



# Temporal Horizons in Education

Nurturing Timeless Teaching-Related Skills  
and Fostering Teacher Leadership  
in Low-Resources Contexts

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## Keywords

Teachers training, education in emergencies, education in low-resources context, critical pedagogy

## Abstract

This paper extracts the findings of the impact study on the Learning Facilitator programme's study, a 6-month blended learning professional programme accredited by the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany) and delivered by Jesuit Worldwide Learning to teachers in context of marginalisation. Focused on elucidating how the Learning Facilitator programme nurtures graduates' soft skills in teaching and fosters their servant-leadership, this paper underscores how the programme redefines the temporal horizons for its participants, enabling them to transcend established frames of reference and cultivate inclusive and conducive learning environments both within and beyond the confines of traditional classrooms. This contribution seeks to bring the seldom heard voices at the centre of the discussion on "time for education", echoing graduates' critical exploration in reevaluating conventional frames of reference in pedagogical contexts.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Time for Education: Relativity and Critical Pedagogy in the Learning Facilitator programme

In a global context where 250 million children are deprived of access to education (UNESCO, 2023), the urgent discourse on "Time for Education" prompts a profound reflection on the temporal dimensions inherent in the educational landscape. This contemplation, particularly pertinent within the framework of the Learning Facilitator programme<sup>1</sup>, underscores the imperative of equipping educators with the necessary skills to address the shortage of trained teachers in contexts of emergencies and enable teachers to emerge as leaders within their communities. In grappling with the contemporary significance of 'time for education,' adopting Albert Einstein's theory of relativity offers a physical lens for reevaluating conventional frames of reference in pedagogical contexts.

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<sup>1</sup> This article has been previously released with minor changes by the authors and Jesuit Worldwide Learning as §2.2.-3.1 of the report: "Student-Centred and Inclusive Approaches Nurturing Teacher Leadership: The Learning Facilitator programme, JWL Research Report #11 / October 2023, URL=[https://www.jwl.org/Articles/Research/Research%20Publications/lf-impact-2023/Template\\_LF\\_report\\_Final%20%28003%29.pdf](https://www.jwl.org/Articles/Research/Research%20Publications/lf-impact-2023/Template_LF_report_Final%20%28003%29.pdf)". Republished with permission. The Learning Facilitator programme, delivered since 2019 by Jesuit Worldwide Learning and accredited by the Catholic University of Eichstätt-Ingolstadt (Germany), is a 24-week course which trains teachers in context of marginalisation - be it through poverty, location, lack of opportunity, conflict or forced displacement - to build an inclusive and student-centred classroom in both formal and non-formal education settings. The Learning Facilitator programme utilises a blended learning format, delivered through the JWL Learning Management System and Global E-learning app, with weekly assignments following the experience-reflection-action model, fostering a global community of learners who engage in reflection and apply knowledge to a practicum, guided by online and onsite facilitators.

In the context of the Learning Facilitator programme, Eistein’s argument that time is relative based on a frame of references invites us to examine the notion of ‘time for education’ through the role of teachers in relation with their distinct environments. Rather than isolated purveyors of knowledge, teachers are integral components of a system that shapes traditionally hierarchical relationships with students (Freire, 1970). Freire's critical pedagogy theory urges a re-evaluation of these classroom dynamics, recognising the intricate interplay between internal classroom dynamics and external influences. In this interwoven web of interactions, the role of teachers assumes crucial significance in comprehending the reciprocal relationships among knowledge, students, and their surroundings.

The Learning Facilitator programme serves as a space wherein educators from marginalised settings are afforded the temporal latitude to scrutinise and transcend conventional educational paradigms, transitioning from a prescriptive “banking system of education” to becoming facilitators of learning (Freire, 1970). Drawing from the insights gleaned from the impact study of the Learning Facilitator programme, this paper allows to give centrality on the development of educators and their positionality within the ambit of low-resource settings. Focused on elucidating how the Learning Facilitator programme nurtures graduates' soft skills in teaching and fosters their servant-leadership, this paper underscores how the programme redefines the temporal horizons for its participants, enabling them to transcend established frames of reference and cultivate inclusive and conducive learning environments both within and beyond the confines of traditional classrooms.

