



The Youth
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Capacity Strengthening for Educators in WAEMU: Aligning pre-service and in-service teacher training?

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About the Youth Employment Evidence and Insights Hub

The Youth Employment and Evidence Insights Hub is a partnership convened by the Pan-African Collective for Evidence (PACE), which brings together key organizations from across Africa and beyond, with expertise and experience in how best to provide evidence and insights to decision-makers. The Youth Employment Evidence and Insights Hub supports the Mastercard Foundation to deliver its Young Africa Works Strategy.

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Summary

Teacher professional development systems across WAEMU countries face persistent fragmentation between pre-service and in-service training, which undermines teaching quality and contributes to widespread learning poverty. Pre-service programmes tend to offer theoretical preparation with limited classroom exposure, while in-service training is mostly short-term, donor-driven, and reactive to emerging challenges rather than aligned to long-term pedagogical goals. As a result, teachers often receive inconsistent messages, inadequate support, and little opportunity to build foundational skills into advanced practice.

Institutional silos, weak feedback loops, and insufficient collaboration between ministries, training colleges, inspectors, and school-level actors further limit the relevance, coherence, and impact of teacher development efforts across the region.

Findings across case studies show that the roles of inspectors and trainers remain underutilized despite their potential to anchor continuous professional learning. Inspectors often focus on administrative compliance instead of developmental support, with visits constrained by limited resources and irregular follow-up. Teacher trainers, in turn, frequently lack updated pedagogical knowledge and operate separately from pre-service institutions,

leading to mismatched training content. Evidence from countries such as Burkina Faso, Senegal, and Côte d'Ivoire underscores that sustained mentoring, peer collaboration, hybrid learning models, classroom-anchored practice, and shared professional frameworks can significantly enhance teaching quality when adequately supported. Examples such as OPERA, Lecture Pour Tous, PRADEF, and eFormation illustrate that progress emerges when training is contextualized, jointly designed, and linked to practical challenges faced in classrooms.

Overall, the conclusions point to the need for system-wide coherence and strategic alignment across all phases of teacher preparation and support. Strengthening collaboration between pre-service and in-service institutions, establishing shared competency frameworks, improving communication channels, and institutionalizing feedback loops are essential for building a holistic teacher development ecosystem. Success depends on long-term investments, strong leadership, and structures that integrate curriculum, training, mentoring, and school-level improvement efforts. By moving beyond isolated workshops toward coordinated, practice-based, and context-responsive systems, WAEMU countries can better equip teachers, enhance classroom practices, and ultimately improve learning outcomes for children across the region.

1 | Introduction

Despite steady improvements in school enrolment and teacher recruitment across West Africa, education systems in the West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU) region face a critical challenge: widespread learning poverty. Defined as the inability of a 10-year-old to read and understand a simple text, learning poverty affects 56% of children in Benin, 69% in Senegal, 83% in Côte d'Ivoire, and 82% in Togo ([CONFEMEN, 2020](#)). These statistics reflect systemic issues in the quality, coherence, and relevance of teacher training and support ([Pryor et al., 2012](#); [Hardman et al., 2011](#); [Sayed & Bulgrin, 2020](#)).

This rapid evidence review explores how to better align pre-service and in-service teacher training systems to improve education outcomes in WAEMU. Focusing on Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Togo, the review analyses the current structure of teacher training, the roles of key actors such as school inspectors and trainers, and the coordination mechanisms across institutions. It also identifies promising approaches that can inform more effective teacher development.

Pre-service training typically prepares new teachers through institutional programs offered by universities and teacher training colleges. In contrast, in-service training is delivered post-recruitment to update or refine teaching skills. However, these two phases often

lack synergy, resulting in fragmented and inconsistent professional development ([Hardman et al., 2011](#); [Lowe & Prout, 2019](#); [Lange, 2014](#)).

