowell et al., 2017) and contribute to ensuring that the results are both contextually and analytically grounded.

Limitations

Interviews and focus groups provided deep insights into participants' experiences, while workshop observations offered an objective view of T4T's methodology implementation. The decision to use these methods was informed by the need to align with participatory principles emphasised in the literature (Chambers, 2010; Ellerman, 2006). These methods allowed for a reflective process that acknowledged the complexities of educational development. However, several limitations shaped the outcomes of the research. The short duration of 3 weeks of fieldwork limited opportunities for follow-up, making it difficult to assess lasting impact or implementation strategies over time. Handling dominant voices in the focus groups, especially in the IV group where emotional processing at the end of the project influenced reflection depth, was challenging. Despite relationships with participants, the familiarity may have introduced bias in responses. In addition, the sample with only 7 participants in each focus group, though diverse, was limited in size. While participatory methods aligned with the theory (Chambers, 2010; Ellerman, 2006), the practical implementation of tools like Ripple Effects Mapping depended on participants' willingness and ability to share complex experiences within a limited time. Despite these limitations, the research not only assessed the specific impacts of T4T but also contributed to a broader understanding of how grassroots initiatives can be evaluated and scaled in ways that respect local contexts and capacities.

5. Results

This chapter presents the findings of the research on T4T's TPD project. The results draw on document analysis and qualitative research, including semi-structured interviews, focus groups and observations, shedding light on the implementation and impact of T4T's approach. The categorisation and terminology used to describe the different groups of participants (IVs and Kenyan teachers), the board members and the stakeholders (CSOs, head teachers, and an Education Officer) are outlined in the methodology chapter for clarity and consistency. To preserve flow while ensuring transparency, illustrative participant quotations that substantiate key findings are provided in Appendix B. These quotations are organised by theme and coded by role to ensure anonymity (e.g. IV, Kenyan teacher, CSO, head teacher, board member), and focus-group extracts reflect points agreed by group consensus during REM. For non-English excerpts, an English translation appears in brackets.

Autonomy-Respecting Capacity-Building

Both focus groups described a shift in IVs from 'experts' to facilitators of peer-to-peer learning, as an intentional effort by the IVs themselves as promoted by T4T during pre-departure training. Some Kenyan teachers reported instances in which IVs adopted a co-facilitation model during workshops, allowing local teachers to share practical classroom insights. One Kenyan board member described this transition as key to dismantling hierarchical dynamics and promoting a collaborative atmosphere. A head teacher valued the teacher-to-teacher format, contrasting it with (I)NGOs sending facilitators without classroom experience. However, the IVs described the challenges of stepping back from roles as knowledge providers, particularly given the limited timeframe and cultural differences. Their reflections included difficulties in managing silences, feeling they were perceived as hierarchical, navigating hesitant group dynamics, and feeling pressure to deliver content within a short period. One IV, for instance, expressed regret about not stepping back more, having focused on covering more material rather than focusing on depth. For supporting quotations of this subheading, see Appendix B, Theme 1.

Both focus groups acknowledged the importance of creating space for local voices, noting that impactful sharing occurs when teachers engage in discussions about their own educational experiences. One CSO emphasised that teachers do not feel they are forced but invited to reflect and implement what resonated. IVs emphasised the importance of slowing down, “planting small seeds,” and creating space for teachers to choose what to take forwards, an approach seen as key to respectful engagement. Several Kenyan teachers noted that trying out concrete ideas in their classrooms, e.g. with slower learners, supported their confidence and its practical value.

The importance of transferring ownership from IVs to local participants was emphasised in all interviews and both focus groups. Both head teachers noted that TPD has lasting effects when active participants are empowered to take on facilitative roles and support cascading within their schools at least in terms of their own learning curve. T4T now identifies head-teacher workshop leaders via the School Leaders’ Course. The board members clarified this is to build leadership capacity locally, enabling them to facilitate workshops in future cycles with reduced support from IVs. A Kenyan board member and both focus groups questioned this exclusive focus on head teachers. IVs reflected positively on co-leading workshops alongside regular Kenyan teachers. A CSO also provided co-teaching suggestions as an example of a more equal model. One IV proposed pairing each IV with a Kenyan workshop leader, allowing for deeper collaboration and cultural grounding, see Appendix B, Theme 1.2 Ownership Transfer for quote.

T4T’s board members acknowledged this as a potential future strategy, though they also cited practical barriers, including the lack of structured training for regular teachers and logistical challenges in coordination. They noted that some regular teachers in early childhood and secondary education had demonstrated leadership potential, suggesting broader inclusion can be viable. Another CSO and an Education Officer voiced resistance to assigning leadership roles to teachers without formal training. The latter explained that participation alone was insufficient but acknowledged that active teachers could lead with targeted training. This reflects a growing openness to reconsidering leadership roles. IVs described their role not as experts bringing in content. They confirmed that although there was limited time and uneven motivation, they viewed ownership transfer as a central theme to an autonomy-respecting model. However, both focus groups also described tensions between the intended cascading model and its actual implementation. T4T’s approach positions IVs in short-term capacity-building

where selected local teachers are intended to take on the role of peer facilitators within their own school systems, building an internal cascade of TPD. Currently, the commitment of peer facilitator roles by teachers is not visible beyond the project-week staff meeting, as pointed out by the head teachers.

IVs, head teachers, an Education Officer, and CSOs expressed concern about the limited sustainability of workshop learnings in the absence of follow-up activities. An Education Officer stressed that capacity-building requires frequent training and inclusion of more teachers. Both head teachers highlighted the challenge of sustaining the new practices introduced during the short project cycle, noting that consolidating new knowledge was not taken seriously. One emphasised that, while the workshops provided initial input, the absence of follow-up mechanisms and consistency made it difficult to ensure application in classrooms afterwards as teachers easily forget new ideas and revert to former methods. Another noted that although a staff meeting was used to share ideas from the workshops with the rest of the team, without any type of subsequent accountability, implementation by the rest of the staff remained absent. He referenced another INGO that monitored through repeated visits, suggesting T4T could adopt similar low-cost strategies instead of a single visit or adjust its four-year cycle. CSOs and both Kenyan board members identified the existing school cluster system as a promising structure for peer mentoring, where trained head teachers could periodically support teachers in nearby schools with workshop practices. However, they agreed that such support is not currently organised in any structured way. While some CSOs conduct school visits that could serve this purpose, no coordinated follow-up system exists within T4T's approach to ensure post-workshop mentoring. One CSO claimed follow-up occurs informally, but a board member contested this, recognising it reflected a disconnect between perceived and actual practice between the INGO and the stakeholders. There was a broad shared understanding among board members and stakeholders that follow-up visits or peer coaching structures would help institutionalise the new practices more sustainably. IVs raised concerns about the lack of insight into what happens after their departure. Some suggested implementing one day extra for repeat visits to the same schools the following year(s) or developing coaching circles led by local educators. Others pointed to the difficulty of maintaining momentum when the feedback loop remains incomplete. The local teachers described how they implemented workshop learnings in their own classrooms and informally shared them with colleagues. Their accounts suggest that knowledge dissemination occurs.

Despite differing views on what currently exists, stakeholders agreed on the need for formalised, grassroots follow-up structures. See Appendix B, Theme 1.3 Follow-up Structures, for supporting quotes.

IVs viewed the ‘two active strategies per lesson’ check as reductive, preferring qualitative evidence of sustained adaptation. Some feared it encourages performance for visitors rather than meaningful integration. They expressed concerns about prioritising quantitative metrics over qualitative insight.

Empowerment, Equality and Mutual Learning

Stakeholders and board members described empowerment not as a one-sided process, but as something fostered through mutual exchange. They referred to it as a “win-win situation”, an exchange without involving pride, mixing and learning together, inspiration, and shared challenges and successes that empower both local and international participants. IVs encouraged Kenyan teachers to share local strategies, such as energisers or classroom ideas, to promote peer learning, although this was implemented inconsistently. In some cases, IVs paused to listen or stepped aside to make space for Kenyan input, which both focus groups perceived as meaningful for reinforcing a more equal dynamic. IVs confirmed this, often describing their role not as “bringing knowledge,” but to facilitate reciprocal exchange. Some shared that their own teaching practices evolved through observing how Kenyan teachers navigated classrooms with limited materials, managed large groups, or adapted new methods creatively. However, the IVs noted professional growth, often in the form of cultural awareness or humility, rather than concrete pedagogical skills. In contrast, Kenyan teachers emphasised professional outcomes, particularly in adapting the content to CBC principles. One head teacher noted that new practices were not implemented, suggesting that teachers were primarily drawn to (local) collegial interaction, temporary relief from duties, and participation in celebratory aspects of the project.

Both focus groups discussed that the ideal of mutual learning did not always manifest evenly. Some IVs acknowledged that initial imbalances were difficult to overcome, particularly when Kenyan teachers appeared hesitant to share openly. Cultural dynamics such as hierarchical structures within schools, deference to authority, and formality or language barriers were cited by IVs as underlying causes. Initial

silences were interpreted as unfamiliarity with being positioned as equal contributors, though dynamics shifted over time. IVs mentioned co-facilitated sessions, informal school visits, and conscious slowing down of facilitation as key strategies that created more equal interaction. One IV suggested that these shifts happened when facilitators consciously slowed down, left room for silence, and made inquiries into Kenyan teaching realities. Some IVs admitted reverting to instructive roles when local participants remained silent. Several Kenyan teachers expressed that being asked to share their own approaches, especially in classroom management, use of energisers, or implementation of CBC, felt empowering.

While the programme emphasised sharing in principle, most participants across both focus groups noted that it was not consistently facilitated in practice. Contradictions between stakeholder perspectives further affirm the complexity of knowledge exchange and equality. See Appendix B, Theme 2 for supporting quotations on this subheading. IVs reported limited time for peer-to-peer exchange. The Kenyan focus group expressed a desire to create more equal roles in future visits, proposing that local teachers share a classroom activity using their own methodologies while IVs observe, then have the IV share their version, followed by jointly reflecting on which approach might work best. Others proposed that IVs could learn local techniques, including CBC-aligned practices such as weaving, practical improvisation, and the use of indigenous materials, especially in domains where Kenyan teachers had established expertise. Despite sharing being a core principle, both IVs and Kenyan teachers expressed disappointment about its inconsistent realisation. Local participants expressed a desire for their own educational experiences to be acknowledged and examined. Board members and CSOs described examples of teachers stepping into roles as local agents of change, such as mentoring peers informally or introducing new methods in cluster forums. While such efforts remained scattered and largely dependent on personal motivation, they were interpreted as early signs of teacher-led capacity development by the CSOs and a Kenyan board member. Some IVs suggested these efforts could be strengthened through more intentional follow-up. Linked to earlier results, Kenyan teachers shared that they gained confidence through the peer-to-peer format. One head teacher reflected that while teachers received input during the workshops, follow-up was lacking, and conflicting messages from other (I)NGOs sometimes diluted the effect of new practices.

There was agreement among all interviews and focus groups that professional growth is most sustainable when it emerges through sharing and exchanging ideas. Concerning stakeholders and teachers in both focus groups, this required not only building mutual respect but also creating space for participants to recognise and value each other's expertise. While differences in background, expectations, and professional cultures posed initial obstacles, participants within both groups affirmed that an emphasis on co-facilitation, school visits, and peer-to-peer reflection provides opportunities for those gaps to narrow. Many participants voiced that more structure was needed to ensure that mutual learning goes beyond intention. Suggestions included having local participants prepare activities in advance or documenting mutual learning outcomes collaboratively, with Kenyan teachers suggesting integrating shared reflection sessions where both groups compare practices and select which methods to retain, adapt, or blend. Kenyan teachers, head teachers and CSOs suggested IVs could learn from the way Kenyan teachers improvised and localised content within the CBC.

Relationships and Collaboration

Stakeholders, board members and both focus groups described relationships and collaboration as central to TPD involving IVs, emphasising mutual respect and relational connections beyond technical content. IVs noted you can only engage with professional content once a relationship is built. Kenyan teachers emphasised they first focus on socializing with other local educators, while a head teacher noted that participating in celebratory aspects of the project was what truly mattered to local teachers. International and local participants frequently emphasised that building trust requires time and intentionality. IVs felt that hierarchical structures and unfamiliar discussion formats may have initially inhibited dialogue and noted that informal moments played a crucial role in lowering relational barriers, making it easier to engage in the workshops. For supporting quotations of this subheading, see Appendix B, Theme 3.

The Kenyan teachers described how the project helped them form new relationships with local peers they had never met before, which enhanced their sense of community and professional exchange. IVs reflected that establishing a connection early on was essential for enabling mutual sharing, yet some acknowledge that this was not always prioritised. Several regretted prioritising content over building rapport. One IV

noted that investing in Meet & Connect had increased openness later in the week, while skipping this step in other cases led to limited engagement and surface-level exchange. Language differences were also cited as a barrier by IVs and head teachers, requiring time and effort to establish mutual understanding. Some IVs described being overwhelmed by the sensory and cultural intensity of the environment, which slowed down their relationship-building. Each participant also pointed to cross-cultural adaptation as both a challenge and a valuable learning opportunity. IVs noted that communication norms, particularly around hierarchy and skills for cross-culturally giving feedback, caused discomfort. Over time, some IVs adapted their facilitation style by slowing down and paying closer attention to non-verbal cues. While such adjustments were individual initiatives, some IVs questioned whether there is sufficient preparation or structured guidance on navigating these cultural dynamics. A few IVs reflect that greater awareness or support from an organising INGO helps approach relationship-building more consciously.

Kenyan teachers valued cultural exchange through social rituals and informal interactions, including celebrations and gift-giving. One local participant expressed a wish for future visits to include reciprocal sharing, suggesting that IVs also bring and present elements of their own traditions. At the same time, another Kenyan participant described that while the interaction was respectful, IVs might unintentionally overlook local expertise. The local focus group suggested that being asked directly about their own methods, for example, energisers or classroom strategies, would strengthen the sense of mutual recognition. Kenyan participants associated workshop relationships with cooperation, community, and shared growth. One local teacher highlighted teamwork as fostering professional growth.

