



Knowledge hub
-
Collection of best practices

Summary of the best practice

1. Title of the best practice (e.g. name of policy, programme, project, etc.) *

Insights on School Leadership During COVID School Closures & Reopening

2. Country or countries where the practice is implemented *

Rwanda

3. Please select the **most relevant** Action Track(s) the best practice applies to *

- Action Track 1. Inclusive, equitable, safe, and healthy schools
- Action Track 2. Learning and skills for life, work, and sustainable development
- Action Track 3. Teachers, teaching and the teaching profession
- Action Track 4. Digital learning and transformation
- Action Track 5. Financing of education

4. Implementation lead/partner organization(s) *

Rwanda Education Board, Education Commission, Education Development Trust, WISE

5. Key words (5-15 words): Please add key descriptive words around aims, modalities, target groups etc. *

school and system leadership, Rwanda, COVID-19 school closures and reopening; primary and secondary education

6. What makes it a best practice? *

Insights on school leadership best practices during COVID

Description of the best practice

7. Introduction (350-400 words)

This section should ideally provide the context of, and justification for, the practice and address the following issues:

- i) Which population was affected?
- ii) What was the problem that needed to be addressed?
- iii) Which approach was taken and what objectives were achieved? *

- i) Rwanda primary and secondary students in public schools
- ii) better understand the role of school principals and the skills they used during COVID school closures and reopening
- iii) WISE, the Education Commission, and Education Development Trust came together with the Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB) to generate new evidence on school and system leadership during COVID-19; this research used an innovative 'learning partnership' approach with Rwandan education stakeholders engaged as a critical 'co-creation' partner in each phase of the process – from designing the research questions to interpreting the findings. This approach ensured the issues investigated were priorities for local stakeholders and promoted ongoing, dynamic dialogue around emerging findings to influence decision-making which could be acted on to create impact.

8. Implementation (350-450 words)

Please describe the implementation modalities or processes, where possible in relation to:

- i) What are the main activities carried out?
- ii) When and where the activities were carried out (including the start date and whether it is ongoing)?
- iii) Who were the key implementation actors and collaborators? (civil society organizations, private sector, foundations, coalitions, networks etc.)?
- iv) What were the resources needed (budget and sources) for the implementation?

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i) 1. LITERATURE REVIEW AND SCOPING OF EXISTING TOOLS - A desk review highlighted promising skills and behaviors for promoting equity to be explored in the research. Existing competency-based survey tools from WISE, OECD and the Building EdTech Evidence and Research (BETER) group informed tool development. 2. SURVEYS AND INTERVIEWS - Surveys and interviews with school leaders (100), teachers, students, district and sector education officers (20+) helped identify bright spots of promising practice. 3. CASE STUDIES - Case study schools (those more effective in supporting vulnerable learners) were identified by the local Building Learning Foundations team. Deep dives into case study schools helped explore the bright spots – unique and positive actions, behaviors, attitudes and beliefs of school and system leaders.

ii) Rwanda, 2020-2021

iii) Rwanda Education Board, Education Commission, Education Development Trust, WISE

9. Results – outputs and outcomes (250-350 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the questions below:

- i) How was the practice identified as transformative? (e.g., impact on policies, impact on management processes, impact on delivery arrangements or education monitoring, impact on teachers, learners and beneficiary communities etc.);
- ii) What were the concrete results achieved with regard to outputs and outcomes?
- iii) Has an assessment of the practice been carried out? If yes, what were the results? *

i) From the very beginning, REB engaged as a critical 'co-creation' partner in each phase of the process - from defining the research questions to designing the tools, analyzing the data, and interpreting the findings. This ensured that the key issues investigated were priorities for local education stakeholders and promoted an ongoing, dynamic dialogue that not only shaped the research, but ensured continuous reflection from those using the evidence to inform their work. A critical element of the learning partnership approach was immediate feedback and discussion of findings as they emerged at each stage of the research (survey, interviews, case study schools) to influence policy and decision-making so they could be acted on in real time and create live impact. REB worked with the research team to refine the research tools as we moved from one phase of the research to the next, creating an interactive and overlapping process of design, reflection and decision-making

ii) Stakeholders involved in entire research process - from designing the research questions and tools to interpreting the findings. Senior members of the REB and Ministry of Education met to discuss the research and consider the implications for policy. They committed to review and update leadership standards and continuous professional development plans in light of the findings and agreed on the need to clarify leaders' responsibilities for the wellbeing of teachers and learners, and to formalize the role of school leaders in relation to parental engagement in student learning and wellbeing.