Moreover, the potential of inspectors and trainers to support teachers' continuous learning remains largely unrealized due to limited resources, overlapping responsibilities, and poor institutional linkages ([Tshiunza et al., 2018](#); [Belbouah & Bouguerba, 2022](#); [Bagaya et al., 2020](#)). Teachers in remote or under-resourced schools are particularly disadvantaged, with minimal access to regular, quality professional development.

The review identifies four key challenges:

- Misalignment between initial and ongoing teacher training
- Weak institutional collaboration and communication
- Underutilization of school inspectors and trainers
- Poor access and inequitable delivery of in-service training

Despite these issues, a number of promising reforms have emerged. These include hybrid learning platforms, teacher mentorship programs, learning communities, and digital portfolios. Case studies from countries such as Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, and Senegal provide examples of how structured, sustained, and context-specific approaches can enhance the quality and impact of teacher development.

This summary synthesises the evidence to provide policymakers, practitioners, and researchers with actionable insights for strengthening teacher capacity. By promoting coherence, collaboration, and innovation across training systems, WAEMU countries can improve teaching quality and ensure that education reforms translate into meaningful learning outcomes.

2 | Overview of Insights

The teacher training systems across Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Togo vary in structure but share several common features and challenges. The table below provides a comparative snapshot of pre-service and in-service training institutions, delivery approaches, and key constraints.

Across all four systems, the fragmentation between pre-service and in-service training limits coherence and continuity. In-service training is often reactive, driven by local needs or donor agendas rather than long-term policy frameworks ([Lange, 2014](#); [Lowe & Prout, 2019](#); [Sayed & Bulgrin, 2020](#)). Meanwhile, pre-service curricula rarely incorporate the practical challenges teachers face once deployed.

Efforts to harmonize these two phases remain weak, often hindered by institutional silos and insufficient data-sharing.

There is a lack of systematic feedback loops between teacher performance in the classroom and the design of training modules ([Hardman et al., 2015](#); [Pryor et al., 2012](#)). Moreover, national strategies for teacher development tend to be underfunded, inconsistently implemented, or overly centralized.

Nonetheless, innovations are emerging. Côte d'Ivoire's DHFC hybrid model, Senegal's peer-led communities, and Togo's blended Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) programs demonstrate the value of combining flexibility, contextual relevance, and peer support (Chemonics International, 2021; AUF, 2023; INFPP, 2024). These examples underscore the importance of system-wide reforms that centre teacher experience, institutional collaboration, and sustained support. These insights are visualized in the table below:

Table 1: Teacher's Training System insights and summaries

Country	Pre-Service Training	In-Service TRAINING	Key Challenges
Benin	ENI (preschool/primary), ENS (secondary), INFRE and EFPEEN (for inspectors/advisors)	INFRE-led, mostly distance learning with physical assignments returned by post; themes driven by field demands	Limited linkage between initial and continuing training; outdated methods, and poor rural accessibility
Côte d'Ivoire	CAFOP (primary), ENS , INJS , INSAAC (secondary/arts/sports)	Hybrid model (DHFC) under DPFC, combining didactic, disciplinary, and collaborative components	Rapid increase in non-certified teachers; weak legal frameworks; over-reliance on donor-supported delivery
Senegal	CRFPE (early years/primary), FASTEF and others for secondary and inspector training	Decentralized and peer-led via pedagogical cells; focus on ICT, bilingualism, formative assessment	Absence of specialized trainers; variable training quality; limited feedback mechanisms
Togo	ENFPE (primary), ENS and INSE (secondary/inspectors)	INFPP's hybrid TVET-oriented model; mix of online and in-person sessions	High reliance on untrained volunteer teachers; minimal professional development in rural areas

3 | Findings

3.1 Inspectors and Trainers: Underused Anchors in Professional Development

School inspectors and teacher trainers are essential to maintaining teaching standards and supporting continuous learning. Yet, in WAEMU countries, their roles are hindered by structural, operational, and institutional constraints ([Matete, 2021](#); [Mutabaruka et al., 2018](#); [Bagaya et al., 2020](#); [Nzarirwehi & Atuhumuze, 2019](#); [Hardman et al., 2015](#); [Said et al., 2024](#)).