Expectations and Preparedness

Participants across both groups reflected on how expectations shaped the early dynamics of the programme. For most IVs, the reality of working within Kenyan schools challenged their assumptions, especially regarding communication styles, hierarchy, and classroom conditions. Several IVs described feeling unprepared for the degree of hesitancy in their workshop sessions. These early experiences often led to moments of confusion or self-doubt as they explained. Some IVs admitted they had underestimated how deeply cultural dynamics, language barriers, and unfamiliar group formats could shape the learning

environment. More concrete information during the preparatory phase was said to help align facilitation styles. While most described the pre-departure training as positive, others noted they would have benefited from clearer examples of dynamics, common cultural pitfalls, or a more realistic portrayal of the slow pace at which rapport and participation tend to build. While English was the language used in the workshops, several head teachers and participants in both groups suggested not everyone felt confident. This was described by IVs as a factor that affected overall dynamics and engagement.

Over time, IVs reported adjusting their expectations, shifting from a goal-oriented mindset to one that was more attuned to process, patience, and observation. This reframing helped them engage more effectively and being forced to slow down led to deeper reflection with humility as a critical mindset. IVs expressed appreciation for the learning gained through these unexpected experiences, several also recommended receiving more experience-based orientation to bridge the gap between enthusiasm and contextual readiness. Kenyan participants described entering the workshops with little awareness of what to expect. One local teacher recalled being selected by the school administration to attend but did not know what the training would involve. They anticipated receiving physical materials, instead the sessions emphasised pedagogy. While some expectations were unmet, the Kenyan teachers described the experience as enriching. Others noted that colleagues who were not invited assumed the project offered financial or personal benefits, which caused resistance when participants returned to share only new teaching ideas. This mismatch in expectations made it difficult to convince others at school to take the new practices seriously, as explained by the local focus group. One head teacher explained that teachers were often released to attend the sessions without a briefing, and only upon returning did they explain to the school what the project entailed. These perspectives illustrate how expectations varied across groups and contexts. See Appendix B, Theme 4 for supporting quotations.

Participatory Processes

One CSO, both head teachers, an Education Officer, and local participants noted a lack of systemic involvement of the local beneficiaries in the project design and planning of TPD. While sharing or exchanging during the workshops was encouraged, participating Kenyan teachers were not involved in

designing or leading sessions. Several IVs described inviting Kenyan teachers to share ideas but noted that this often occurred spontaneously during the sessions rather than through any structured process. Most IVs acknowledged relying on pre-prepared materials and expressed that earlier involvement of Kenyan teachers might have strengthened relevance and local ownership. Kenyan teachers and head teachers explained that they were merely informed about the workshops and were not involved in shaping the agenda or content. One head teacher noted that teachers attend without knowing the objectives, and that planning decisions were made externally. Both head teachers expressed that clearer communication would enhance engagement. A Kenyan board member explained that CSOs and workshop leaders inform T4T about teachers' learning experiences. He acknowledged that this input is indirect and confirmed that classroom teachers are not directly involved in shaping the content. One CSO detailed their involvement in mobilising and informing teachers for workshops and while teachers' needs are consulted, they are not involved in decisions about workshop content or budgeting. While one CSO suggested that teacher input was collected indirectly through the Board, this was not recognised or known by the local teachers or other board members. See Appendix B, Theme 5 for supporting quotations.

Beyond workshop content, head teachers, CSOs, and an Education Officer expressed a desire to contribute to broader project design, offering concrete ideas for improvement. Head teachers proposed extending the visit period to allow more workshops during term holidays followed by school visits, increasing local facilitators, and organising local planning sessions to improve alignment with calendars. While such ideas were voiced by various other stakeholders, no structured space existed for them to be formally considered or integrated. Both head teachers and one Education Officer reflected on the lack of a bottom-up approach in TPD projects, including this one. They noted that INGOs often arrived with predefined agendas, budgets, and methodologies, leaving little room for locally led decision-making. While T4T was highly appreciated by the local teachers, head teachers, one CSO and an Education Officer for promoting exchange during the sessions, there was agreement that more inclusive planning mechanisms were needed. One head teacher described this dynamic as "receiving information from the top" without opportunities to shape the direction of the project. In terms of downward accountability post-project, a lack of feedback mechanisms and communication was noted by board members, former named stakeholders and the local teachers. Board members confirmed that although written feedback was

collected from local participants, there was no formal system to share back overall findings. The INGO confirmed that no newsletters or reports are circulated to update stakeholders or Kenyan teachers on project outcomes, feedback, goals and progress. A head teacher also stated that teachers received no updates or insights into outcomes until the project resumed in the next cycle.

Alignment with Local Needs and Challenges

Both focus groups and all interviewees reflected on the degree to which workshop content aligned with the day-to-day realities of Kenyan classrooms. Kenyan teachers and a Kenyan board member noted that while learner-centred methodologies are emphasised, such approaches are difficult to implement within large class sizes, limited materials, and strict CBC timelines. IVs similarly reflected on initial expectations and the realities encountered in schools. Supporting verbatim quotations are included in Appendix B, Theme 6 *Alignment with Local Needs and Challenges*. Some IVs admitted they became fully aware of contextual limitations, such as class sizes and resource scarcity, after arrival and noted that these factors had not been fully considered. Each stakeholder and Kenyan board member described a mixed and fragmented landscape of national-level TPD provision, each offering different perspectives on the types of TPD currently provided. Some explained that government CBC workshops are offered once per year during holidays and are targeted at teachers not yet inducted. A CSO added that the government mandates online courses delivered by universities at a cost per module, which many find unaffordable, leading to uneven participation. A Head Teacher noted that zonal and sub-county trainings do occur but are assigned randomly to selected schools, meaning not all teachers receive support. All stakeholders noted barriers such as high costs, limited reach, or digital infrastructure challenges frustrating TPD. Both CSOs mentioned that while national programmes emphasise the CBC curriculum, they lack support on practical pedagogy. One CSO said INGO initiatives like IREX and Aga Khan focused on translating CBC into classroom practice more effectively. All interviewed stakeholders see T4T as a useful complement for its practical approach, although limited in duration. Board members noted that T4T aligns with national priorities through updated guidance from education offices. Additionally, the projects' provision of certificates was valued by a head teacher, as they support promotion opportunities during teacher interviews.

Kenyan participants critiqued the teacher selection model, suggesting it diluted training impact. Several proposed increasing the number of participants per school to promote internal motivation and reduce reliance on informal peer-sharing. Illustrative participant responses are provided in Appendix B, Theme 6. Local teachers also noted that learning in a shared environment promotes internal motivation within the school. They reported not being taken seriously by colleagues who did not attend, as they initially saw the new practices as unsuitable for older learners or impractical within rigid time slots. The head teachers and local teachers expressed expectations that the INGO would provide material support to schools. The head teachers, an Education Officer, one CSO, and the local focus group expressed interest in more proactive inclusion. They suggested greater involvement in identifying local challenges and adapting workshop structures. While they appreciated the project for its respectful engagement style during the workshop, local participants emphasised that context-sensitive planning and broader participant inclusion would make them feel more empowered.

Programme Scope and Scalability

The focus groups and interviewees reflected on both the strengths and limits of T4T's model. Several Kenyan participants expressed that selecting only a few teachers per school every four years reduced impact. Some local teachers reported that, upon returning to school, their peers showed limited willingness to engage. Local participants and both head teachers also highlighted programme duration. They clarified that while two-day workshops were appreciated, they were seen as too short to apply new practices. Several stakeholders emphasised that more time was needed for classroom implementation and reflected on T4T's rotating sub-county model across Kwale. A Kenyan board member contrasted this with past INGOs that operated nationally or in one area but discontinued after several years and faded out over time, leaving limited trace within the education sector when trainers or teachers transferred or retired. T4T's recurring and long-term presence was viewed as an advantage by the board member. Although IVs came for only one week, their contributions were considered effective and financed by their school boards. This model, paired with an expanding Kenyan team, was seen as having sustainable potential based on exchange projects and upscaling. However, the same board member stressed to

strengthen the local facilitation team to ensure follow-up between visits. Illustrative verbatim quotations on programme duration, cascading effects, and scalability are provided in Appendix B, Theme 7.

A Head Teacher reflected positively on a previous long-term programme that offered weekend training each term over six years. He regarded this extended format as more impactful than short two-day workshops every four years. One IV expressed concerns that the four-year cycle is insufficient and should be repeated more often. One CSO positively described the practice of training small groups as more manageable and effective, citing examples from other TPD initiatives.

Findings from Previous IV Reports (2023–2024)

To complement 2025 findings, I draw on 2023–2024 IV reports, which echo implementation challenges, workshop dynamics, evolving facilitation roles, and M&E gaps (T4T, 2023c; 2024c).

Several IV reflections underscore the importance of early rapport-building as a condition for meaningful engagement. Across both years, IVs reported that moments of personal connection, such as informal conversations, energisers, and bonding activities, were instrumental in shifting workshop dynamics from formal and hesitant to collaborative and open (T4T, 2023c; 2024c). These moments of “meeting and connecting before learning” were consistently framed as critical to enabling more effective facilitation. In their absence, some IVs mentioned they observed surface-level engagement. Other IVs described initial disengagement, attributing it to unclear expectations and unfamiliarity with workshop formats. A few called for more structured preparatory guidance or orientation tools to support early alignment and reduce hesitancy (T4T, 2023c; 2024c). Many IVs also highlighted promising moments of peer-to-peer learning. Some workshop groups described they managed to co-develop teaching ideas, reflect together, and exchange feedback, particularly when encouraged to work in smaller settings. The 2024 report describes a school visit where IVs created space for local teachers to share challenges and generate their own solutions, mentioned it was a shift appreciated by all involved (T4T, 2024c). The IVs explain that these moments were often improvised, rather than built into the structure of the workshops, and some even suggested the need for more formalised support for peer collaboration among Kenyan educators and

recommended it for future project implementation. One IV suggested workshops should create opportunities, supported by simple techniques, for Kenyan colleagues to exchange ideas (T4T, 2023c).

A topic also identified in the reports of 2023 and 2024 was the sustainability of workshop impact in the absence of structured follow-up. Several IVs noted that, after the final session, it remained unclear whether workshop content would be applied meaningfully. An IV describes that during their school visit in one staff meeting, teachers presented their learnings without using active methods (T4T, 2023c). A report describes a teacher who applied only one new technique, prompting IVs to question if it was genuine or because of their presence (T4T, 2023c). Some IVs reported visiting schools where no new practices were visible, questioning the degree to which the methods had been adopted despite overall high observation scores (T4T, 2023c; 2024c). These observations led IVs in some of their reports to recommend more regular revisits or coaching-based follow-up sessions, such as a joint reflection to evaluate application and next steps (T4T, 2023c; 2024c). Some IVs also raised a concern about the effectiveness of T4T's M&E tools. The programme's primary classroom observation metric was described as lacking contextual nuance (T4T, 2023c; 2024c). The reports demonstrate nuanced and qualitative feedback on how and why certain methods worked or failed. Additionally, the role of tools like the "Stool of Confidence" was discussed, with IVs reporting both successes and cultural challenges in using it to facilitate peer feedback (T4T, 2023c; 2024c). In some cases, IVs struggled to maintain a dialogical tone, particularly when local teachers disengaged. Some IVs expressed unease in their own roles, particularly when collaborating with Kenyan head teachers as workshop leaders. They described confusion about expectations and difficulties maintaining peer-level dynamics, especially when local participants appeared more hesitant to contribute under hierarchical leadership formats. However, other examples show that when roles were well-aligned, the collaboration was experienced as supportive (T4T, 2023c).

IVs also reflected on growth in understanding of cultural dynamics and the importance of humility in facilitation. Reports from both years define the value of creating space for Kenyan teachers to collaborate directly with each other. IVs noted that teacher-guided exchanges, where local teachers brainstormed and shared strategies, were particularly effective in encouraging responses and interaction. These peer-driven moments often emerged only when IVs deliberately stepped back, creating space for local voices to lead as they noted in the reports (T4T, 2023c; 2024c). A few IVs in the February 2024 report explicitly

recommend that future workshops facilitate such settings more intentionally, noting that even simple group discussions, when facilitated carefully, can empower teachers to take ownership of their professional growth. They noted that resistance to new practices often stemmed from fear rather than disinterest. One IV observed that teachers were reluctant to diverge from the curriculum, fearing their methods might be deemed inadequate by head teachers or authorities (T4T, 2023c). Another IV suggested that starting workshops from a more localised, context-driven point could shift the emphasis from knowledge transfer to co-creation, strengthening engagement (T4T, 2024c). The IV reports reinforce themes identified in the qualitative research, such as the importance of co-facilitation, the need for structured follow-up, and the challenge of maintaining participatory intent in practice (T4T, 2023c; 2024c).

6. Discussion

This discussion critically reflects on the findings related to the research questions and the previous themes from the results: autonomy-respecting capacity-building, empowerment and mutual learning, relationships and collaboration, expectations and preparedness, participatory processes, alignment with local needs and challenges, and programme scope and scalability in T4T's approach to TPD. Each theme will be discussed in relation to the literature and the data insights.