## **1.2 Research contexts and design**

Anchored in the voices of the graduates of the Learning Facilitator, this paper relied on the Participatory-Action Research design (Hall, 1992) of the Learning Facilitator impact study (Honen-Delmar & Rega, 2023). This research analysed the voices of over 50 Learning Facilitator graduates from diverse locations, including Afghanistan, Kenya, Malawi, Guyana, Iraq, and India. These countries were carefully chosen to ensure that the research could be conducted effectively within the local conditions.

Row Labels	Female	Male	Total
<b>Afghanistan</b>	15	5	20
Bamyan	7	2	9
Herat	3		3
Kabul	2	1	3
Lal	1	2	3
Nili	1		1
Shekmeren	1		1
<b>Guyana</b>	2		2
St Ignatius	2		2
<b>India</b>	3	1	4
Delhi		1	1
Sneharam	3		3
<b>Iraq</b>	2		2
Domiz	1		1
Erbil	1		1
<b>Kenya</b>	1	19	20
Kakuma	1	19	20
<b>Malawi</b>	2	1	3
Dzaleka	2	1	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>51</b>

*Table: Participants by country, community learning centres and gender*

- Kakuma Refugee Camp, Kenya: Established in 1992, Kakuma is one of the oldest and second-largest refugee camps in Kenya, hosting over 200,000 refugees, mainly from South Sudan and Somalia (UNHCR, 2023a). JWL initiated its first online programme at Kakuma in 2010, and it has since become the largest JWL learning centre, serving over 1,500 students since 2020.

- Dzaleka Refugee Camp, Malawi: Situated 40 kilometres from Lilongwe, it was the second pilot site for the Diploma in Liberal Studies, the first programme offered by JWL. Initially created in 1994 for refugees from the

African Great Lakes region, Dzaleka now houses over 80,000 refugees from Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo (UNHCR, 2023b). Since 2020, approximately 1,250 young individuals have engaged in daily courses, connecting with peers both at the JWL learning centre and within the global community of learners.

- Iraq: JWL began focusing on Iraq in late 2016, responding to the Syrian war and the ISIS invasion. The organisation established a small learning centre in Domiz Camp, which has now expanded to seven centres across the Kurdish region of Iraq, serving diverse religious and cultural communities, including Syrians, Muslims, Yezidis, and Iraqi Christians. Since 2020, nearly 4,000 students have enrolled in JWL courses.

- Afghanistan: In the recent education policy development, 110 students, including 93 young women, enrolled in the Learning Facilitator programme in 2023. These students, located in remote villages in the Bamyan and Daikundi Province, study partly at home in learning groups, addressing the critical need for professional training in the community.

- India: JWL’s recent growth includes two new centres established in New Delhi and Anchuthengu (Kerala). The New Delhi centre, in collaboration with the Jesuit Refugee Service, predominantly serves Afghan and Myanmar refugee students. The Anchuthengu centre, in partnership with the Sneharam Centre for Social Action and Research, offers a variety of academic and professional courses, primarily to young adults from the fishing community and lower castes.

- Guyana: In the Southwest of Guyana, near the Brazilian town of Bonfin, JWL commenced programmes in 2020. They aim to provide university education to the villages, meeting the specific needs of secondary school graduates who become ‘untrained teachers’ before pursuing formal teacher training.

## 2. Teaching-related soft skills

In the realm of essential soft skills for educators, various attributes such as communication, initiative, technological proficiency, leadership, productivity, teamwork, resilience, reflexivity, empathy, self-efficacy, creativity, and effective communication have been frequently highlighted (Fernandes et al., 2021; Malik & Mohan, 2022). Acknowledged as indispensable for effective teaching, personality development, professionalism, and the promotion of inclusive education (Fernandes et al., 2021), these skills form the foundational framework for educational excellence. Within the context of graduates from the Learning Facilitator programme, a nuanced exploration of soft skills reveals a particular emphasis on time management, and skills prompting self-reflection on teachers' positionality and fostering a caring and inclusive learning environment. As we delve into the discourse surrounding teacher soft skills, these emergent themes underscore the distinctive contributions of the Learning Facilitator programme in shaping educators from the margins with a heightened awareness of their temporal responsibilities and a commitment to creating nurturing and inclusive educational spaces.