3.1.1 Role and Impact of School Inspectors

Inspectors are mandated to assess teaching practices, ensure curriculum adherence, and provide pedagogical support. However, their work is often perceived as administrative rather than

developmental. They also face acute logistical challenges, including lack of transportation and travel budgets, especially in remote areas ([Matete, 2021](#), [Mutabaruka et al., 2018](#), [Tshiunza et al., 2018](#)). When they do take place, inspection visits tend to be infrequent, short, and compliance-driven, leaving little room for meaningful feedback or mentoring ([Matete, 2021](#); [Bagaya et al., 2020](#); [Muhammad, 2024](#)). In the Table 2 below are the results from a few case studies:

3.1.2 Role and Effectiveness of Teacher Trainers

Teacher trainers, particularly in-service facilitators, are often appointed based on tenure rather than pedagogical expertise. This generates several challenges including outdated training content that fails to reflect classroom realities; trainers having limited access to ongoing professional development themselves; and limited

communication and coordination between pre-service and in-service trainers ([Pryor et al., 2012](#)).

Case Study: Kyambogo University, Uganda

An evaluation of Kyambogo University's in-service teacher training programme found that 60% of participants reported significant improvements in instructional practices. Teachers who completed the programme were 3.8 times more likely to improve their teaching, and those who did saw 4.2 times higher odds of student academic success. The study highlights that structured, well-supported professional development backed by resources and mentorship can lead to measurable gains in teaching quality and learning outcomes. It underscores the importance of integrating teacher training with broader school improvement efforts.

Table 2: Role and impact of school inspections.

Case Study Location	Main Findings	Implications for Inspection Practice
Mbeya District, Tanzania (Matete, , 2021)	Inspections emphasized documentation over teaching, with 80% reporting no lesson observation and 88% no pedagogical support.	Strengthen inspections through regular, subject-specific classroom observations and adequate resourcing.
Mvomero District, Tanzania (Chilangilo, 2022)	91.4% agreed that inspections improved performance through methodological and lesson-planning support, classroom observation and follow-up were often absent.	Inspections are valued but require consistent, pedagogically focused practice and strong follow-up to sustain improvement.
Ugandan Primary Schools (Mutabaruka et al., 2018)	Inspections improved supervision, attendance, discipline, and teacher motivation, but were constrained by resource gaps and bureaucracy.	.Inspection effectiveness requires adequate funding, decentralization, and alignment with school-level supervision.
Mbeya City, Tanzania (Matete, 2009)	Teachers valued pedagogical feedback but cited weak follow-up, limited classroom observation, and poor inspector working conditions.	Ensure inspection recommendations are implemented through institutional commitment, robust follow-up, and improved inspector working conditions.
Kasese District, Uganda (Mathembele et al., 2025)	Inspection activities, particularly post inspection follow-up, were positively associated with student performance ($r = 0.358$), explaining 15% of achievement variance.	Improve learning outcomes through frequent, well-planned inspections, quality feedback, and effective post-inspection support.
Uganda – I&I Programme (Lopes et al., 2023)	Inspections embedded in the Inspect & Improve system (SIPs, mentorship, follow-up) strengthened leadership and teaching, but effectiveness varied by context	Inspection effectiveness increases when embedded in holistic support models that include mentoring, improvement planning, follow-up, and attention to school context.
Systematic Review (Klerks, 2013)	Evidence linking inspections to improved student outcomes is limited and context-dependent, with strongest effects where feedback is constructive and schools can act on it.	Integrate inspections into broader capacity-building and accountability systems, using formative, collaborative, and context-responsive approaches.