Autonomy-Respecting Capacity-Building

The findings of both focus groups revealed the value of shifting intentionally from directive instructional models to collaborative peer-facilitated approaches in TPD, as evidenced by recent research on the African continent that highlights teachers' preference for demand-led, peer-based models (Mitchell et al., 2024; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). While aligning with Chambers' (2010) and Ellerman's (2006) advocacy for co-learning, practical challenges highlight barriers in translating a theoretical autonomy-respecting model into practice that allows local participants to pursue their own objectives. Practical barriers such as time constraints, cultural dynamics and insufficient formal guidance on navigating these challenges limited effective implementation of the co-learning approach. This implementation gap underscores a need for more systematic IV training and coaching in culturally responsive facilitation, supporting co-learning and reflective practice, as advocated by Gumucio Dagron (2006), Girgis (2007) and Mitchell et al. (2024). Mugisha (2015) and Malunga and Holcombe (2014) suggest that IVs and TPD initiatives should consider how workshops can be tailored to culturally grounded learning preferences without avoiding the implementation of new ways of learning, but meeting teachers where they are while encouraging growth as well. At times IVs framed new practices as adaptable tools rather than prescriptions, creating a safer learning environment. This reflects autonomy-respecting principles as co-construction from Freire and Ellerman, where international facilitators offer resources but leave room for local adaptation. Participant reflections demonstrated a distinction between sharing and instructing, reinforcing Chambers' (2010) notion of "facilitation over instruction". These challenges reaffirm the need for IV preparation in facilitation and cultural responsiveness. Although T4T aspires to implement autonomy-respecting co-

learning models (Chambers, 2010; Ellerman, 2006), practical constraints such as brief IV placements and intercultural dynamics limited consistent application. Thus, IVs sometimes unintentionally reverted to directive roles which undermines a lasting impact, highlighting an implementation gap discussed further in the following themes.

The data from the semi-structured interviews with head teachers, board members and CSOs also confirms that fostering sustainable autonomy depends not only on what happens during workshops, but also on what follows. The lack of structured local follow-up undermines long-term capacity-building and highlighted the need to embed it in ongoing school-based support systems (Harper et al., 2024; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023; Mitchell et al., 2024). This reinforces Kipkemoi Bett's (2016) caution against relying merely on short-term interventions. While some ideas, such as mentoring roles for trained local teachers or head teachers, or rotating follow-up visits in cluster groups were suggested, these structures are not systematically implemented.

Divergent perspectives on follow-up structures, one CSO confirming informal follow-up was happening while a board member questioned its existence, confirm underlying issues that influence the impact. It is possible that affirmative responses were offered by the CSO to avoid admitting a lack of action or awareness. Such ambiguities affect the consolidation of new pedagogical practices. This discrepancy raises the question: what kind of follow-up is meaningful, should it be informal and relationship-based, or rather structured and institutionalised? Clearer definitions of roles and responsibilities are needed to align expectations and foster accountability between schools and CSOs. This echoes findings in the literature that volunteering interventions, even well-intentioned, risk shallow impact if they are not grounded in a system of horizontal peer collaboration, exchange and local school support (Hassler et al., 2018; Kipkemoi Bett, 2016; Mitchell et al., 2024).

When exploring models of capacity-building, the data also speak to the debates surrounding the ToT approach. While ToT is often described as an alternative sustainable approach or as a cost-effective way to scale TPD, it has been critiqued for neglecting local context, passive replication of content, and reinforcing dependency (Ellerman, 2006; Girgis, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2024). Similar concerns emerged in the interviews with board members, and an Education Officer. Head teachers or regular teachers in some

projects, were eligible to become facilitators only after specific training or after demonstrating growth in the newly learned pedagogy. This risks favouring those who most closely replicate externally introduced practices. Trainees become trainers based on what Ellerman calls “the best learners”. This process, even when it involves regular teachers, risks replicating the same patterns that ToT critiques were based on. This limits the potential for teacher-to-teacher exchange and co-facilitation. While national or regional TPD providers may offer expertise, they have proven to be costly and inaccessible. Although the literature notes that INGOs often justify ToT by claiming that local training institutions do not meet quality standards, this leaves an unexploited opportunity for the INGO to collaborate with local institutions and jointly explore contextually grounded alternatives together.

The results also pointed towards alternatives to the traditional ToT model. Some participants from the IV focus group, the board members and an Education Officer envisioned collaborative approaches where regular teachers co-facilitate workshops alongside IVs and gradually take on leadership roles in peer-learning activities between project visits, supported by sustained mentoring. The case study shows that if capacity-building is co-created between IVs and local participants and focuses on peer-based knowledge exchange in a safe environment, the ToT approach moves beyond selecting ‘the best learners’ (Ellerman, 2006). Instead, it is designed with teachers to foster genuine horizontal and reciprocal exchange (Girgis, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2024; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). This can be among local teachers and between local and international participants. The T4T model partially reflects these principles by promoting collaborative facilitation roles rather than hierarchical projects, echoing Mitchell et al.’s (2024) and James’ (2018) call for community-driven learning networks. The workshops can serve as a foundation for developing collaborative learning networks among teachers, head teachers, and CSOs, within schools, across school clusters, and even between clusters. The responses of the IV focus group, the board members and an Education Officer suggested that such participatory structures should involve both regular teachers and school leaders in differentiated roles, although their ideas diverged as practical and cultural considerations remained. This created a slight tension regarding who is suitable to facilitate workshops, head teachers or regular teachers. An Education Officer suggested only head teachers or senior staff are viewed as facilitators due to their perceived legitimacy, authority, and formal training, partially echoed by board members. This preference can reinforce existing power hierarchies, while

regular teachers who are directly involved in day-to-day classroom realities and practices, may have more accurate pedagogical insights. When reinforcing these hierarchies through selective empowerment, it might suppress valuable bottom-up insights from other classroom teachers and reduce innovative strategies (Mitchell et al., 2024). However, in the interviews and also in the IV focus group, there were positive indications regarding creating space to experiment with more horizontal approaches. The role of regular teachers as co-facilitators, co-workshop leaders or in-school peer mentors was emphasised as a step towards promoting collaborative learning and ownership at school level. Some IVs suggested pairing more equally with local teachers in facilitation roles, building deeper exchange and contextually grounded facilitation. These ideas point to gradual shifts, where leadership is not assigned only based on status or enthusiasm but on relational trust. A mixed model that integrates both head teachers (to provide logistical leadership) and regular teachers (to provide contextually grounded classroom insights and peer relatability) could bridge these tensions.

Another example illustrates T4T's approach to TPD and builds further on the previous discussion regarding the project's two-legged capacity-building model which intentionally targets both local teachers and IVs, aiming to foster a reciprocal learning relationship. Rather than focusing solely on content delivery, the model recognises that IVs also undergo a (professional) learning journey, positioning them as co-learners. This reflects Chambers' (2010) and Ellerman's (2006) calls for autonomy-respecting support, where facilitators engage as equals rather than instructors. Document analysis from previous cycles (T4T, 2023c; 2024c) and interview data suggested that IVs were increasingly seeking methods to shift from directive instruction to facilitation, engaging teachers through collaborative problem-solving and peer exchange. Implementation varied. While IVs valued implementing a more equal, participatory model and emphasising co-creation of ideas, they faced challenges translating these principles into practice. Feedback tools used for the classroom observations by IVs during the school visits proved effective for some IVs but were less adaptable for others due to intercultural contexts. This underscores the importance of cultural sensitivity and adaptive coaching methods (Malunga & Holcombe, 2014; Mugisha, 2015). The concept of "connecting before learning" was frequently mentioned as a valuable strategy to build trust and flatten hierarchies. Peer-to-peer exchanges among local teachers, allowing them to share challenges and solutions, have emerged as a critical element for advancing long-term impact and

empowering local educators to take ownership of their professional development. This resonates with literature that horizontal learning is valued by teachers and key to sustaining impact (Mitchell et al., 2024; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023; Abakah, 2023). The experiences of IVs shared in the focus group and reports of previous years, stressed the value of collaborative coaching techniques and the ongoing need for facilitation guidance to apply co-learning principles in practice. The brief project week often meant that these intentions were difficult to sustain. This underlines the gap between well-meant intentions and sustainable practice. The collaboration with external funding partners has also shown both progress and ongoing tensions in fostering autonomy. While such partnerships have enabled meaningful initiatives, as well regarding support in ownership transfer, conflicts can arise when donor expectations diverge from local priorities and realities.

Addressing barriers requires equipping IVs with tools for root-cause analysis, culturally responsive practices, and self-reflection competencies (Freire, 1970/2005). Chambers (2010) argues it is equally about changing ourselves as it is about fostering change in others, encouraging IVs to critically reflect on their own practices and adapt them accordingly. T4T's capacity-building approaches could be strengthened by implementing mentoring and reflective practice into their workshops and follow-up structures, facilitating a reciprocal professional development process. Coaching local teachers and school leaders to facilitate peer-led professional development enables INGOs to embed capacity-building within the community, ensuring that impact continues beyond external involvement. While IVs can bring unique skills and perspectives, their involvement must meet strict conditions to ensure that their contributions align with local needs and priorities. Devereux (2008) emphasises that without meaningful training in reciprocal capacity-building, intercultural communication, and reflective thinking, IV involvement risks becoming superficial. When implementing Freire's (1970/2005) principles of dialogue, they must be adapted to diverse cultural settings where communication styles may differ significantly. TPD projects and programmes like T4T must continuously reassess the role and added value of IV contributions, prioritising processes which are equitable (Gumucio Dagron, 2006). Only under these conditions IV programmes can facilitate mutual learning, where volunteers and local educators have an equal contribution. T4T has made progress in shifting power dynamics by training school leaders to take on greater roles in leading

workshops. At the same time, gaps remain in participatory processes, which will be further discussed in the following themes.

Empowerment, Equality, and Mutual Learning

Mutual learning, though widely recognised, was partially undermined by limited structured dialogue. The findings from both focus groups imply that efforts to foster reciprocal exchange were often shaped by cultural context, perceived hierarchies, and practical limitations. Girgis (2007) notes that these external factors are frequently undermining efforts and pose a risk of IVs falling back into dependent work relationships. While international and local participants valued reciprocal learning, the lack of structured dialogue and intercultural misunderstandings, reduced exchanges to incidental moments rather than systematic, deep mutual learning, reflecting theoretical-practical gaps (Girgis, 2007; Ellerman, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2024). This aligns with Freire's (1970/2005) philosophy of co-learning and Ellerman's (2006) open learning model, which reject passive knowledge transfer in favour of active, local problem-solving. Aikman (2010) adds that treating local teachers as passive recipients undermines lasting motivation. Intrinsic motivation requires embedding mutual learning into the structure of TPD, rather than treating it as an optional outcome. Girgis (2007) and Gumucio Dagron (2006) emphasise that reciprocal exchange cannot happen without intentionally created dialogical and relational spaces, built on mutual reflection, suggestive dialogue, cultural sensitivity and facilitators prepared to enable this participation. Eade (2007) stresses that enabling mutual recognition and respect for local agency requires facilitators to listen, adapt, and co-construct knowledge. As noted in the theme on autonomy respecting capacity-building, IVs benefit from coaching on supporting inclusive, context-sensitive exchanges that present methods as adaptable tools. Thompson et al. (2020) similarly argue that such co-constructive facilitation requires structured preparation in relational competencies. A limitation was the discrepancy between stakeholder perceptions, where local teachers felt insufficiently acknowledged despite organisational good intentions of mutual empowerment. IVs also reflected on the degree to which perceived hierarchies shaped their interactions with local teachers. IVs described a broader atmosphere of formality, hesitancy, and deference, especially early in the process. Practices which, while sometimes read as hierarchical, may also reflect broader cultural values around communication. Such reflections relate to insights from Girgis

(2007), Mitchell et al. (2024) and Thompson et al. (2020), who discuss cross-cultural understanding. It remains difficult to disentangle whether these dynamics reflect power imbalances or simply different forms of professional respect. Intercultural workshops benefit from discussions in capacity-building for IVs around such dynamics.

Perceptions of equality and mutual learning varied across groups. IVs emphasised limited structured opportunities for deeper exchange. Board members and CSOs presented a more favourable picture, highlighting shared activities and emphasising the reciprocal intentions. Kenyan participants and head teachers described empowerment more in terms of local peer-to-peer interaction and professional affirmation through recognition. Head teachers and a CSO noted missed chances to learn from Kenyan participants due to the absence of equal dialogue. IVs and Kenyan participants alike expressed a desire for more deliberate structures that allow mutual learning through exchange to take shape in practice. As Freire (1970/2005) and Chambers (2010) argue, co-learning must be actively created through dialogical processes and shared reflections. Such spaces for dialogue and reflection not only affirm equality but also serve as conditions for empowering TPD environments (Mitchell et al., 2024). Similarly, James (2018) highlights the importance of shared reflection to create mutual empowerment. The concept of “sharing” did not always surface as clearly or consistently as other project objectives like “to meet,” “to connect,” and “to learn.” While IVs expressed intentions to act as facilitators, rather than experts, the degree to which sharing and mutual exchange were prioritised sometimes depended on individual efforts and facilitation styles rather than systematically implementing it. Ellerman (2006) notes that facilitators must step back and create space for self-directed learning. Some IVs actively invited input or reflected on learning from Kenyan resourcefulness. Others acknowledged sometimes reverting to more directive roles in moments of uncertainty. These shifts reveal how reciprocal dynamics, already discussed in the previous theme, can benefit from clearer facilitation coaching in capacity-building for IVs to support them. Girgis (2007) points out, coaching in facilitative “instruments” can help reframe relationships. The contradictions between stakeholder perspectives further affirm the complexity of knowledge exchange and equality. While CSOs and board representatives often described the exchange as equal, this was not always echoed by IVs or local teachers. One CSO was more critical, acknowledging ongoing inequality and the need for local teachers to play a more active role. This underlines the importance of examining mutual learning not

only in principle, but in lived experience. Mutual learning demands space for reflection, vulnerability, and trust-building. Participants across both focus groups highlighted that co-facilitation, informal school visits, and slowed facilitation strategies helped bridge cultural gaps and enabled more authentic engagement. These dynamics can also reinforce volunteer engagement, as Kinsbergen et al. (2011) found that reciprocal relationships and authentic connections often lead to longer-term involvement.