### 2.1 Organisational and time management in classrooms

The Learning Facilitator programme has been instrumental in fostering the development of soft skills essential to the creation of inclusive and student-centred classrooms. One significant area of growth is time management, organisational and classroom management skills, as emphasised by a graduate from Afghanistan:

“ Now my actions are a bit more disciplinary. I have my notebook with myself always, and I put the most important things in my timetable. This disciplined approach has allowed me to make time for my studies while also spending quality time with my family and friends.

The programme instils the value of identifying priorities and organising tasks effectively, as exemplified by another graduate in Kakuma:

“ The format of this course is meant to mentor teachers. So, it is all about organising books, it has help me to have skills on how I should organise my work especially before I enter to the class. I have to plan my lessons that are number one. Secondly, it has helped me on management skills especially how I should manage my classroom.

This newfound ability to systematically plan and confidently engage with students led to improved classroom management and a more impactful teaching approach, as highlighted by graduate in Afghanistan:

“ Before I was, I was not really good at controlling this in managing the classroom. But now I can easily manage the classroom, I can understand the students [...] I can show the planning.

This capacity to effectively plan lessons is further elaborated by this participant in Sneharam, India:

“ Before a class, I planned the systematic way how I teach, what is the content I taught with my students, what are the objectives of the class and I planned everything in this course.

Thus, these enhanced classroom and organisational skills ultimately contribute to a positive impact on their students’ learning journey.

## **2.2 Developing community collaboration and trust**

Besides building organisational skills in classroom settings, the Learning Facilitator programme serves as a catalyst for community collaboration and trust-building, fostering essential soft skills that empower graduates to effectively engage with their communities. Graduates highlight how the course taught them to cooperate and build strong relationships with community members gaining their trust and effectively imparting knowledge, as stated by this graduate in Afghanistan:

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“ I have learned by the epic learning facilitator course how I have to connect with [community members], or how I have to have more effective relationships.

Or, in the words of this graduate in Malawi: “I learnt so many things for example how to collaborate in the community and how to make people to be engage in several things like cooperation.” As a result, when speaking with community members, their words are held as credible and often accepted without hesitation. This new ability to build connections and trust enables them to collaborate with the community towards the achievement of common goals, including the improved education and fostering positive change. Graduates from various countries, such as Kenya, Malawi and Guyana, attest to learning valuable skills related to leadership, communication, and understanding of others. These skills have proven instrumental in improving their relationships with community members, enhancing their capacity to actively listen, value others' opinions, and be patient and caring in their interactions. For instance, this graduate in Kakuma states how the programme enables the development of strong interpersonal skills:

“ I have gotten some better ways of dealing with people like considering valuing everything, [...] being patient, to love, to be giving time to other people and even active listening, that's what I mean. [...] So, I could listen to my people and get what is there with them to come up with a conventional idea, that is going to agree with our ways, all of us. That way I can say the course has improved me, in the community [...].

For this graduate in Guyana, being part of a global community of learners who shared similar issues enabled her to not feel alone and to:

“ realise that we can do a little more to help, especially with communities, because it's a community-based learning, and as the saying goes, it takes a community to raise a child and the units we are focusing on [...] what can you do to let the community help the learner? What can school do? How can you motivate the teachers. So, in learning those skills



or knowledge kind of have me where I am, and I’m better able to deliver, and it's good.

As a result of these enhanced interpersonal skills, they are able to garner support and engagement from the community, inspiring them to be part of initiatives. This positive impact is evident, as community members express appreciation and acknowledgment of graduates' efforts in raising awareness and promoting community involvement. The same graduate in Guyana highlights that:

“ Up to yesterday I had a session with my committee members, and they were like, [...] we are here because of you, and we're embracing this whole literacy, and you give us that inspiration to be part of this.

This strengthened community collaboration and trust not only benefitted the community, but also the graduates themselves, as they recall how the Learning Facilitator programme instilled self-confidence, positively impacting their teaching approaches. This graduate highlights that their self-assurance allows them to gain the trust of learners:

“ With learning facilitator course, it helped me to have self-confidence, be sure of what I’m saying so that learners may trust me and may understand, you know when dealing with children, all they need is trust, if at the beginning they don’t trust you whatever you be teaching them, they will take them as if you don’t know how to teach, as if you are telling them lies.