3.1.3 Synergies and Constraints between Inspectors and Trainers

The review highlights that a major challenge in teacher development across African education systems is the persistent disconnect between pre-service and in-service training. Pre-service programmes tend to prioritize theoretical knowledge, often at the expense of practical classroom exposure due to limited resources and large enrolment numbers. In contrast, in-service training delivered mainly through short workshops or externally funded initiatives is frequently reactive, fragmented, and rarely aligned with the foundational skills provided during initial training. This lack of continuity weakens the formation of a coherent professional identity and reduces the overall effectiveness of teacher development efforts. In many cases, in-service training is used to compensate for the inadequacies of pre-service preparation, rather than build upon it, leading to duplication or mismatched content.

The divide extends to the roles of inspectors and trainers. Inspectors are typically experienced teachers but are not always trained to offer pedagogical support, while trainers may lack familiarity with the evolving curricula and approaches used in pre-service institutions. This results in inconsistent guidance for teachers and a fractured professional development experience s ([Belbouah & Bouguerba, 2022](#); [Tshiunza et al., 2018](#)).

However, there have been some promising initiatives. Inspector-led mentoring schemes and curriculum design involvement in Uganda and Senegal, for instance, demonstrate how these roles can be better integrated. Unfortunately, though, such efforts remain isolated and heavily dependent on external resources.

Policy Spotlight: African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25)

The African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 16–25) promotes the harmonization of teacher education standards and the professionalization of support roles such as inspectors and trainers. By encouraging alignment across training systems and reinforcing the importance of collaboration between evaluation and capacity-building actors, the strategy offers a continent-wide framework for improving coherence in teacher development. While implementation remains uneven, CESA 16–25 sets a shared vision for more integrated and effective teacher support structures across African education systems.

Overall, the absence of coordination between accountability (inspectors) and capacity-building (trainers) limits systemic improvements. Establishing a unified framework with shared objectives, collaborative planning, and mutual reinforcement between training phases and professional support actors is essential to deliver meaningful and sustained improvements in teaching and learning.

3.2 Structures That Support Coherence between Pre-Service and In-Service Teacher Training Institutions

The review highlights the persistent fragmentation between pre-service and in-service teacher training systems in WAEMU countries, a pattern also observed more broadly across Sub-Saharan Africa. While pre-service education often focuses heavily on theory with limited classroom exposure, in-service training tends to be short-term, donor-driven, and reactive, frequently used to address gaps left by initial preparation rather than building upon it. The lack of coordination between these two stages results in a disjointed professional development journey for teachers and weakens overall teaching quality.

The report identifies the following key strategies for strengthening coherence:

Shared Frameworks and Curriculum Alignment

Establishing unified competency frameworks helps align goals, standards, and pedagogical approaches across both training stages. An example of this is the [Palestinian Teacher Professional Development Index \(PTPDI\)](#) under the [Teacher Education Improvement Project \(TEIP\)](#) initiative, which served as a shared reference for pre-service and in-service programmes, ensuring consistent focus on core competencies such as inclusive

teaching and pedagogical content knowledge.

Integrated Instructional Design and Collaborative Structures

Redesigned programmes that embed consistent instructional models across training phases can ensure continuity. In this regard, TEIP promoted joint development of modules by universities, schools, and ministries, ensuring that training materials addressed actual classroom needs. Extensions of the practicum component and peer-led initiatives, such as Learning Circles, supported the translation of theory into practice.

Institutional Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement

Formal partnerships, such as advisory boards or co-designed professional development (PD) initiatives promote alignment and regular dialogue between institutions. The [Public Education Leadership Project \(PELP\)](#) framework emphasises that coherence is not just about aligning content but about reinforcing strategy, culture, resources, and stakeholder coordination at all levels.

Feedback Loops for Continuous Improvement

Mechanisms like portfolios, classroom observations, and feedback from in-service teachers help refine pre-service curricula and inform future PD design.

TEIP's use of trainer-UQT (Underqualified Teacher) collaborations

and structured feedback tools created adaptive, responsive training systems.