The divergence in how IVs and Kenyan teachers prioritise mutual learning is important to reflect upon. While some IVs describe their learning in terms of professional growth related to teaching strategies, most frame their experiences more strongly in terms of personal growth and cultural awareness. In contrast, local participants emphasise the pedagogical improvements. IVs might have the privilege to focus more on personal development, whereas local teachers' needs reflect more immediate classroom pressures. This difference risks reinforcing implicit imbalances by prioritising personal growth for international participants while framing pedagogical knowledge as relevant mainly for local teachers. To bridge this gap, it requires acknowledging and integrating both dimensions of mutual learning. Currently, IVs hold greater influence over workshop activities and content selection, which can unintentionally privilege internationally validated pedagogies over local methodologies.

Another dimension in learning, was the social and emotional value that teachers placed on the workshops. Many local teachers as well as the head teachers described the opportunity to socialise and build relationships with local peers as an important reason for participating. Beyond professional content, these interactions fostered community and support networks, suggesting that INGOs play a crucial role in creating these communal spaces. This aligns with Girgis' (2007) and Mitchell et al.'s (2024) view that informal peer dialogue is central to effective capacity-building. Teachers particularly value opportunities to learn with senior colleagues and to engage in sharing both formally and informally. Makuwira (2018) similarly emphasises that emotional and relational dimensions are crucial for sustained empowerment. This further supports the idea that scheduling space for social bonding, through informal conversation is a vital component of effective TPD design. The Kenyan focus group further revealed that peer-to-peer learning was particularly strong among local teachers, especially when they exchanged practical classroom strategies. These dynamics speak to a broader understanding of empowerment. This was evident in teachers' preference for exchanging ideas with peers, whether local colleagues or IVs, during

and outside the workshops and aligns with wider findings in literature that centre shared expertise and ongoing collaboration (Harper, 2024; Mitchell et al., 2024; Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). This emphasis on peer learning contrasts with the inclination of promoting only head teachers as workshop leaders. Ellerman's (2006), Girgis' (2007) and Mitchell et al. (2024) critiques of the ToT model are relevant here as well. Fostering mutual empowerment requires that both Kenyan and international participants are viewed as capable agents, each with something to contribute and to learn.

Relationships and Collaboration

Effective TPD, especially in cross-cultural contexts, is shaped not only by the content delivered but by the quality of the relationships through which learning occurs, as introduced in the previous theme. Relational dynamics such as mutual trust and interpersonal connections are foundational. The case study illustrates how embedding relationship-building as a core principle in TPD design can foster meaningful learning exchanges. Although relationship-building was strongly affirmed, short timelines and limited intercultural training sometimes prevented IVs from forming meaningful relationships, highlighting a gap with the theory (Girgis, 2007). While IVs recognised relational connection as fundamental, several admitted prioritising content over relationship-building at times. There is a broader importance to relationship-building as a design concern for cross-cultural TPD initiatives. Both focus groups emphasised building rapport as key for deeper engagement and collaboration, aligning with Girgis' (2007) notion of "friendship work" built on trust, proximity, and informal engagement. It is precisely these elements, time, cultural presence, relational continuity, and humility, that IVs themselves reported as often compressed. Both focus groups affirmed that meaningful interactions depended on the establishment of trust and genuine interpersonal connections, both of which require dedicated time and attention. IVs risked falling into dependent work dynamics which undermined potential for sustained change if not taking sufficient time and attention (Girgis, 2007). When IVs did dedicate more time on bonding activities, participants from both groups confirmed stronger engagement and deeper exchange. Some IVs recognised this crucial aspect and regretted not having focused more on Meet & Connect. When such moments were skipped, the dynamic remained formal while limiting open communication and interaction. IVs affirmed that the relational tone set early in the week shaped the learning experience throughout the rest of the project.

Cross-cultural TPD settings require intentional support to navigate difference. Language barriers, unfamiliar feedback norms, and different communication styles presented relational challenges in the beginning. Several IVs acknowledged initial discomfort or confusion when interactions diverged from expectations. In response, some adapted their facilitation by slowing the pace, reinvesting in relationship-building, paying closer attention to body language, or adjusting instructional styles. Though these shifts were typically personal. This supports as previously mentioned Thompson et al.'s (2020) and Girgis (2007) call for structured training for practitioners in relational competencies. Girgis' (2007) three instruments, suggestive dialogue, discussion dialogue, and sensitivity, are particularly relevant here. These tools allow space for co-construction and responsive facilitation rooted in local realities, rather than implementing fixed templates. Relationships were further strengthened through informal moments. Participants pointed to shared meals and tea breaks as powerful moments to connect. These settings helped lower relational barriers and fostered mutual respect. Some local participants expressed a desire for more balanced cultural exchange during the final celebration day to close the project, including the sharing of traditions. This reinforces Makuwira's (2018) argument that emotional and relational dimensions are vital for authentic engagement in development work. Kenyan participants also highlighted the importance of having their own expertise acknowledged and invited into the learning space. While the atmosphere was described as positive and respectful, some participants noted that local knowledge was not systematically integrated. Additionally, IVs highlighted that activities sometimes failed to translate into staff meetings or lessons and interpreted the absence as a sign that teachers had not fully understood the workshop content, leading them to recommend making the workshop approach more accessible (T4T, 2023c). Cultural differences became spaces for empathy, growth, and adaptation, echoing earlier shifts in mindset. As Girgis (2007) emphasises, cross-cultural learning in capacity-building must move beyond technical exchange to become a relational process shaped by adaptation, humility, and reflection.

As noted with mutual learning, relational bonding among local teachers played a vital role. Several participants valued the opportunity to connect with peers they had never interacted with before, underlining TPD as a platform for professional community-building as confirmed in the literature by James (2018). Particularly in systems where such opportunities are limited. Peer-to-peer was often experienced as safer, underscoring the value of teacher-to-teacher formats.

Expectations and Preparedness

Misaligned expectations among participants, particularly around communication styles, pace of engagement, or anticipated outcomes, delayed relationship-building and can undermine sustainable implementation. This is especially relevant in IV involvement, where differing cultural assumptions and norms can challenge early mutual understanding. Several IVs described arriving with limited awareness of local educational context and slower dialogue pace. As previously noted, while pre-departure training was appreciated, many noted that enhanced guidance could strengthen IVs' preparedness on cultural dynamics, classroom realities, the importance of patience in building rapport, managing language barriers, and adapting communication strategies. This indicates that INGO-led programmes should complement technical preparation with reflection-based orientation that explicitly addresses intercultural communication and adaptive capacity-building strategies. Equipping IVs with relational and reflective competencies, not only to manage expectations, but also to avoid unintentionally imposing external facilitation norms (Girgis, 2007; Thompson et al., 2020). Malunga and Holcombe (2014) emphasise that engaging with local cultural norms is essential, especially when IVs come from different educational traditions. Similarly, Mugisha (2015) highlights the importance of adapting strategies and activities to culturally preferred learning styles. These insights suggest that expectations about engagement must be grounded in a genuine understanding of local dynamics and context.

Rather than seeing these misalignments as misjudgements, they highlight a broader challenge for INGOs: ensuring transparent communication about what TPD engagements entail, how they are perceived locally, and how this shapes expectations. The case study emphasises "to meet" and "to connect" before "to learn," and intentionally frames this in concrete practices. IVs' reflections suggest that it remained unclear to some how these relational values translated into expectations around facilitation practices and potential outcomes. Therefore, it should be translated into concrete expectations, outcomes or practices. Unless values are clearly communicated and embedded, they risk being perceived as symbolic rather than guiding. This also links to downward accountability, where transparency and consultation are necessities for effective engagement (Bawole & Langnel, 2016). These discussions engage all stakeholders and explicitly address also non-tangible outcomes and ensuring this is communicated consistently at all levels. International participants reflected on roles and expectations, questioning what was expected or

admitted having assumptions about wanting to achieve too much. These reflections highlight the importance of both individual readiness and systemic clarity in communication. Some participants indicated that more realistic expectations could contribute to a more relaxed and open atmosphere. Makuwira's (2018) and Wallace et al. (2006) warn to not let expectations override local norms. Devereux (2008) adds that poorly structured volunteer initiatives risk prioritising volunteer expectations over community needs, reinforcing the importance of context-sensitive design grounded in mutual benefit.

Local participants from the focus group entered the workshops with minimum prior information or clarity about what the training would involve. Some expressed they expected material support or colleagues expected even financial benefits and ended up finding themselves in sessions centred on methodology. While these mismatches were generally resolved positively and participants maintained optimism, they reinforce the need for transparent communication. This underscores the importance of vertical and horizontal communication between INGOs, IVs and local stakeholders about what the TPD entails, as expectations affect motivation, engagement, and perceived relevance. This includes expected content, structure, and objectives. Clarity and transparency concerning objectives and constraints are essential to preserve trust between INGOs and participants. When local teachers perceive objectives as inadequately aligned with their expectations, their commitment might weaken. To prevent disappointment, the INGO can address this through participatory dialogues with teachers upfront to strengthen trust. This will be further elaborated in the following theme, participatory processes. Language and communication also challenge expectations. While English was used during the workshops, not all participants felt confident contributing due to proficiency levels or pronunciation differences. Several IVs reported that adjusting their expectations and slowing their speech created space for more thoughtful engagement. Support from Kenyan co-facilitators, who clarified, translated, or adapted key messages, played a crucial role in bridging communication gaps. This highlights the value of collaborative facilitation and language-sensitive design as part of intercultural TPD. Wallace et al. (2006) and Malunga & Holcombe (2014) caution that English-dominated capacity-building can marginalise non-native speakers and hinder dialogue, reinforcing the importance of linguistic inclusivity. Many IVs came to value the process of slowing down, observing, and adapting. These moments of adaptive learning reflect the importance of cultural sensitivity not just as a soft skill, but as a structural condition for equitable TPD exchange (Girgis, 2007; Thompson et al., 2020).

Participatory Processes

The results from the local focus group and interviews suggest that while participation is encouraged within sessions, through sharing ideas, local and head teachers are typically absent from earlier, more strategic stages of project design. This reflects a wider challenge in teacher development efforts where consultation and involvement tend to focus on implementation rather than planning. The data revealed an exclusion of teachers from decision-making phases, contradicting theoretical foundations to downward accountability (Bawole & Langnel, 2016; Ellerman, 2006; Mitchell et al., 2024). While CSOs contributed valuable insights for the workshop content, they also noted opportunities in their role in shaping workshop agendas, budgets, or delivery models. Decisions were generally made externally and communicated to local participants, which undermines agency and leaves valuable contextual knowledge unused. T4T was consistently appreciated for fostering interactive and dialogical spaces during the workshops. Some IVs, as described both in the focus group and in reports from earlier cycles, adapted their facilitation styles to prioritise peer collaboration among Kenyan teachers, fostering a participatory environment. The results also suggested that planning decisions were primarily driven by external actors, Kenyan board or higher-level local educators. Teachers were informed of their role rather than involved in defining it. Mechanisms for sustained feedback or collaborative decision-making, before or after the intervention, remained limited. Several stakeholders, including the head teachers, CSOs and an Education Officer, offered practical suggestions. The main challenge lay in the absence of structured pathways to systematically integrate participant feedback into programme development.

Looking at institutional engagement, T4T has at times struggled to fully involve CSOs, some of whom deprioritised workshops due to time constraints. Past experiences with the local authorities in Kwale County further reflect broader challenges faced by INGOs. The reluctance to fully endorse local educational authorities in the project echoes Kinsbergen's (2019) critique that INGOs often face bureaucratic resistance when collaboration is not established. Local authorities may feel merely informed rather than actively involved in decision-making or planning, confirmed by the local authority interviewed. When INGOs bypass local authorities, this can trigger misunderstandings. Such disconnects, as Kinsbergen warns, can erode legitimacy and compromise long-term sustainability. T4T has since gained formal

backing; however, local authorities must be more than passive supporters. Actively involving them at all stages of project design and planning is essential for ownership to maintain continuity.

This reflects a wider topic in externally supported TPD efforts: the structural barriers that prevent bottom-up contributions and downward accountability from shaping key decisions. Without intentionally designed spaces for shared decision-making, even well-meaning programmes risk reinforcing hierarchy. For participatory intent to translate into practice, involvement must extend the capacity-building sessions to the entire cycle of the initiative, from design and planning to evaluation, inclusive feedback loops, follow-up and learning. This aligns with Ellerman's (2006) critique that local actors should be engaged in decisions on priorities, timing, and methodology, ensuring capacity-building efforts are genuinely bottom-up. Simpson and Gill (2007) similarly highlight that inclusive design requires transparency about which perspectives are incorporated and why, warning against tokenistic consultation. While the case study collects feedback, the absence of responsive feedback loops meant that participants remained unaware of whether, and how, their input shaped the programme's design, delivery, or evaluation. As Bawole and Langnel (2016) argue, downward accountability demands more than collecting input; it requires openness and structured mechanisms for responding to it. This includes clarifying decision-making criteria, enabling continuous consultation, and ensuring participants can see how their perspectives inform outcomes. These concerns are also aligned with Gumucio Dagron (2006) and Cavill and Sohail (2007), for INGOs to become learning organisations, they must not only create spaces for dialogue but demonstrate how that dialogue reshapes decisions.