This trust is vital in the learning process, as learners are more receptive and engaged when they believe in their teachers' abilities. Moreover, this trust leads graduates to feel empowered, as expressed by this graduate in Kenya:

“ This is through learning facilitator, I got it and when I go and apply, my learners really trust me, and they really honour me. This is learning facilitator really give me that power.

This is also highlighted in the story of this facilitator in India:

“ When I started to teach in this community, maybe most of the students didn't trust me to be a good facilitator [...] so after I studied with JWL and being a facilitator in this community, so I understood that they empowered me by education. [...] because most of the students tried to trust me.

Through the programme's emphasis on effective communication and teaching techniques, graduates can deliver their lessons with confidence and assurance, strengthening their connection with students and the community in the process.

### **2.3 Self-confidence, courage and the practicum**

The practicum component of the Learning Facilitator programme has proven to be a significant catalyst in boosting courage and self-confidence among the participants. For this graduate from Iraq, the initial lessons during the practicum were challenging but they gradually gained confidence and improved their teaching abilities. This newfound self-assurance is seen as universally applicable and beneficial in all situations. Similarly, the graduate in Kakuma highlights how the practicum served as a refresher, offering hands-on learning and practical application of facilitation skills. Through this experiential approach, the graduate gained the motivation to modify strategies and share experiences with others, enhancing their teaching effectiveness. This graduate illustrates:

“ I would say it is almost like when you are taught how to ride a bicycle and you have, so you go and ride and then you come back, and you give your experience based on what you have learned. So, it was really hands-on because I was doing the same thing.

Graduates in Afghanistan also highlight how the programme had a transformative effect on their self-confidence. One graduate mentions that the encouragement received from their on-site facilitator greatly contributed to

their increased self-assurance. Utilising the acquired skills during the practical sessions further reinforced graduates’ belief in their ability to have a positive impact on students, leading to an overall boost in self-confidence. Even in Malawi, where juggling work and learning proved to be a challenge for some programme participants, the Learning Facilitator course – particularly the practicum– ultimately empowered graduates to effectively facilitate learning and overcome initial doubts, instilling a sense of confidence in their teaching approach. Collectively, these testimonies demonstrate how the practicum portion of the programme plays a crucial role in building courage and self-confidence among participants, preparing them to be more effective and confident educators.

#### **2.4 Openness, communicative, and approachable educators**

Lastly, the Learning Facilitator programme has served as a catalyst for transforming graduates into open, communicative, and approachable educators, as attested by the following respondents. One graduate from Afghanistan shares how the programme instilled the values of openness and engagement with the community:

“ I think one of my friends completely changed. He wasn't trying to communicate a lot with me. I remember that. You know, one of my friends wasn't trying to communicate with all of people a lot. So, I was trying to share with him that you need to be a bit more open with the people. So, from these things I have learned from this course. I'm studying in this course, we need to be more open, if you want to have improvement in your life. You need to be engaged in community.

Another graduate from Guyana highlights the significance of being approachable and energised during sessions, stating that:

“ You must be fully energised in order to have effective sessions. Actually, there are lots. You have to be kind and approachable to everyone you share and impart all this important knowledge in a fun and an effective way.

Furthermore, the Learning Facilitator programme enabled graduates to develop their communication and observation skills. For example, this graduate in Kenya who mentors teachers admits that before the course, they always wanted to speak and be heard in meetings. However, through the course, they learned the importance of actively listening to others, allowing them to understand different perspectives and use that knowledge to enhance the learning experience for the whole class. Additionally, the programme enabled this graduate to shift their focus from looking at things from a broad perspective to paying attention to details:

“ With this course, I do look now at details. Like if I'm in a class, I look at student individually, rather than just looking at everyone as student in the class and, you know, that makes a very big difference. Because when you see student individually, [...] you try to understand what does each students need in particular for them to study, which may be different from another student.