10. Lessons learnt (300 words)

To the extent possible, please reply to the following questions:

- i) What were the key triggers for transformation?
- ii) What worked really well – what facilitated this?
- iii) What did not work – why did it not work? *

Findings included:

- 1) ENGAGEMENT WITH CAREGIVERS, COMMUNITIES AND OTHER SECTORS: LEADERS REACHED OUT TO FAMILIES AND CAREGIVERS & LEADERS LEVERAGED COMMUNITIES AND PROFESSIONALS FROM OTHER SECTORS
- 2) SCHOOL LEADER AND TEACHER COLLABORATION: LEADERS COMMUNICATED WITH TEACHERS AND SUPPORTED THEIR SELF-EFFICACY & LEADERS COLLABORATED WITH EACH OTHER AND PROMOTED TEACHER COLLABORATION
- 3) TRACKING, SHARING INFORMATION AND PROVIDING TARGETED SUPPORT FOR VULNERABLE LEARNERS: LEADERS AND TEACHERS TRACKED AND SHARED INFORMATION ON VULNERABLE LEARNERS & LEADERS AND TEACHERS PROVIDED TARGETED SUPPORT
- 4) The survey results and interviews illuminated specific skills, competencies, and behaviors that we believe will be important for leadership now and in the future to support more resilient education systems. These included three overarching skills with associated behaviors and practices: Managing uncertainty, being open to trying and learning new approaches and leading with compassion and empathy.

11. Conclusions (250 words)

Please describe why may this intervention be considered a “best practice”. What recommendations can be made for those intending to adopt the documented “best practice” or how can it help people working on the same issue(s)? *

1) These findings suggest that clarifying and defining the role of caregivers in student learning and wellbeing, including caregivers of vulnerable children, is key to continued learning in a crisis. The role of leaders and teachers must also be clearly outlined and communicated so they can effectively guide caregivers to support their children’s learning. More specifically, strengthening school leaders’ role as facilitators of engagement with caregivers and the community, and establishing collaborative mechanisms (such as working groups) at the local administrative level, could help meet the full range of needs of vulnerable children in a holistic way. Formalizing accessible communication and engagement structures, or drawing on existing ones (such as focal points, community groups and parent committees), can enable leaders and teachers to more efficiently reach out and engage with caregivers and the community, especially during school closures. Another consideration, based on findings from the literature review, could be to develop a database of all stakeholders and focal points at each level of the system to facilitate swifter responses in emergency situations (UNESCO, 2020). Finally, the existing policy and procedures for school leaders to connect with local health officials should be maintained and relationships further strengthened as this will be critical in the ongoing response to the crisis as well as post-COVID-19.

2) These findings suggest that strengthening school leaders’ role as facilitators of teacher leadership could help to leverage existing teacher collaboration. Promoting existing communities of practice (COPs) and giving teachers more ownership of them could also ensure maximum relevance of these groups in addressing challenges and opportunities at the local level. Evidence from the literature review suggests that embedding peer feedback into teacher appraisal approaches could help strengthen informal teacher collaboration, undertaken through communities of practice (Shirley, Hargreaves and Washington, 2020). Given that teachers and school leaders in this research used low-tech options to successfully collaborate, policymakers could consider leveraging existing widespread low-tech solutions to enhance opportunities for informal teacher collaboration while improving access and use of higher-tech solutions.

3) These findings suggest that considering the varying needs of different groups of vulnerable learners, establishing guidance and processes to meet them, and closely monitoring and tracking vulnerable learners can support continued learning during closures and reduction of dropout during reopening. Evidence from the literature review supports considering incentives for the most vulnerable learners. These incentives worked well in encouraging attendance and retention of learners during the West African Ebola crisis (UNESCO, 2020). They established clear procedures for follow up with vulnerable learners as soon as data demonstrated the need to reach specific individuals or groups (Carvalho, Rossiter, Angrist, Hares and Silverman, 2020); and they provided planning for teacher and school leader professional development on the use of assessment data to inform support for learners at their level (United Nations, 2020). In a workshop analysis of the findings, REB suggested capturing information about all students in a ‘Comprehensive Assessment Management Information System (CAMIS)’ integrated with the School Data Management Information System (SDMIS) at the Ministry to improve capacity to identify and reach vulnerable students at all times.

12. Further reading

Please provide a list and URLs of key reference documents for additional information on the “best practice” for those who may be interested in knowing how the results benefited the beneficiary group/s. *

<https://educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Rwanda-Learning-Partnership-report.pdf>