



UGANDA NATIONAL TEACHERS' UNION

UNESCO IICBA REGIONAL WEBINAR ON SCHOOL LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE AMIDST AND POST THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC CRISIS IN AFRICA



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How can school leadership be enhanced to address the current unpredictable sector challenges posed by the COVID- 19 pandemic and during the school re-opening process?

Key issues to consider

1. **Definition of school leadership and governance:** There is need to unpack who school leaders are in every school/ education institution context to enable one ably define their roles and responsibilities in the COVID-19 situation. School leaders can include;

- Head teachers
- Teacher leaders
- student leaders
- School Directors
- Principals
- Board of Governors
- Foundation bodies, among others.

How can school leadership be enhanced to address the current unpredictable sector challenges posed by the COVID- 19 pandemic and during the school re-opening process?



2. Understanding the impact of COVID-19 on school leadership and governance: The COVID-19 pandemic cast school leaders and managers in sudden, unanticipated ‘waters’ where they were expected to act fast to save the lives of the school community and their own lives.

Our school leaders and managers have been currently likened to actors/ actresses in a play where the story, the script and costumes have all changed midway the performance and they are on stage improvising on how to adjust to their new roles. *The show must go on- but how?*

This situation has created a number of challenges such as;

- School leaders and managers having no prior experience or training to deal with such a crisis yet Governments and other stakeholders expect them to succeed in their new roles of ensuring learning continues though remotely.
 - School leaders and managers are expected to act as coordinators of the distance learning process but most do not have close contact/relationships with the parent/guardian community as most of them usually have a laissez faire/hands off relationship concerning the education of their children
 - School leaders and managers are expected to act as motivating agents by giving learners and teachers the much needed mental and psychological support during this time when their future is uncertain. However, they are doing so without adequate information on the status of school re-opening because those planning for the sector have not involved them in the process. In Uganda, they were not involved even in the closure of schools and education institutions. All they were given was a directive and a deadline on when to close.
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3. What needs to be done/ strategies

- School leaders and managers should be involved in the process of preparing the guidelines for recovery and re-opening of the education institutions. Government should not work in isolation; all steps towards reopening should be coordinated with all the key stakeholders
 - There is an urgent need for Governments to consider supplementary funding to education institutions to enable school managers and leaders effectively implement the Standard Operating Procedures in preparation for re-opening of the institutions. They should not be expected to perform without the necessary support.
 - There is an urgent need for thorough support and training to enable school managers and leaders to fit in their new roles. They are being asked to secure lives and ensure that the entire school community remains safe and healthy. Are they prepared for such a huge responsibility once education institutions reopen? Do they have the required knowledge and skills to cater for the mental health/ well being of the school community? Are they well prepared on how to handle the huge learning gap created by the pandemic?
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4. Key lessons learnt

- There is an urgent need to deliberately create linkages between the school and the community. School leaders and managers need to be supported to foster/ create personal relationships with learners' families for ease of communication and contact if they are to perform their coordination role successfully. How will they coordinate the education process during and post COVID-19 if they have no contact with parents/guardians? These relationships can also help school leaders and managers track learners who may have dropped out of school as a result of the pandemic with the hope of returning them to school.
 - There is need to create networks for school managers and leaders where they can connect and support one another as a form of peer support. This can be done online through webinars, and other online workshops. These networks are particularly important at such a time where all education institutions both nationally and globally are facing the same challenges. This is the time for experience sharing on what is working else where and how it can be used in other countries where applicable.
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5. Final thoughts

It is important that all countries anticipate a re-opening of the education process. However, any plans to re-open should not be made in isolation by Government and other policy makers if we are to safe guard the lives of the learners, teachers, the entire school community and the particular communities where they hail from. We put the entire country at risk if all key education stakeholders are not involved and in mutual agreement with Government on the guidelines and procedures for reopening.

...Thank You...