This newfound ability allows them to view students as individuals with unique needs and to tailor their teaching approach, accordingly, leading to better comprehension and engagement among the majority of students. As part of this openness to learners, graduates emphasise the value of being connected with people from diverse backgrounds and beliefs. One graduate in Kenya uses the example of the LGBTQI+ community, expressing their acceptance and respect for different identities and beliefs, which contributes to fostering an inclusive and friendly learning environment. Through the course, this graduate developed a sense of respect for diverse identities and a willingness to use their own experiences as an example to promote understanding and unity within the community. This is further acknowledged by a graduate in Iraq who has already begun incorporating the concepts they learned from the course to create a friendly and welcoming atmosphere for their students:

“ I have already told them about these concepts in informal or indirect ways, and in the future when I'm a teacher, for example, using these points helps them a lot, you

know, at least it makes a friendly environment for the students of the community.

Other graduates cited building a code of conduct as part of fostering a supportive learning environment for their students. This graduate in Iraq explains how such tools are particularly helpful in their context as:

“ I didn't know that there is a code of conduct can protect my rights [in school] and [...], especially in our country we were Kurdish, and we have been subjected for abuse really. So, I think in each step in teaching I will focus on code of conduct which can protect our learners [...] and also the educating staff.

This demonstrates graduates' commitment to utilising the knowledge gained from the programme to build a conducive learning environment that facilitates students' development. Thus, the Learning Facilitator programme has been instrumental in equipping graduates with the characteristics of openness, effective communication, attention to detail and approachability required to become transformative educators, enabling them to connect with their communities and make meaningful connections with their students and promote a sense of belonging within the community.

In conclusion, the Learning Facilitator programme goes beyond developing soft skills. Adopting a student-centred and inclusive pedagogy, graduates from diverse regions explored temporal horizons as they gained the ability to reflect on their role as teachers and their pedagogical frame of references. Their improved interpersonal skills, self-confidence, time and classroom management skills, as well as their understanding of community dynamics positively impacted their teaching and learning processes, promoting a sense of unity and cooperation in their communities. Additionally, openness, effective communication, and approachability were instilled, empowering graduates to promote access to education for all within their communities. Lastly, the programme's emphasis on experiential learning through the practicum has played a pivotal role in boosting graduates' courage and self-confidence, making them more effective educators in diverse situations. As graduates of the Learning Facilitator programme continue to grow and evolve

as educators, another crucial aspect of their development is their role as leaders in the field of education and beyond.

### 3. Teachers as leaders

The Learning Facilitator programme not only equipped participants with practical teaching skills but also instilled in leadership qualities which extend beyond the classroom. Teachers as leaders refers to the idea that teachers have the ability to influence and improve teaching and learning practices within their classrooms and schools (Pushpanadham & Mammen Nambumadathil, 2020). Their role goes beyond being mere “depositors” of knowledge, but rather play a crucial role in shaping the educational experience of their students (Freire, 1970). Teacher leadership is not limited to formal roles or positions, but encompasses the competencies, influences, relationships, and expertise that teachers possess (Tedia & Redda, 2022; Zydziunaite et al., 2020). It involves actively engaging with colleagues, principals, and other members of the school community to promote effective teaching and learning practices, ultimately leading to increased student learning and achievement (Green & Kent, 2016). In this chapter, we explore how the programme empowered its graduates to become teacher leaders, inspiring and influencing their peers and community members to drive positive transformation in the education landscape.

#### 3.1 Building leadership skills

The Learning Facilitator programme has proven transformative for teachers to build strong leadership skills. One example of the programme’s transformative impact in terms of leadership is evident through experiences such as that shared by one graduate from India, who refers to how they once had a tendency to rely on others for affirmation and guidance, often seeking validation for their actions. However, upon completing the course, a transformation occurred, and this graduate adopted a more proactive approach to leadership, expressing a desire to collaborate with others. The programme played a crucial role in enhancing their listening skills, allowing them to better understand diverse perspectives. This graduate learned the

value of taking measured steps, avoiding impulsive decisions which, in turn, encouraged others to follow their lead and take initiative. Moreover, the experience broadened their awareness of societal challenges, prompting them to expand their engagement beyond their own community. This graduate is now actively involved with a fishing-dependent community despite the cultural and caste differences. They recognise the importance of this marginalised community and appreciate their expertise within their society. Thus, through the programme, teachers like this graduate gain a new perspective on leadership, empowering them to serve and collaborate with diverse communities, demonstrating their commitment to understanding and addressing societal challenges. While some participants already possessed leadership (notably graduates in Kenya), for others, the Learning Facilitator programme was essential for them to build this capacity. An Afghan graduate’s account reflects how the Learning Facilitator course can boost self-confidence. This graduate shared,