Strategic Systems and Structures

PELP outlines that coherence depends on strengthening:

- The instructional core (ensuring what's taught in pre-service is reinforced in PD)
- Theory of change alignment (linking teacher preparation to student learning goals)
- Resource flows (such as shared tools and hybrid faculty roles)
- Cultural and collaboration norms (e.g., joint leadership teams)
- Accountability systems (common assessments and longitudinal tracking)

Balancing Standardization with Flexibility

While alignment with national policy is critical, training systems should allow for “negotiated coherence” adapting PD to local classroom realities while maintaining core instructional principles.

3.3. Strengthening structures and feedback loops: Insights from TEIP and PELP

To better understand how coherence can be operationalised, the report draws lessons from two international models: TEIP and PELP. These

frameworks underscore that coherence is not just a technical fix; it is a strategic, system-wide undertaking. For WAEMU countries, the key takeaways include:

- Adopt a shared professional framework to guide expectations across the training continuum.
- Invest in mentorship systems and create joint development platforms for universities, schools, and ministries.
- Institutionalize feedback loops to ensure PD remains relevant and responsive.
- Ensure policy support and strategic leadership to anchor coherence as a long-term reform objective.

Together, these practices can help transform fragmented teacher education systems into cohesive, learner-centred pathways that support continuous professional growth.

3.4 Strengthening collaboration between teacher training colleges and in-service training institutions

Collaboration between teacher training colleges (pre-service) and in-service institutions is essential for reinforcing pedagogical advancements and improving teacher quality in WAEMU countries. Despite limited region-specific documentation, multiple initiatives across Sub-Saharan Africa illustrate how coordinated efforts between these institutions can address

persistent teaching quality challenges and improve educational outcomes.

3.4.1 Rationale for Strengthening Collaboration

- Teacher quality remains a concern across Sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in French-speaking countries. Teaching often fails to guarantee foundational skills, literacy, or employability for students.
- Learning outcomes remain low: PASEC data shows only less than half of Grade 5 students meet reading standards, and just over half meet basic expectations in mathematics.
- Disconnect between reform and implementation: Though education reforms have focused on inputs like textbooks and curriculum changes, they often neglect classroom practices and are implemented without adequate teacher training or local adaptation.
- Fragmented professional development systems hinder teacher effectiveness and continuity between training stages.

However, there are several common barriers to effective collaboration, which include resource disparities between pre-service and in-service institutions; lack of formal coordination frameworks and shared planning, misaligned institutional priorities; and logistical and administrative barriers.

Efforts to strengthen collaboration between teacher training colleges and in-service institutions in WAEMU must move beyond abstract commitments to concrete, structured mechanisms. The following strategies illustrate how countries in the region have already begun to operationalize collaborative frameworks that sustain pedagogical improvements and align teacher development with classroom realities.

Develop Clear Frameworks for Roles and Responsibilities

Establishing explicit frameworks that define the mandates and responsibilities of pre-service and in-service institutions helps clarify expectations and foster accountability. Togo's Competency-Based Framework is a clear example. It was co-developed by teacher training colleges and in-service bodies to monitor teacher performance in early learning. This shared framework not only formalises collaboration but also ensures consistent criteria are used across the teacher development continuum.

Ensure Regular Communication and Joint Planning

Sustained collaboration relies on routine dialogue, co-planning, and shared ownership of teacher development outcomes.

- In Senegal, the *Lecture Pour Tous* programme institutionalized joint planning by forming teacher communities of practice. These included trainers and local

stakeholders who co-designed lesson plans and shared pedagogical feedback. The result was improved instructional quality, particularly in early grade reading.

- Burkina Faso's OPERA Project exemplifies joint planning grounded in everyday teaching realities. By focusing on observed classroom practices, pre-service and in-service actors collaborated to train teachers to reflect critically and adapt instruction, creating a shared, practice-based vision of teacher quality ([d'Aiglepierre & Bauer, 2017](#)).

Invest in Joint Capacity-Building Initiatives

To support collaboration, both institutions must be equipped with the skills, structures, and tools to deliver context-relevant, high-quality training.