Participation in Monitoring and Evaluation

In the case study, T4T's M&E tools, such as post-workshop surveys, classroom observations, and participant feedback forms, are used consistently. However, inclusive and participatory elements remain underdeveloped. The tools rely on binary metrics and partially top-down reporting. Classroom implementation of new practices is assessed based on the presence of activities rather than through deeper engagement with teachers' reflections. Although this binary approach produced high success rates, it is questionable whether the methods link to meaningful pedagogical change. Nuances such as

teacher intentionality or contextual adaptation are overlooked, offering limited insight into long-term effectiveness or impact. This evaluation method contrasts with the more detailed qualitative insights shared by IVs in reports. Several IVs expressed concerns that new practices were not consistently visible during school visits, despite high rates of active methods being reported. This discrepancy points to a disconnect between observed practices and pedagogical change, raising questions about what is truly being measured. It risks reducing complex learning processes to checkbox indicators, potentially overlooking factors such as the unpredictable nature of development work, the nuanced challenges of assessing impact, and the limitations of quantifiable outcomes (Boadu & Ile, 2022; Makuwira, 2018; Wallace et al., 2006).

Post-project reports indicate that teachers are increasingly adopting active learning methods, though the extent varies across schools. While workshops are positively received, the absence of a sustained M&E strategy, especially beyond the short visit cycle of IVs, limits the ability to monitor sustained impact over time. Teacher involvement in shaping indicators for meaningful learning, assessing impact, and designing context-relevant tools is fundamental. IVs' qualitative observations provide rich insights, detailing why certain strategies succeeded or failed during the workshops and explaining the shift towards participatory methods. This shift aligns with autonomy-respecting capacity-building principles (Chambers, 2005; Ellerman, 2006), emphasising the potential of bottom-up approaches. Yet, despite these contributions, teachers were rarely involved in defining evaluation criteria or informed about project results, limiting opportunities for genuine accountability. M&E systems should be transparent and participatory in understanding and decision-making. As Bawole and Langnel (2016) suggest, accountability must include beneficiaries in shaping how outcomes are defined and used. Participatory M&E would ideally involve a collaborative definition of learning goals, reflection on progress, and co-interpretation of results. Roberts and Lillis (2001) argue that evaluation must move beyond static reporting tools to support ongoing learning processes. In T4T's case, the challenge lies in translating this principle into the M&E model. Participatory M&E may involve empowering local teachers to co-design evaluation tools for school visits and classroom observations, define success indicators, and lead reflective follow-up in their school clusters. By strengthening feedback loops at the local level, T4T can shift to a learning-oriented approach. One example of this is the use of the "Stool of Confidence," which, although not designed by the local

teachers, enabled peer feedback in a constructive and culturally sensitive manner. It illustrates how adaptable tools can support reflective practice and point towards more participatory monitoring approaches.

Alignment with Local Needs and Challenges

Learner-centred pedagogies introduced during the workshops were well received by the local participants, especially in how they translated into practical classroom strategies. However, participants also noted a disconnect between these pedagogies and local teaching constraints, such as large class sizes, curriculum timelines, or limited resources. These reflections highlight the challenge of aligning externally developed approaches with the lived realities of local classrooms (Powell, 2006; Wallace et al., 2006). Ellerman (2006) and Mitchell et al. (2024) emphasise the importance of prioritising local perspectives and learning from those who live the challenges, as a basis for sustainable capacity-building. Several IVs became aware of these limitations only after arrival, suggesting a need for deeper contextual preparation. Rather than undermining active learning, this highlights the need to frame it as adaptable and to co-develop it with local constraints in mind. Malunga and Holcombe (2014) similarly emphasise that true engagement requires integrating local traditions and knowledge first, and only then blending them with modern solutions.

Discussions around this alignment were not only pedagogical but also structural. The national TPD context is fragmented and inconsistent, reinforcing the critical role of grassroots INGO-led initiatives. Teachers appreciated the case study's tangible, practice-based strategies for the new curriculum, yet noted that bypassing their input compromised its deeper relevance. The flexibility allows grassroots initiatives to respond more swiftly to localised challenges than larger INGOs or national systems (Contreras & Roudbari, 2021) and represents a missed opportunity to integrate teacher voices through a bottom-up approach. The informality of grassroots INGOs, such as the case study, risks limited local needs assessment unless involving the teachers at all stages as well as collaborating with the government (Kinsbergen et al., 2017). While T4T illustrates some level of inclusion, it primarily involves mid-level stakeholders and no direct engagement with teachers. When objectives are defined without upfront teacher input, motivation and

ownership can be weakened. Intrinsic motivation is a crucial condition for real change, regardless of good intentions (Aikman, 2010; Ellerman, 2006). Local teachers also revealed in the focus group how colleagues questioned the applicability of the new practices, underscoring how perceptions of pedagogical relevance are shaped by local norms. Kenyan teachers said they modelled the new practices for colleagues, showing potential for change, but only when scepticism was acknowledged.

When one or two teachers per school are involved, the broader implementation is limited, particularly when follow-up or peer-sharing structures are absent. Such implementation choices influence how aligned capacity-building efforts feel at school level. Involving slightly more teachers per school, without expanding overall group size, can help build a stronger social and professional network during workshops, especially when guided by Girgis' (2007) three instruments. This peer dynamic can then foster shared ownership of new practices and provide a more solid foundation for in-school or school cluster cascading. Hassler et al. (2018) propose peer facilitators who model interactive practices; however, Kipkemoi Bett (2016) critiques this approach, arguing it must be grounded in individual school needs through smaller, deep-scaling strategies that emphasise horizontal peer learning and teacher-led action research. By fostering wider networks within schools or cluster groups, teachers are less likely to feel the need to defend new practices, as they collaborate horizontally on shared challenges and problem-solving (Kipkemoi Bett, 2016).

The findings highlight the importance of designing TPD that fosters both community and professional relevance. As noted in earlier themes, Makuwira (2018) stresses the importance of not overlooking social relationships. A TPD initiative from a different INGO in Kwale County was especially valued by head teachers and local participants due to engaging with communities before entering school environments. This early engagement was seen as reflecting deep local responsiveness. Such models echo Eade's (2007) perspective that effective capacity-building requires patience, community-led engagement, listening, and alignment with local values. As the data from the local focus group revealed, there remained an underlying perception that new practices may work abroad but that 'here things are different.' This underscores the need for deeper intercultural dialogue and co-developed approaches to ensure strategies are not just transferable in theory but also meaningful in practice (Yeboah & Daniel, 2020). The case study illustrates

how respectful engagement fosters trust, while also showing that deeper contextual responsiveness and shared decision-making are essential for long-term relevance.

Programme Scope and Scalability

The scope and continuity of TPD initiatives directly shape their long-term impact. Here, scope refers to how widely and deeply the project engages teachers and schools. When few teachers are selected per school and project cycles are spaced years apart, the potential for meaningful dissemination narrows. Short-term engagements, despite their benefits, may not provide sufficient time for reflection, especially when peer-sharing structures remain informal. These limitations underscore the importance of considering not only how programmes scale geographically, but also how they deepen locally over time, a tension widely acknowledged in the literature between scaling up and scaling deep (Hartmann & Linn, 2008; Hassler et al., 2018; Sutoris, 2018; Thomson, 2014). In the case study, a rotating sub-county approach and short project cycles were chosen. While this model was valued for its manageability and long-term vision by some, particularly given its self-funded IV component and the focus on peer-to-peer knowledge exchange as well as growing Kenyan leadership, participants emphasised the importance of strengthening local facilitation, improving follow-up mechanisms, and adjusting the pacing to sustain momentum at the school level. Intensive short-term visits can be effective when rooted in a long-term vision. When combined with key principles, brief interventions can reinforce professional growth and continuity. These principles include more frequent engagement cycles, strengthened follow-up between visits, and a growing network of local peer facilitators led by teachers through a revised ToT model. They also include a peer-learning structure grounded in equal exchange and reciprocal capacity-building for both IVs and local teachers (Sasere & Makhasane, 2023). This reflects Eade's (2007) and Mitchell et al.'s (2024) emphasis on the importance of local approaches and long-term relationships for scaling sustainably and aligns with Kipkemoi Bett's (2016) advocacy for small-scale, horizontal collaboration over top-down cascading.

The county-wide geographic strategy effectively mitigated teacher-transfer risks common in hyper-localised projects, facilitating continuity despite frequent teacher reassignments across districts. Thus,

scalability requires a balance between grassroots proximity and strategic span, resonating with Ellerman's (2014) call for decentralised and adaptive approaches that can slowly expand. Additionally, participants emphasised also the risks of relying on cascading models. Teachers expressed that their colleagues often prefer receiving training first-hand, indicating an interest in broader direct participation during workshops to strengthen follow-up opportunities afterwards and ownership, as discussed by Kipkemoi Bett (2016).

Volunteer engagement must be complemented by support structures, transparent communication, and co-development with teachers. Funding models based on school board contributions and volunteer participation offer opportunities for reducing dependency on large-scale donors, but must be paired with clarity to sustain trust. Moreover, initiatives working from within communities demonstrate how early engagement with local participants can enhance relevance, aligning with participatory models such as REFLECT (Hickey & Mohan, 2005). Recognising incremental change may offer a more resilient path to TPD scalability. The shift to mutual and collaborative learning and engagement at grassroots levels is confirmed by the literature (Kipkemoi Bett, 2016; Hassler et al., 2018). The case study illustrates both the possibilities and the complexities of balancing short-term engagement with sustainable, locally empowered change.

The reflections across the different themes discussed challenges and opportunities within T4T's current TPD approach. They shed light on how IV-involving TPD can strengthen sustainability through seven key areas. Tensions persist between top-down instruction and bottom-up facilitation. In the following conclusion chapter, these insights are translated into two main strategic principles: reciprocal and qualitative capacity-building, and participatory processes in TPD design, implementation and follow-up activities.

7. Conclusion

Two key insights emerged as essential to effective and sustainable TPD initiatives involving international actors. The first is the need to foster reciprocal capacity-building. The second is the importance of embedding participatory processes and local ownership mechanisms across all programme phases, from design to follow-up. This chapter reflects on these two insights, translating them into strategic principles.

Reciprocal and Quality Capacity-Building

The first insight is the importance of designing TPD that fosters reciprocal learning between IVs and local participants, while ensuring context-sensitive capacity-building for both groups. The T4T model targets IVs and local teachers, promoting collaborative growth, but its full potential remains unrealised.

Professional growth occurred when cross-cultural interactions were grounded in humility, mutual respect, and shared reflection, with relationships built before learning ('To Meet and To Connect'). When trust and openness were established, workshops shifted from instruction to collaboration. If bonding was rushed, learning remained constrained by hierarchy or misunderstanding. This calls for intentional strategies where relationship-building should be structurally embedded in project design through dedicated moments for exchange, mutual goal setting, and peer reflection.

Empowerment and learning must flow reciprocally between external practitioners and local participants. IVs intended to act as facilitators or co-learners. However, the short duration of their engagement and limited preparation in intercultural pedagogy often led them to take more directive roles. To move beyond isolated examples of individual change, mutual learning should be systematically embedded in the TPD framework. Mutual learning must be actively fostered through careful design, structured planning, clear objectives, and dedicated spaces for reflection in cross-cultural professional exchanges. Empowerment and autonomy include enabling local teachers to lead their own capacity-building efforts. This means shifting from IVs as knowledge providers to catalysts for mutual learning. This requires not only a change in mindset of the IVs but also in programme structure. Workshops should include dedicated time, structure, and activities for knowledge sharing between IVs and local teachers. Include space for

indigenous methods and classroom dilemmas from both contexts. Ideas should flow both ways with joint reflection. These exchanges must be actively facilitated and recognised as core to the project. Embedding “to exchange” between “to connect” and “to learn” would make it deliberate and central. IV feedback since 2023 supports peer learning, but it is not yet systematic. Workshop segments could be co-led by local teachers, including time for local peer exchange. Such opportunities are rare in national TPD, underscoring the need to plan time for peer learning. Adopting a dual approach to capacity-building, in which IVs act as both learners and facilitators, can enhance the sustainability and scalability. This approach creates contexts where IVs and local teachers co-develop culturally relevant and practically applicable strategies.

Quality induction and continuous preparation of IVs are equally essential. Professional development of IVs is another key element of T4T’s approach. This study emphasises that effective training for IVs must go beyond cultural awareness. It should also develop deeper skills, including cultural humility, sensitivity to power dynamics, and understanding participatory facilitation techniques. Meaningful dual capacity-building also requires coaching on how to implement reflective practice among peers in activities during the workshops and school visits. It further requires investment in relational facilitation competencies. IVs bring new strategies and cross-cultural exchange, but brief presence can reinforce power imbalances. Feedback tools proved useful for some IVs, but difficulties in adaptation highlight the need for better preparation in intercultural coaching. Capacity-building must equip IVs with the skills to engage as co-learners in different cultural settings with local teachers. This includes more substantive training in intercultural communication skills, a deeper understanding of local contexts, and how to engage in dialogue. The expectations around dialogue and critical thinking differ among different cultural contexts. Without capacity-building that addresses the complexities of cross-cultural friendship relationships, IVs risk reverting to top-down approaches and undermining collaboration. Capacity-building for IVs must include training in:

- Power sensitivity and the way asymmetries emerge during facilitation and feedback
- Strategies for enabling shared learning without defaulting to expert positions
- Intercultural communication skills, language and cultural barriers, and the use of Intercultural dialogue tools

- Participatory facilitation approaches grounded in Girgis' (2007) "friendship work" instruments: suggestive dialogue, shared discussion, and cultural sensitivity

IVs should be continuously coached on creating shared learning environments. By promoting a more equitable form of capacity-building, where both IVs and local teachers are actively engaged in developing their skills, the shift can move to a bottom-up model.

Designing Sustainable and Participatory TPD Programmes

The second main insight is the need to embed participatory processes and follow-up structures. While the T4T project was praised for its interactive, relationship-oriented nature, the data revealed limitations in how participation was implemented across the full project cycle. Local teachers and school leaders were excluded from strategic phases, limiting ownership and sustained engagement.