“ After taking this programme, the thing that my family and friends are saying is that 'Now you're a completely different person. Now you can talk in front of different groups and share the things that you have in your mind. You are a good manager, or you can manage when you are between groups of people like 10 or 20 or maybe 100 students, and all coming together, [...] and you're now thinking differently or you're a creative thinker now than before.' [...] they are saying this, and this self-confidence, they really think that this course changed you this much.

This graduate’s journey highlights how leadership development through the Learning Facilitator programme can empower individuals to become influential leaders, inspiring others to pursue personal growth and self-assuredness in their leadership endeavours.

Another characteristic that is seen as essential to graduates’ understanding of leadership is the importance of effective communication and guiding people toward achieving objectives. As explained by one graduate in Kenya,

“ Leadership is an opportunity to guide people or to lead people; you monitor them toward achieving given objectives. You guide them and support them in the way that they should achieve [...] [their] objective.

This is particularly relevant in terms of their leadership role as teachers, which extends beyond the sphere of the classrooms. Thus, the Learning Facilitator programme has proven instrumental in transforming teachers into leaders within their communities, enabling them to think critically, engage with diverse contexts, and address societal challenges effectively. The following sections look at the various characteristics of being a ‘teacher leader’, according to graduates.

### 3.2 Conflict resolution

The Learning Facilitator course has a profound impact on graduates, empowering them with conflict resolution skills and transforming them into influential leaders. Graduate emphasises how the course sharpens leadership skills, particularly in maintaining a safe class environment and resolving conflicts effectively, thereby equipping them with the skills that contribute to becoming leaders in the classroom. For instance, this graduate in Afghanistan illustrates how the course develop them into mediators within their communities, solving issues regarding access to education as stated,

“ I was trying to be in the middle of their community to solve their problems [...] I became a mediator among them. And I received some respect from all my community.

This shows how the course fosters leadership qualities that are valuable in conflict resolution and community engagement. Similarly, this graduate in Kenya emphasises how graduates emerge as leaders in their roles as teachers, resolving conflicts in schools and communities, illustrating that:

“ For example, learners can fight, and we reach a conclusion safely [...]. You are up there as a mediator in case of anything, especially violence, social problems all



this one. [...] we are competent especially as a teacher, I myself I have done and am doing it.

Although conflict resolution skills can be present before joining the Learning Facilitator programme, graduates are given the opportunity to explore and expand these. Hence, graduates learn to address conflicts among their students and communities, becoming effective mediators and earning respect as leaders, ultimately leading to improved support for learners, teachers, and parents.

### 3.3 Role models

The Learning Facilitator course has had a particularly profound impact on graduates in shaping them to become strong role models and effective leaders within their classrooms and communities. Graduates recognise the significant role they play as teachers and the responsibility to be exemplary leaders for their students. As one graduate from India affirms:

“ Only a strong leader can be a good teacher, isn't it? We should be a model to our students in always. [...] Point out an example for them, that still now even this age, teacher is doing a course and then why can't you?

The course also infused in graduates the potential in education to challenging traditional gender roles and societal norms. In the words of an Afghan graduate:

“ I am trying to do my best, and to show how much I changed after I finished the course after, I became the teacher, after I enrolled in this programme. So, when people see my reflection, my behaviour. So, I think they will be more encouraged, and they will send their children and boys and daughters to study this course, or they can send them anywhere no problem, this suggest they will encourage them to go to school or to study.