- The PRADEF initiative in Mali introduced a mentorship model where experienced teachers trained through in-service centres coached graduates from the École Normale Supérieure (ENS). This created a pipeline that linked pre-service preparation with ongoing, in-school professional development.
- Similarly, Mali's CAPE (Centre d'Animation Pédagogique) facilitated collaborative action research projects that brought together teacher trainers and school-based educators to explore and strengthen multilingual education practices. This approach promoted mutual learning and

sustained pedagogical experimentation across training stages.

In Côte d'Ivoire, the eFormation digital platform was jointly designed by training colleges and in-service institutions to provide blended learning opportunities for both students and practising teachers. This initiative enabled capacity-building through flexible, scalable, and shared access to digital training resources

4 | Insights from case studies

The case studies reviewed (summarized in a table below) across the WAEMU region reinforce a central message of this rapid evidence review: pedagogical transformation and improved learning outcomes require more than the existence of pre-service and in-service training systems. They demand that these systems work in synergy—coherently designed, mutually reinforcing, and consistently aligned with classroom realities.

A clear pattern emerges across countries like Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Senegal, and Burkina Faso. When training systems operate in isolation whether because of institutional silos, lack of communication, or divergent pedagogical philosophies the impact on teaching practices is minimal. Teachers

may attend workshops or complete initial training, but without sustained support or consistent messaging, they often struggle to translate these inputs into improved student learning.

The case studies illustrate that it is not only the presence of training that matters, but how that training is sequenced, supported, and embedded in a teacher's professional journey. One-off workshops often disconnected from the curriculum or school context fail to bring about lasting change. In contrast, programs that are long-term, grounded in real practice, and include structured mentoring and peer collaboration show greater potential to shift teaching behaviours and improve outcomes.

Several overarching lessons stand out:

Continuity and Progression Are Essential

Teacher development must be treated as a continuum. Pre-service preparation should provide foundational competencies that are revisited and deepened during in-service phases. In Burkina Faso's OPERA project, for example, grounding professional development in classroom-based research allowed teachers to reflect on and refine their practice in context moving beyond rote adoption of methods

Sustained and Contextualized Support Is More Effective Than Episodic Training

The case of Benin demonstrates that short workshops do not suffice. Teachers need regular opportunities to

engage with content that is relevant to their day-to-day challenges. Where digital tools were used, such as in Côte d'Ivoire's eFormation initiative, they showed promise when embedded within a broader ecosystem of mentoring and peer exchange.

Systemic Alignment Enhances Impact

Senegal's experience with the PREMST project underscores the risk of focusing solely on method replication without pedagogical understanding. When systems are aligned, curricula, training institutions, mentoring structures, and assessment frameworks teachers are more likely to internalize new approaches and adapt them to their classrooms. Côte d'Ivoire's fragmentation between institutions highlights the opposite: that institutional incoherence weakens reform uptake.

Table 3: Country-specific case studies and their insights

Country	Key Insight	Implication
Burkina Faso	OPERA project showed the value of classroom-anchored training and peer reflection	Ground training in local practice and enable structured feedback loops
Benin	Short, one-off workshops were ineffective; digital CPD tools showed moderate success	Sustained, practice-based CPD is more impactful than episodic models
Senegal	PREMST showed that surface-level method training did not improve learning outcomes	Deep pedagogical understanding is critical to translate training into student success
Côte d'Ivoire	Multiple institutions exist but lack integration	Ministry coordination is needed to align pre- and in-service systems across institutions

5 | Conclusion

These insights lead to a clear conclusion: improving teaching quality is not just about introducing new content or training programs. It is about building a coherent system where all components from training colleges and ministries to inspectors and learning communities work together to support teacher growth. For practitioners and policymakers, the implication is that investment should shift from isolated interventions to integrated systems of professional development. Priority should be given to mechanisms that bridge training phases, build in reflective practice, and ensure that teachers are supported throughout their careers. Only then can education reforms in WAEMU countries translate into meaningful and measurable improvements in learning.

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