

Teacher Leadership

The Rwandan teachers'
experience during school
closure

Introduction

- Across the globe, the COVID-19 pandemic has affected everyone's life in one way or another; including anyone involved in schooling — students, parents, or educators;
- In Rwanda, schools have been closed since March 2020.
- At the onset, the first priority was to ensure safety of students during school closure;
- The second priority has been to find a way to ensure continuity of teaching and learning during school closure;

Introduction (Cont...)

- In the case of Rwanda; during this unprecedented period; teachers have shown resilience and played extra-ordinary roles thus emerging as true leaders during this crisis: writing lesson scripts for Radio lessons, teaching Radio and TV lessons, sensitizing parents and communities for the fight against COVID-19; supporting school leaders on various aspects of school leadership;

Interventions to ensure the continuity of learning

There are interventions being implemented to strengthen leadership capacity of school leaders and teachers to ensure continuity of learning;

- Training of School leaders in School Improvement Plan (SIP); this is meant to enhance their capacity in improving learning outcomes in their schools;
- Developing guides for teachers, school leaders and parents on ensuring children's wellbeing and continued learning;
- Uploading books and other reference materials on E-learning platforms to increase learning opportunities for learners;
- Radio and TV lesson programs and related weekly timetable;
- Sensitization and involvement of parents to take a leading role in supporting children's continued learning;

Interventions to ensure the continuity of learning (cont...)

- Virtual training of teachers in ICT to enhance integration of ICT in teaching and learning;
- Continuous Professional Development (CPD) courses for teachers;
- Increasing the use of social media in sharing lessons, exercises and even giving feedback;
- Distribution of radio boxes and smart phones to low income households;
- Celebration of the International Literacy day and launch of the literacy month in September.

Plans going forward

- Developing School re-opening plan- schools opening soon in phases
- Training teachers in Covid-19 preventive measures and teaching during Covid-19 prevalence
- Plan to inform teachers to report in advance of school re-opening to prepare teaching documents;
- Set and implement strategies to ensure that all learners come back to school

Strategies/enabling factors to foster a leadership mindset

The reality is that skills and abilities are not fixed traits; but instead can be developed through effective strategies and practice.

In view of this, there are a number of enabling factors in place meant to foster a leadership mindset;

- Criteria and incentives for teacher promotion (Junior teacher, senior teacher and Master teacher) elaborated: experience, annual performance evaluation, and CPDs;
- Teaching experience to be considered for the appointment to head teacher position.
- Teachers' statute gazetted: This clarifies categorization, procedures of promotion and other matters related to teachers

Strategies/enabling factors to foster a leadership mindset (cont'd)

- Provision of structured Continuous Professional Development courses;
- Teachers code of conduct revised to uphold the dignity of the teaching profession
- Teacher Development and Management (TDM) Policy to strengthen the institutional and structural capacities to improve teacher quality.

Strategies/Enabling factors to foster a leadership mindset (cont'd)

- Instructions on selection of school leaders have been elaborated to have effective and efficient school leadership and management;
- Teachers' motivation package: best performing teachers are rewarded;
- Career Guidance policy made to make lifelong learning a reality for all.

Challenges

- High turnover of teachers;
- High teacher-pupil ratio;
- Inadequate school infrastructure: limited internet connection, limited number of classrooms, lack of access to electricity for some schools;
- Limited real teaching time.

Conclusion

The pandemic has exposed the underlying difficulties of distance learning, accessing and teaching students in a crisis; hence there is need for strategic measures to prepare for such unprecedented situations.