A similar role model account is described by this graduate in Malawi:

“ You know nowadays girls they just think of marriage, they just think of getting engaged they don't really think of education, you may find that like 80% of 18 years old girls or even 15 years old girl they are pregnant they have babies, they are now mothers in the house, they have married, so with this I can show them [...] how empowered I am by the learning facilitator course which enabled me to be a professional teacher and depend on myself and just thinking about education and think about tomorrow like think about having something in life before thinking about marriage.

This newly developed self-assurance enables graduates to shatter gender and accessibility barriers and serve as advocates for education in their communities, empowering others to seek knowledge and self-improvement. As educators, graduates have learned the importance of becoming role models and mediators in their classrooms and communities. Graduates recognise that teaching goes beyond imparting knowledge; it also involves nurturing students' social skills. One graduate in Kenya shares: “A teacher should have boundaries where the students and the pupil or the learners should have the difference from the teacher [...] be a model in a way you dress, the way teach, the way you do things.”

This demonstrates how the course empowers educators to set the right example for their students and maintain a conducive learning environment. As leaders, graduates are inspired to support others in their educational journeys. They take on leadership roles within their schools and communities, guiding and mentoring students and community members alike. One graduate in Kenya emphasises:

“ You have to be sustainable of your own self. [...] I told you learning facilitator really is a way forward but the one, who is now the learning facilitator himself, he is a simple to stand independent, assisting the rest and himself or herself.

The course has empowered educators to embrace their leadership potential, leading by example and fostering a supportive learning atmosphere for their students. Thus, the Learning Facilitator course has had a significant impact

on educators, transforming them into role models and leaders within their classrooms and communities. Graduates embody the values of continuous learning, empowerment, and leadership by example. Through this transformation, teachers emerge as strong leaders who positively influence their classrooms and communities, creating lasting change and fostering a culture of empowerment and growth.

The next section further discusses how the Learning Facilitator programme shapes graduates as servant leaders.

### **3.4 Servant leadership**

Servant leadership is a leadership style that places the well-being of others at the core of leadership practice, with the ultimate goal of “serving others first” (Greenleaf, 2014). It embodies a selfless and empathetic approach, where leaders prioritise the needs of their community, inspire growth, and foster a sense of empowerment among individuals and a more just and humane world (Armstrong & Spears, 2015; Buck, 2019; Rega & Honen-Delmar, 2022). It is found to have a significant influence on the working environment, leading to a more favourable and supportive atmosphere (Sinta, 2022). As for its impact on the learning environment, it was showed that it improves students' cognitive learning and sense of empowerment, leading to better learning outcomes (Yeying et al., 2023). Servant leadership also enhances the learning culture and promotes effective knowledge application in universities, leading to increased knowledge sharing and a strong learning environment (Azam & Chaudhary, 2021). In this context, we explore how the Learning Facilitator programme acts as a catalyst, enabling teachers to embrace servant leadership and become agents of positive change within their communities.

According to graduates, servant leadership is often related to the idea of empowerment. Their responses link servant leadership with the idea of giving freedom and power to others, enabling them to make their own choices and assertive decisions, as this graduate in Guyana expresses:

“ I think leadership is being able to give that freedom to that person. After a good conversation about whatever it is we're dealing with, giving the other person the

freedom to make a really good choice about what they're doing, [...] having them giving them the power, not giving them the power, but having them understand that they have the power to make those choices, I think.

Graduates also demonstrate their servant leadership through their concern for others. One graduate's reflection after participating in the Learning Facilitator programme demonstrates a shift from self-centred thinking to a focus on the needs of others in the community:

“ Before participating in this course just I thought about myself [...]. And also, even I was jealous with some persons who are in my community and also even I thought negatively about my people of community. But after participating in learning facilitator, I have found that no, I should [not] be as the person to always think about myself.

This transformation highlights the servant leader's genuine care for the well-being of those they lead and their commitment to uplift and improve the lives of others. This is also highlighted in terms of how the Learning Facilitator programme helps graduates become more actively engaged in their communities, promoting a sense of responsibility and ownership. One graduate in Malawi expresses,

“ Yes, it has helped me to increase my sense of community because now I am able to assist the community and give back what JWJ has given me to the community.