To address this, participation must not be something that happens solely within training sessions. Begin with participatory needs assessments with the teachers and head teachers who will implement training. Move beyond CSO/ Education Officials consultations and create spaces for teachers to voice challenges, constraints, and desired outcomes. Collaborative planning tools, such as listening sessions, mapping exercises, or design workshops, could serve as practical mechanisms. When schools are included in multiple consecutive project cycles, the potential for participatory input increases. Then teachers involved build familiarity and trust with the project, as well as develop a clearer sense of how their feedback could inform future cycles. This opens opportunities for participants to shape the subsequent year's content and methods. T4T's current rotational structure revisits areas every four years, while maintaining a long-term vision. Adjusting this to a two-year consecutive rotation, the cyclical regional structure can be more effective. Shifting from a one-off engagement model to a cyclical structure offers INGOs an opportunity for deeper local participation without sacrificing geographical diversity.

Evaluation must evolve. Binary metrics and post-workshop feedback forms risk masking the complexity of learning and implementation. Local teachers hesitated to implement new methods due to large class sizes, curriculum constraints, or uncertainty about approval. These nuances are lost in current M&E approaches.

The INGO should instead adopt participatory M&E methods, such as teacher-led reflective group sessions, co-created evaluation indicators, and collaborative feedback dialogues in between project cycles. Teachers could reflect in small groups on which practices were adapted, why certain approaches worked or did not work, and what further support might be needed. When teachers understand and shape changes, intrinsic motivation grows. This asks for downward accountability, where the INGO actively acts upon feedback and communicates this back to participants in a transparent manner.

Workshops co-led by local educators, designed collaboratively, and grounded in peer-to-peer interaction foster a shift to horizontal learning. T4T has made progress in shifting power dynamics by training school leaders to take on greater roles in leading workshops, either as facilitators or workshop leaders. However, this leadership must also include regular teachers, who often hold greater relational trust within schools and can serve as peer mentors or capacity-building facilitators. This calls for restructuring the ToT model. Traditional ToT models often select those who copy best new practices, reinforcing dependency. In some projects, regular teachers already co-facilitate with IVs. Rather than abandoning the ToT concept altogether, this research recommends redesigning it into a more flexible, horizontal framework. Here, facilitation roles are not limited solely to school leaders but extended to peer teachers based on trust, relational ability, and shared contextual understanding. Enabling grassroots co-facilitation models. When facilitation is shared between IVs and local teachers, participants are more likely to perceive workshops as collaborative rather than directive. Such peer-to-peer structures decentralise ownership and create the conditions for scaling deep, where capacity-building develops through relationships and shared reflection. Facilitation roles should evolve gradually, mentoring that support teachers in progressing from participants to peer mentors or workshop leaders. T4T has taken steps to support local leadership by engaging head teachers in coaching roles and leadership training. However, expanding this model to include regular teachers is critical. Facilitators need not only positional authority but relational ties with the peer group, which is often stronger among classroom teachers. This model allows multiple actors to lead at different moments, depending on expertise and trust.

The research exposed a gap in post-workshop activities, where the absence of formalised peer-sharing mechanisms and school-based reflection limited sustainability. To address this, the INGO should facilitate school- and/or cluster-based peer mentoring networks. These could involve participants taking on

informal facilitation roles within their clusters, co-observe lessons, or organise collaborative planning discussions. These roles must be supported through relational coaching by local leaders or CSOs. However, ensuring that follow-up does not become another top-down instruction but a participatory process grounded in mutual exchange.

There is a need to reframe international volunteering as collaborative, co-creating and rooted in local knowledge, dialogue, and teacher-led change. When INGOs integrate participatory and autonomy-respecting mechanisms, build reciprocal capacity among all participants, and shift to horizontal collaboration, they move closer to designing sustainable models. While drawn from the T4T case study in Kwale County, this can offer practical pathways and guidance for other INGOs navigating similar journeys and seeking to build empowering partnerships in diverse educational contexts.

Summary of Key Strategies

The two strategies respond to the central research question and sub-questions. They suggest embedding autonomy-respecting principles in TPD through reciprocal capacity-building and participatory processes. This shows how local participants can strengthen sustainable practices in collaboration with international actors in context-sensitive ways.

1. Reciprocal and Quality Capacity-Building

This strategy proposes a two-legged model of capacity-building for local and international actors through context-sensitive knowledge exchange. It addresses the first and second research questions by identifying autonomy-respecting principles and key components for indirect capacity-building through relationships and peer exchange.

- **Reciprocal capacity-building**
 - Trust and relationship-building as foundational to learning, acknowledging the time required.
 - Structured moments for building-rapport in project design and capacity-building, including informally.

- Deliberately create safe environments for peer exchange between IVs and local educators, as well as among local participants, to foster mutual learning and empowerment.
- Ensure that suggesting, discussing, and problem-solving occur in both directions.
- Incorporate indigenous knowledge and local curricular examples.
- Empower local participants with co-facilitation roles, letting them lead their own capacity-building efforts.
- **Qualitative capacity-building international actors**
 - Training must include cultural humility, participatory pedagogy, and relational facilitation competencies focused on empowering local participants.
 - Provide international actors with ongoing coaching to adapt facilitation styles and reflective practice.
 - Address risks of directive teaching through intercultural communication and feedback training.
 - Shift in capacity from directive instruction to co-facilitation, applying Girgis' (2007) three instruments.

2. Designing Sustainable and Participatory TPD Programmes

This strategy emphasises bottom-up ownership and continuity across all phases of TPD, from needs assessment to follow-up. It addresses the third research question by suggesting a participatory framework that enhances local autonomy.

- **Participatory processes in all stages**
 - Involve local teachers and head teachers in bottom-up planning and content co-creation, using collaborative tools.
 - Participatory M&E through teacher-led reflection and feedback loops.
 - Shift to downward, teacher-centred accountability.
 - Redesign ToT models, where regular teachers become co-facilitators or co-workshop leaders, developing horizontal and grassroots frameworks.
- **Robust and locally embedded follow-up structures**

- Establish peer mentoring networks within schools and clusters to extend project impact.
- Co-develop mentoring roles with CSOs, motivated head teachers, and regular teachers.
- Follow-up sessions in project design, aligned with school calendars.
- Avoid overload by scaffolding responsibilities and distributing roles gradually.

The strategies also address the fourth research question by offering grassroots approaches that can guide INGOs. They show how local engagement, autonomy-respecting capacity-building embedded in peer exchange, and participatory processes can serve as a foundation for sustainable, context-sensitive TPD in diverse settings.

Policy and Implementation Recommendations

To translate these insights into practice, the following steps can be implemented:

- Two-year consecutive rotation: remain in the same sub-county for two years to consolidate relationships, participatory processes and peer exchange.
- Participatory design: convene a teacher panel before each cycle to shape workshop themes, ensuring local classroom challenges drive the agenda.
- Co-led workshops: require at least one local teacher per session; phase in regular teachers alongside head teachers.
- Structured exchange block: add a protected “to exchange” segment in every workshop for mutual sharing of methods and dilemmas.
- Cluster peer mentoring: establish school-cluster meetings each term with light-touch coaching by CSOs/head teachers.
- Participatory M&E: use teacher-led reflection notes and co-created indicators; hold one feedback dialogue between cycles.
- IV preparation: add a module on power sensitivity, participatory facilitation, and intercultural dialogue with coached practice.

Possible indicators are sessions co-led by locals, cluster meetings held, and teachers reporting adaptation of at least one practice.

Limitations

The two strategies offer potential for a paradigm shift. However, there are practical challenges concerning feasibility and capacity that must be considered. This is particularly relevant when implementing alternative ToT models. There is no current training or mentoring system for regular teachers to become co-facilitators or peer mentors. Logistical constraints remain concerning qualitative coaching and training. Moreover, there is a risk of selecting teachers based on how closely they replicate INGO approaches. Overcoming these challenges requires that training and coaching processes actively involve head teachers, CSOs, and potentially actors such as Teacher Training Colleges or other local think tanks to co-develop these roles and support peer facilitation models. Together with structured, bottom-up involvement of the regular teachers. While head teachers already engaged as workshop leaders could take on a coaching role, their number remains limited. T4T is progressively expanding the School Leaders' Course, which provides more workshop leaders over time. Inviting motivated head teachers and CSOs to a peer-mentoring initiative could help address the gap. This group could support teachers in building facilitation skills and co-developing peer mentoring frameworks.

Follow-up must be co-developed with shared responsibilities among head teachers, teachers, and CSOs. This demands time and a genuine openness to participation and ownership from all actors involved. A constraint lies in the limited availability and capacity of current CSOs and school leaders, especially those who have not completed the School Leaders' Course, to take on mentoring roles. As previously discussed, school clusters can function as peer-mentoring centres. The suggestion to integrate a day in the project week specifically for follow-up from the previous cycle requires a redesign of the current model, which also involves the challenge of school calendar alignment. The risk of overloading classroom teachers, head teachers and CSOs must be addressed. Roles must be clearly scaffolded. This means providing clear modelling, breaking down tasks, and offering tools. The process must also be ongoing and participatory.

Teachers must define their roles and responsibilities based on their own professional competencies and time constraints.

Challenges also arise in participatory planning and M&E. The INGO lacks formal structures to facilitate collaborative planning or participatory evaluation. Both the Dutch and Kenyan boards consist of volunteers, some with other professional commitments, which generates capacity limitations. Involving new volunteers, especially locally and also possibly internationally, who can support participatory design processes, co-create evaluation indicators, facilitate feedback mechanisms and strengthen downward accountability structures would be beneficial. However, more volunteers involved and investing in all these approaches may slow processes, and reduce operational efficiency, requiring gradual build-up.

The suggestion to shift from a once every four-year to a consecutive two-year cycle similarly involves logistical challenges and requires strong stakeholder alignment. However, its added value lies in the potential to enhance IV involvement by strengthening rapport-building. It has emerged that IVs consider participating more than once, especially for two following years. This would enable IVs to reconnect with the same group of teachers or schools, strengthening continuity. Slightly increasing the number of teachers per school would further strengthen peer exchange, especially if regular teachers co-facilitate workshops alongside IVs. Facilitating multiple workshops simultaneously on the same school grounds would maintain collaborative opportunities among IVs while expanding teacher participation.

Personal Reflections and Lessons Learned

On a personal and professional level, this research influenced my understanding of reciprocal capacity-building. It also highlighted the importance of building lasting rapport in international educational development contexts. Over a decade in international development, I often questioned the sustainability and meaning of my involvement in Global South programmes. This research renewed my optimism. It demonstrated how mutually beneficial professional exchanges between the Global North and South can be structured to empower local teachers while also providing growth opportunities for IVs. This reinforced my recognition of professional autonomy for local participants. It affirmed the necessity of allowing each teacher to determine their own path of professional learning. My critical stance on the sustainability of

TPD programmes implemented by INGOs has evolved. I now have a clearer understanding of how programmes might be redesigned and strengthened to achieve authentic, lasting impacts without harm. This research has therefore shaped my ongoing professional journey and ethical approach towards international development practice.

Reflecting on the methodological process it revealed insights and lessons. As a first-time qualitative researcher, I encountered several methodological challenges. These related to managing researcher bias and facilitating productive discussions without unintentionally guiding participants. Having built extensive rapport with participants facilitated genuine, open conversations. However, this also led participants occasionally to diverge into discussions unrelated to the research themes. This necessitated facilitation skills to maintain thematic coherence and mitigate potential researcher bias. These methodological challenges were especially evident in the IV focus group, which was scheduled toward the end of their field experience due to logistical constraints. At this stage, IVs were emotionally charged, actively processing complex and often overwhelming experiences. This occasionally constrained deep reflection slowed consensus-building and influenced the group dialogue. Additionally, practical constraints on participant motivation led to a smaller, more familiar focus group of IVs, further deepening potential biases. The local teachers' focus group and interviews with head teachers on the other hand provided valuable insights. They clearly validated the importance of participatory methodologies that centre on primary beneficiaries. The application of REM was particularly effective, enabling participant engagement despite diverse cultural backgrounds. However, its reliance on group consensus required thoughtful facilitation.

This study drew on a relatively small sample of participants through focus groups and stakeholders through semi-structured interviews, generating in-depth, contextual insights rather than providing conclusions intended for generalisation. The results aimed to offer transferable learning for INGO staff and volunteers involved in TPD initiatives. As a researcher with prior experience in international education and development, my positionality may have shaped the data collection process and interpretation. While this background helped build trust with participants, it may also have introduced certain assumptions or influenced how themes were prioritised. This highlights the importance of reflexivity and researcher positionality in qualitative research. Although this research draws on a single case study, the reflections

provide insights for a broader discussion on TPD programmes aiming to adopt more participatory, reciprocal, and context-responsive approaches.

Future Research

This research identified several opportunities for further research. Succeeding studies could examine scalability more deeply, focusing on how dual capacity-building models can be adapted and integrated within larger INGOs while maintaining their participatory and reciprocal character. Research is needed on the long-term impacts of reciprocal capacity-building on both local participants and IVs, particularly regarding sustained pedagogical change, leadership, and intercultural competencies. These studies could provide deeper insights into the sustainability, effectiveness, and transferability of TPD models. This supports INGOs in enhancing their approaches. Finally, future research could investigate the ways through which local teachers evolve into co-workshop leaders or peer mentors within TPD programmes helping INGOs better structure bottom-up ToT alternatives. Comparative research on grassroots facilitation across contexts could inform strategies for sustainable teacher leadership in decentralised TPD.

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Appendix A: Summary Qualitative Research Tools

Semi-Structured Interviews

Participants: Two head teachers, two Kenyan board members, one Dutch board member, two CSOs, and one Education Officer. Structure: Questions were grouped into themes drawn from the research questions and literature review. Open-ended, flexible prompts were used to encourage rich responses.