The servant leaders' deep commitment to the well-being and growth of the community is evident through their active contributions and support. One characteristic of a servant leader is leading by example (Armstrong & Spears, 2015; Greenleaf, 2002). This graduate's description of setting an example for others exemplifies servant leadership's emphasis on leading by doing and being a role model for others. One graduate based in Kakuma says:

“ I have always extended a hand whenever an opportunity is whenever there is a place to extend our love, I always have and I've always told colleagues, but leadership is not sitting down and barking orders. Leadership is leading by doing leading by example.

Servant leaders inspire and motivate others through their actions and behaviours, creating a positive impact on their community. Graduates also acknowledge the challenges faced in prioritising the community's needs over personal desires. This other graduate in Kakuma shares:

“ They take me as someone who doesn't love himself because I sometimes do things which are going to have a negative impact on [me] but a positive impact on the community. They continue to keep asking me why am I not quitting and be like the rest who are focusing on themselves. I feel I need to do more for others instead of myself.

This reflects the servant leaders' exercise of selflessness, patience in “serving others first” and striving to do what is best for the community's welfare (Greenleaf, 2002). In the context of the Learning Facilitator, fostering an inspiring and conducive learning environment intertwines with the quality of a servant leader. This graduate in Kakuma reflects the servant leader's dedication to continuous learning and growth:

“ Being at the forefront of teaching learners, gives you the ability to plan, to inspire and lead learners. So, this is a leadership itself. So, it means you are, you should be able leader who is able to plan a lesson because from this course, I have learned about curriculum design [...], one should be able to plan or scheme a lesson, then take charge of the learners, you plan where they should learn, what they should learn and what time they should learn.

Through the Learning Facilitator course, graduates cultivate servant leadership attributes, promoting an environment of learning and knowledge-

sharing which empowers others to develop their own skills and abilities. Therefore, the Learning Facilitator programme effectively transforms teachers into servant leaders in their communities. They shift their focus from self-centred thinking to community-oriented actions and become influential leaders who inspire, guide, and positively impact their classrooms, or at a larger scale, their communities, fostering a culture of collaboration, support, and personal growth. In the context of the global education crisis, the urgency of 'Time for Education' underscores the critical role of these transformed educators in shaping a more equitable and inclusive future.<sup>2</sup>

### 3. Concluding remarks

The comprehensive exploration of the Learning Facilitator programme's impact on teaching-related soft skills and the emergence of teachers as leaders underscores the transformative space for teachers to reflect on their roles and relations within their teaching environments, shaping a form of pedagogical relativity. The nuanced analysis of teaching-related soft skills, encompassing organisational and time management proficiency, the cultivation of community collaboration and trust, the development of self-confidence and courage, and the fostering of openness, communicative, and approachable attributes among educators, reveals the multi-faceted nature of the programme's influence in forming critical thinkers and caring educators. These outcomes collectively contribute to the creation of a dynamic and inclusive classroom environment.

As the positionality of teachers in and outside the classrooms becomes prominent during the programme, the growth of teachers' critical consciousness enables them to adopt a servant leader in their teaching position. The exploration of building leadership skills, conflict resolution

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strategies, the embodiment of role models, and the cultivation of servant leadership principles collectively illustrates the “conscientisation” of graduates undertaken by the Learning Facilitator programme in shaping pedagogical leaders (Freire, 1970). The programme not only imparts essential leadership skills but also emphasises the significance of embodying these skills in a manner that resonates with the ethos of servant leadership.

As evidenced by the testimonials and experiences of graduates, the Learning Facilitator programme serves as a catalyst for rethinking educators’ frames of references, empowering them to be leaders within marginalised contexts. It transcends traditional educational paradigms, offering a unique temporal horizon for teachers to redefine their roles and foster inclusive and conducive learning environments. The often-neglected voices of teachers at the margins, now at the forefront of the discourse on “time for education,” challenge established norms and inspire a re-evaluation of the symbiotic relationship between educators and their teaching environments.

In conclusion, the Learning Facilitator programme stands as a beacon of innovation in redefining educators’ relations within their teaching practice, not only equipping them with essential teaching-related soft skills but also nurturing them into leaders who embody the principles of servant leadership. This transformative journey redefines the temporal dimensions of education and emphasises the pivotal role of educators in shaping a more inclusive and empowering learning landscape.

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## Short biography

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