Themes Covered:

- TPD in Kwale County
- Stakeholder roles and involvement in TPD
- Relevance and perceived impact of T4T's work
- Accountability and communication practices
- Perceptions of IVs and collaboration
- Ownership transfer and sustainability
- Local participation in design and implementation
- Alignment with local needs and challenges

Interview Questions summary:

1. Background and Role
 - What is your role and responsibilities?
 - Describe the national TPD in Kwale and what your involvement is?
 - What experience do you have with NGO capacity-building programmes and T4T?
2. Accountability and Perceptions
 - How do you describe and experience the (downward)accountability of T4T?
 - Which information is shared and how by T4T about feedback, goals, outcomes, or progress?
 - How is feedback encouraged or collected?
 - In what ways could accountability and transparency be improved?

- How do teachers and you perceive the usefulness of T4T's work in enhancing motivation, skills, or practices?
- How aligned is T4T's capacity-building with the specific challenges faced by local teachers?

3. Collaborations and Roles

- What role does T4T play in TPD and school development?
- How do you view the role of IVs in TPD?
- What do IVs gain from their participation, learning experiences or takeaways?
- What contributions can Kenyan teachers offer to enhance T4T's approach? How can their role be enhanced?
- How to improve collaboration between local teachers and IVs to support mutual learning?
- How do you perceive the relationship between local teachers and IVs? (including challenges, cultural differences or power dynamics)

4. Programme Design and Participation

- Have you or the teachers been involved in shaping workshop content or programme activities?
- How participatory are the T4T activities? Are local voices included in decision-making?
- What mechanisms exist to co-design TPD activities with Kenyan educators?
- Are feedback systems or reporting tools accessible and effective?
- How would you describe motivation and engagement levels during T4T workshops?

5. Sustainability and Future Directions

- What mechanisms are in place to ensure that practices from T4T are sustained in schools?
- What mechanisms can be used? How to follow-up?
- What support is needed to ensure long-term change after T4T's involvement ends?
- How can local ownership be increased?

Focus Groups

Two separate focus groups were conducted: Kenyan participant teachers and Dutch participant teachers as IVs. Each focus group lasted approximately 90 minutes and was structured in phases:

- Introductions
- REM Phase 1: Appreciative Inquiry Interviews (peer-to-peer)
- REM Phase 2: Reporting, group reflection, mind-mapping
- Themed discussion prompts linked to research questions

Themes Covered:

- Empowerment and professional growth
- Ownership and follow-up
- Perception of IVs and power dynamics
- Participatory processes
- Expectations and preparedness (IVs)
- Local needs and projects alignment

1. Introduction Phase

- What is your professional background?
- In what ways have you participated in T4T or other TPD initiatives?

2. REM: Appreciative Inquiry Interviews

- How have you used the information and knowledge received during workshops and project week?
- What has been a highlight or success from your involvement? Where does it lead to?
- What unexpected changes or developments occurred as a result of your participation?
- What new or deeper connections have you made? What did this lead to?
- What are the challenges you are facing, or you have faced during or with the project?

3. Thematic Group Discussion Kenyan Teachers

Empowerment and Motivation

- What are your expectations of T4T?
- How are T4T's efforts received in the school community?
- How do you define your own learning needs, and how do you engage with solutions?

Accountability and Feedback

- Which information is communicated to you and how (goals, outcomes, feedback, progress)?
- How can communication and engagement be enhanced?

Participatory Processes

- How are efforts related to local needs?
- How are you involved in shaping the project content of T4T? (in all stages)
- How can you participate more in designing the workshops and decision-making?

Autonomy-Respecting Principles – Relationships

- How do you see your role in relation to IVs? How do you see their role?
- How do you experience the relationship with IVs? (power dynamics and cultural differences)
- What are your motivations for participating in T4T?

Autonomy-Respecting Principles – Professional Development and Mutual Learning

- What do IVs learn from Kenyan teachers? What are the learning experiences for IVs?
- What do you wish to share with IVs regarding your knowledge or talents?
- What contributions can IVs make?
- How do you feel learning opportunities compare between Kenyan teachers and IVs?
- How can collaboration between Kenyan teachers and IVs be improved?

4. Thematic Group Discussion IVs

Empowerment and Motivation

- How do you view T4T's role in the local school community?
- What do you think the community expects from T4T?

- How do you see your role in supporting teacher empowerment?

Accountability and Feedback

- How does T4T communicate its goals, outcomes, feedback, progress etc. to you and to the local community?
- How can communication and engagement be enhanced?

Participatory Processes

- How familiar are IVs with the local educational environment and cultural context?
- How do you think the efforts are related to local needs?
- To what extent do you think Kenyan teachers are involved in shaping the capacity-building?
- How can their voice be better integrated?

Autonomy-Respecting Principles – Relationships

- How do you see your role in relation to the Kenyan teachers? How do you see their role?
- How do you experience the relationship with Kenyan teachers? (power dynamics and cultural differences)
- What strategies could improve cross-cultural collaboration and strengthen the relationship?

Autonomy-Respecting Principles – Professional Development and Mutual Learning

- What are the main takeaways for you as an IV? For Kenyan teachers?
- How do Kenyan teachers contribute to your professional or personal development?
- What can be valuable contributions from Kenyan teachers?
- What is the value of IVs in capacity-building?
- How can two-way learning between IVs and Kenyan teachers be further strengthened?

Appendix B: Verbatim Quotes from Qualitative Data

Theme 1: Autonomy-Respecting Capacity-Building

The following quotations illustrate participant perspectives on autonomy-respecting capacity-building, including shifts in IV facilitation roles, ownership transfer, and follow-up structures. These extracts are organised by sub-themes to navigate them easier.

1.1 Facilitation

Responses highlight Kenyan teachers reflecting on the workshops and the limited space to share insights. IVs also described stepping back or co-facilitating, which affirmed the importance of creating space for local voices. Whereas IVs are reflecting on limitations in facilitation and the shift in transmitting towards facilitating demonstrating the before and after shift.

“Ik vond het soms ook een beetje ongemakkelijk. Een deelnemer durfde eigenlijk niks te zeggen. Dus dan ging ik het toch doen. Anders komt het helemaal niet over. Ondanks dat het niet de bedoeling was.” [“I sometimes found it a bit uncomfortable. A participant actually did not dare to say anything. So, then I took over. Otherwise, nothing would come across at all, even though that was not the intention.”]

(Focus Group IVs)

“Als ik heel eerlijk ben. Het ontbreekt gewoon aan tijd, want je hebt te veel mensen in je workshop en het is dan toch relatief tekort. Je wilt veel laten zien, dat het niet echt tot een gesprek komt voor mij.” [“To be very honest. There is simply a lack of time, because you have too many people in your workshop and relatively little time. You want to show a lot, but then for me it does not really lead to a conversation.”]

(Focus Group IVs)

“Wij kunnen zeggen: dit zijn de mogelijkheden. Ga nou eens kijken hoe kan je dat binnen je systeem op een werkbaar en prettige manier inpassen.” [“We can say: these are the possibilities. Now go and see how you can integrate that into your own system in a workable and feasible way.”] (Focus Group IVs)

“Ik had het vooral anders willen brengen. Want ik denk inderdaad, meer had niet gekund. Want daarom hebben we ook maar zo weinig kunnen brengen. Maar ik had het graag op een andere manier gedaan.”

[“I would have liked to have done it differently. Because I think indeed, more would not have been possible. That is why we could have bring only so little. But I would have liked to have done it in another way.”] (Focus Group IVs)

“En dat gaven ze zelf ook aan dat ze het superfijn vonden om met hun collega's over onderwijs te praten. Maar daar was eigenlijk helemaal niet zo tijd voor.” [“And they themselves indicated that they really enjoyed talking about education with their colleagues. But there was actually no time for that.”] (Focus Group IVs)

“Maar die investering was heel waardevol, want daarna kregen we veel meer terug. Als we een kwartier of een half uur hadden ingekrompen op die Meet & Connect, had dat niet een half uur extra waardevolle informatie geleverd.” [But that investment was very valuable, because afterwards we got much more in return. If we had cut down that Meet & Connect session by 15 or 30 minutes, it would not have yielded 15 or 30 minutes of equally valuable information.] (Focus Group IVs)

“But now we want to feel that we are not learning from them. But we are learning from each other.”
(Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

To my side, the interaction, it was cordial, there was mutual agreement. But the way we are saying, you could see that there's something we have in us, which you needed to know first before trying to bring your own, which you implemented there. You could ask us about energizers, our own local energizers. How do you do it? But it is as if your perception was these Kenyan teachers have no clue, no idea. So, we are bringing our own, we put them there, they have to implement. Okay, so that can lead to resistance. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

Learning as a team, there are also some values which we are building. Because as they are working as a team, there is value of community, there is value of cooperation, love as they are close to each other. So where does that lead to? Higher retention. Also, it leads to the achievement of your goals. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

The issue is to change the behaviour from the old one to the new one and we find that these friends of ours from like T4T, actually we normally appreciate them. We normally accept them. They are not people that they take that pride or because we are this way or that way. They mix with us, and we learn a lot. They learn a lot from us. (Head Teacher-1)

1.2 Ownership transfer

Reflections on the exclusivity of head teachers leading workshops as workshop leaders or facilitators, paired with proposals for facilitation.

Zou het een optie zijn om gewoon met één Keniaanse workshop-leider en een Nederlandse, want dan heb je die connectie met die andere workshop-leider. Moet je overleggen, moet je dingen doen. Hij doet dingen op zijn eigen Keniaanse manier, wat soms goed werkt bij de mensen. Ik breng wat nieuws in, maar die combi, dat is voor de mensen zelf misschien ook vertrouwder en minder afwachtend zijn ze dan als dat er twee Nederlanders staan. [Would it be an option to work with one Kenyan workshop leader and a Dutch one, because then you have the connection with the other workshop leader. You need to discuss, do things together. He does things in his own Kenyan way, which sometimes works well with people. I introduce something new, but that combination may feel more familiar for the people themselves, and they are then less hesitant instead of having two Dutch standing there.] (IV-3)

Perspective on peer-to-peer workshops from teachers instead of head teachers:

It makes one to have more knowledge or skills to approach certain areas. You see, sometimes people can be even afraid of the one who is teaching. People can be afraid of the teacher. But if it is a pupil and a pupil of the same age, now the learning becomes closer and real and even easier. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

1.3 Follow-up structures

The quotes below capture reflections on follow-up, mentoring, and sustainability beyond workshops.

“Ja en dat is ook wat ik vanuit huis hoor van vrienden of leerlingen ofzo. Van oh gaan jullie daar dan ook nog eens een keertje terug om te kijken of het inderdaad impact heeft gehad?” [Yes, and this is also what I hear from home from friends or students or so. Oh, are you going back again to see whether it had an impact?] (Focus Group IVs)

“Merkte je het verschil tussen deelnemers die eerder hebben meegedaan? Want ik merkte dat niet.” [Did you notice the difference between participants who joined earlier? Because I did not notice that.] (Focus Group IVs)

“Dan is één keer in de vier jaar dus niet voldoende. Dan moet je dat eerder herhalen.” [Then once every four years is not enough. You need to repeat it earlier.] (Focus Group IVs)

You see, you find that T4T are organizing that workshop only for two days. You see, which maybe could be more better if it would be conducted maybe for three or four days. Because we find those, the knowledge and the skills that we learned for the two days, they reached a point where we are now crashing to save, because time was not on our side. Low. And the effectiveness, it won't be that much effective. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

The follow-up is the only problem. Because the teacher is impacted with knowledge but thereafter no seriousness in following exactly what they have learned. But it depends on the implementation of those, whatever the knowledge learned. If it is implemented, then it is useful. But if it's learned and not implemented, then it doesn't become effective. Most teachers are happy when selected to attend these teachers' professional development, because they feel that they are relieved from classwork. They will go and enjoy, especially in T4T. They have somewhere to release the stress. Teachers look forward onto that. I like, you taught us, I saw the programs, the activities that were done so that the learner can learn. But I don't think that the teachers are doing it. They are not. (Head Teacher-1)

“There should be follow-ups. There should be follow-ups by officers to see whether what they learned or what was learned in that workshop was implemented.” (Head Teacher-2)

You can divide the schools in terms of clusters. Those schools which are neighbors. It's not a big issue. Like we have this cluster schools here. You train one as a trainer and as a monitor so that they can go to the schools. You in charge, they go through, they give the feedback. Yeah, what is exactly happening. Then from there, after taking all that information, they suppose these schools which have been in the center, then they sit with the NGO, they analyze what the impact of everything. (Head Teacher-1)

In plaats van, zou een van de drie scholen die we bezoeken, best één een terugkomgesprek kunnen zijn met een school die vorig jaar heeft meegedaan. Bij een school die vorig jaar een schoolbezoek heeft gehad. Nou maar dat is dan wel in een andere regio. Dat is een organisatorische kwestie. [Instead, one of the three schools we visit could best be a return conversation with a school that participated last year. Well, that is then in another region. That is an organisational matter.] (Focus Group IVs)

Theme 2: Empowerment, Equality and Mutual Learning

The following quotations illustrate participant perspectives on empowerment, equality, and mutual learning. Contradictions and nuances are retained to reflect the diversity of experiences. These insights align with the broader observation that sharing, as a core principle, was enacted variably across workshops and contexts.

Now I wish next time you come, and you tell us; now we want to learn from you! So, I teach, I use my own activity, my own methodologies. And you, you observe. Then after that, we sit down, we share, where to change, where I've done perfect. So that you also, you learn what we are doing here in Kenya. But now we want to feel that we are not learning from them. But we are learning from each other. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

“They're not equal. Some people can be biased. Somebody may be decided to be biased, not to expose, not to explore everything they have. But those who are not biased, they can be ready to share” (CSO-1).

“Er was geen gelijkheid. Er was weinig wederkerigheid van kennis. Ik heb mensen ontmoet. En ik heb mooie verhalen gehoord. Hoe doen jullie dit? Maar ik had daar meer diepgang in gehoopt.” [There was no equality. There was little reciprocity of knowledge. I met people, and I heard beautiful stories. How do you do this? But I had hoped for more depth.] (IV-8)

Ik denk ook dat als je de workshop zou gaan bekijken dat er heel verschillende dingen gebeuren. En bij iedereen het een heel ander karakter en vorm heeft. En dat ligt natuurlijk wel een beetje aan beide groepen. En de een heeft gewoon denk ik heel erg de leiding. Dit ga ik met ze doen. Dat ga ik met ze doen. En ik wilde vooral dat het ook kwam van joh wat hebben jullie voor ideeën? Wat willen jullie graag leren? Het vooral bij hen ook neerleggen. [I also think that if you look at the workshop, you see very different things happening. And for everyone it has a very different character and form. And of course, that depends a little on both groups. And I think, one just takes the lead. I’m going to do this. I’m going to do that with them. And I mostly wanted it to come from them: what ideas do you have? What do you want to learn? To leave it with them.] (IV-3)

“There are so many differences, and I don't know. When shall we be equal? To equalize after all discussions, we have to sharing ideas from Kenya, sharing from Netherlands” (Head Teacher-1).

The T4T, when they come here, they share a lot with the Kenyan teachers. There is an exchange program between the Dutch and the Kenyan teachers. So, they share a lot when they come. We get experiences from Dutch. They also get our experiences from Kenyan. So, it is a sharing, we're sharing activities, sharing workshops, where it's a win-win situation. (CSO-2)

“It is to give; we call it exchange program” (Education Officer-1).

“The teachers. Because one or two will come from a school or a class with the same enrolment. He will give out his views on how he approaches this class. So, they'll share” (Board Member-2).

Theme 3: Relationships and Collaboration

The following quotations illustrate how participants perceived the role of relationships and collaboration, emphasising the relational foundation as a requirement to meaningful exchange and the value of social interaction with peers.

“De connectie begon stroef met Keniaanse deelnemers, het waren allemaal mannen ook. Het duurde lang de tweede dag ging beter.” [“The connection with the Kenyan participants started off awkwardly, and they were also all men. It took time, but the second day was better.”] (IV-5)

Je doet meer informatie op door de contacten met nieuwe mensen uit andere besturen en andere delen van Nederland. Verschillende onderwijsvisies bij elkaar die een breed gevulde workshop leiden. Met Keniaanse contacten duurt het langer door de taalbarrière. Je hebt een band nodig om ze te laten vertellen over hun werk, vragen stellen. Met Keniaanse collega's kun je pas de diepte in gaan als er een band is, wij willen heel snel, maar het levert meer op als je hier tijd in investeert. [You gain more information through contacts with new people from other school boards and other parts of the Netherlands. Different educational visions coming together to lead a rich workshop. With Kenyan contacts it takes longer, due to the language barrier. You need a bond to get them to talk about their work, to ask questions. With Kenyan colleagues you can only go in-depth once there is a bond. We want to go very fast, but it yields more if you invest time in it.] (Focus Group IVs)

Ik had eigenlijk ook het gevoel dat we ook nog al die andere dingen erbij moesten doen. En dat we in een soort van tijdnood kwamen en daardoor misschien niet de goede keuzes gemaakt hebben... Terwijl het uiteindelijk ten koste is gegaan van de echte relatie opbouwen... Ik merkte bij mezelf dat ik dat nu achteraf dacht, ja weet je, dat heb ik wel echt gemist. Dat ik eigenlijk te weinig wist over de deelnemers. Dat is mijn eigen ding, maar daarom zei ik het belang van relatie is sowieso het belangrijkste in elke vorm van onderwijs. Of in elke vorm van contact. [I actually felt that we also had to do all those other things as well. And that we ended up pressed for time and perhaps did not make the right choices... But in the end, it came at the expense of building real relationships... I noticed myself thinking afterwards, yes, you know, that is

something I really missed. That I realised afterwards I knew too little about the participants.

That is my own issue, but that is why I said that the importance of relationships is, in any case, the most essential in every form of education. Or in every form of contact.] (IV-2)

The connection that we have is that from the project, we meet strangers and become friends.

Like now I have met my colleagues who I've never met them. I've met them here. So, we have become friends. Even next time when we have a project, I'll be reminding anyone of them, where are you? Come. So, people, they learn from each other because of the connection that we have. And also, we learn from a different school. What is happening in the different school? Okay. We learn from there. From ourselves. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

We were friendly there. We talked, we made a lot of chats. But when it came to, can you help me with your number? She said, we are not allowed. There's a cut off, you see. So, you find that there's a disconnect somewhere. So, you find that at the end of the day, we are not completely connected because there's a limit. There's a limit somewhere that we cannot get more involved. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

After we had done with our project, we came together here. We had a very nice celebration here. And you saw us giving you gifts and mostly we based on what we normally do here. So how I wish that next time with you, you are coming, you bring some of your things there which are new to us here. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

Theme 4: Expectations and Preparedness

The following quotations illustrate how participants perceived expectations and preparedness, highlighting IVs expectations before arriving, the readiness of both international and Kenyan participants, and local community expectations of the project.

“Misschien moeten wij onze verwachtingen ook een beetje lager zetten. En hopen op een paar zaadjes planten.” [“Perhaps we should lower our expectations a little. And hope to plant a few seeds.”] (Focus Group IVs)

“Ja, misschien is het ook de taal. Maar het is ook wel dat het inderdaad minder... Wij zijn sneller in het denken of in het doen. Misschien komt dat ook door het warme weer. Dat alles wat langzamer gaat.”

[“Yes, maybe it is also the language. But also, that indeed things are slower... We are quicker in thinking or in doing. Perhaps it is also because of the warm weather. That everything goes a bit more slowly.”]

(Focus Group IVs)

“Als je dat van tevoren even iets beter weet. De verwerkingssnelheid. Ze zeggen iedere keer. Plan niet te veel. Nee maar. Plan niet te veel. Plan echt heel, heel, heel weinig. Want het is echt niet normaal wat je eigenlijk maar kan doen in zo’n dag. En je snapt niet waarom ze dat zeggen.” [“If

you know that a little better beforehand. The processing speed. They keep saying: Don’t plan too much. No, really. Don’t plan too much. Plan really, really, very little. Because it is truly not normal how little you can actually get done in one day. And you don’t understand why they say that.”]

(Focus Group IVs)

They expect more from T4T. You see, sometimes the teachers and the community compare the same jobs. Now, if we just come and maybe they do not give more resources to the school, they feel they are not that good. So, what we are saying that these NGOs, what do they expect? The schools, they expect that they will bring facilities. Yes. We thought that we could carry more facilities to the school so that we can use them. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

In terms of involvement, I was, I don't know whether it is an appointment or selected by the administration or by the head teacher to attend the workshop. Then the new skills and knowledge that I got from the T4T facilitators. I carried that to my school where also I educated my colleagues. Though with maybe some things that we're not expecting or things that we're expecting and were not there. But they were positively received the information, the knowledge.

(Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

We don't know even exactly what those teachers are going to do. But later on, when they come back, they bring the information to us. We sit together. What have you done? What have what? They tell us.

(Head Teacher-1)

Theme 5: Participatory Processes

The following quotations illustrate participants' perspectives on participatory processes, focusing on stakeholder and teacher involvement in project design, planning, implementation, and evaluation, as well as responses on bottom-up participation and downward accountability.

5.1 Co-design of workshops:

Contradictory responses emerged regarding the co-design of workshops among stakeholders and participants.

We're always using our Kenyan workshop leaders who are within the same zones... They have to know what the theme of the workshop is. And this theme, it has to be derived from the teachers. So, from their past learning experiences... So, the workshop leaders, they are becoming like our ambassadors and information given within their... (Board member-1)

"It consults the teachers on what they need, the training needs, but when it comes to budgeting and the other areas, no, teachers are not involved. But the training needs, they are consulted." (CSO-1)

Kenyan teachers, head teachers, and other stakeholders contested the participatory approach to co-designing workshops and suggested ways they might participate.

The NGOs should listen to the people. What are the major problems and how possibly they can solve so that the NGO now can chip in so that they see how possibly they can solve their own problems. But at times when someone comes from the top and they come with it; he has the objectives. He has a plan. He has everything. What I've seen from the time when these NGOs are shipped in the teacher development. I have never seen what you call the bottom up. (Head Teacher-1)

I can easily say that it hasn't been so much. For us, like for the teachers, you will just hear of, we are attending workshop. So, the planning is done at a certain level, maybe. Like for us, we depend on the director. The one in charge of the program. So, when he sends letters to the teachers that we are having maybe a workshop, that's the end. (Education Officer-1)

“We were not involved. We should be called for seminars for the planning before the actual workshop.

Or conduct research or a survey on the gaps.” (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

“CSOs and master trainers (the workshop leaders) can be given sessions. They can be sensitized, to participate to plan the project week.” (CSO-2)

5.2 Active involvement Kenyan teachers:

These quotes illustrate how Kenyan teachers described their level of active involvement, and how this is perceived by other stakeholders and head teachers.

“When it comes to planning all the activities, I think we were only involved when we were making the activities of the day. Yeah. not involved upfront.” (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

“When you come and then we put it there, start with the Kenyan knowledge. When you learn from us and then we learn from you, then we can sit and agree which one is more effective.” (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

“Afterwards. Do these teachers hear afterwards something? They don’t. Until next year when the program will again be organized.” (Head Teacher-2)

“I think the methods that are used in workshops should be methods that suit the participants.”
(Education Officer-1)

To me, what I find is that though it is coming from the top because we are not involved in the planning. We are not involved in the budgeting. But when we come now to the material day on how we can solve our problems, on how we can improve the teaching in the schools, it is where now there is a little bit of bottom up. Why? Because we share the challenges. We share the strengths, the weaknesses and the opportunities we have. (Head Teacher-1)

Theme 6: Alignment with Local Needs and Challenges

The following quotations illustrate participants' perspectives on tensions between the ideals of learner-centred pedagogy and the practical classroom realities and internal motivation among the school community and peer-sharing.

IVs reflected on their intentions and Kenyan classroom realities.

Ik denk persoonlijk dat ze heel goed wel begrijpen de beste intenties. En dat ze ook de potentie zien van wat we ze aan willen bieden. Maar dat er ook wel gedacht wordt. Ja, ik snap dat jullie denken dat het zo beter is. Maar jullie zijn Nederlanders. En in Kenia werkt het gewoon anders. Ik denk dat, dat deels ook wel klopt. [I personally think they do understand our best intentions, and that they also see the potential in what we try to offer. But they also think yes, I understand that you believe this is better, but you are Dutch, and in Kenya things just work differently. And I think that is partly true.] (Focus Group IVs)

Local teachers emphasised how broader socio-economic barriers affect participation.

Let me say everything was useful, but the gaps, like for example, in Kwale, poverty level is very high. So sometimes learners come without breakfast, they have taken nothing. So sometimes to make them be active in class is a problem. Also, parental involvement. You could come with ideas. How can we involve our parents in learning the material development? We need some more. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

Head teachers questioned the relevance of training materials prepared externally without considering classroom constraints.

Some extent like 50% they are relevant to the local needs but another 50% they are not, because they are prepared elsewhere and brought here. Now our CBC is a major default, because it's teaching a learner to be competent. You are supposed to issue enough materials, enough resources for learning to take place but they have not come to the grassroots to know

which materials we have. So, to some extent it's irrelevant. T4T when it comes, it comes with something concrete. (Head Teacher-2)

The teacher selection model was critiqued as limiting impact beyond those who attended.

If I can give a good example of a program like T4T, it's mostly felt by those teachers who attend the workshop. Like if I send two teachers from primary and two teachers from junior school, they are the ones who get the knowledge. Mostly they don't come to teach the others, unless it is organized by an individual school. So, it benefits the teachers who attend more than the other community. (Head Teacher-2)

Some participants noted that colleagues who did not attend dismissed new methods as impractical.

Some of the teachers were saying that that's just wasting time. We're going to get those minutes to put on the energizers, when you have only 35 minutes to deliver your lesson. So, some are thinking that they are not useful, and we are not supposed to use them. (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

Theme 7: Programme Scope and Scalability

Participants highlighted both the potential and the constraints of T4T's model, particularly in terms of duration, cascading effects, and scalability.

7.1 Time limitations

Participants highlighted that the short workshop length and timing limited impact.

T4T is the best to me. But the only thing is very time limited. If they could be coming to Kenya at least to spend a week. So, the only thing is that they come on a wrong time. They can make changes. Come during holidays when children are at home. They come just to us a week early. So, if we are opening our school on the fifth. They come on first within that one four days they will interact with the teachers. Then when we open, they visit the schools. (Head Teacher-1)

“Two days cannot bring a major change in a teacher. Two days will only awaken the senses, but thereafter they will forget and easily go back to their ways.” (Head Teacher-2)

7.2 Scale of engagement

Teachers pointed to challenges of limited numbers per school and difficulties in peer-sharing.

“That was our challenge... Kenya teacher versus Kenya teacher. I mean after the seminar. So, when we went back to school, some of these teachers were not ready to come and listen to what we were taught.”

(Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

“When we have a project, at least instead of having two teachers, we can add to have like six of them so that we can empower all teachers from the project centre.” (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

7.3 Cascading vs. one-off effects

Concerns were raised about teachers failing to apply new methods and the lack of frequency in training.

“When the teachers go back to school, they fail to implement the information they got from the project. So, you find at the end of the day, the materials (the new learnings) ... are misused.” (Focus Group Kenyan Teachers)

“Sometimes it becomes a problem when we don’t have frequency. If this has to work, then there should be frequent training so that the targeted number of teachers can be realised.” (Education Officer)

7.4 Scalability potential

“But when the group leaves, what happens in between, that matters a lot. That’s why we need the Kenyan team to be increased. Because they come only for one week. After one week, then we have six months ... Who is going to pick on the elements of this workshop to the other teachers?”
(Kenyan Board Member-1)