

Research Report

Teacher Leadership

in Developing Crisis Education responses

in Africa and Latin America

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Executive summary

In 2020, countries around the world moved to temporarily close educational institutions in an effort to stop the spread of the COVID-19 virus. This UNESCO-commissioned report presents the findings from a series of rapid country case studies carried out in under two months at the height of the pandemic in six low- and middle- income countries in Africa and Latin America: Brazil (Maranhão state), El Salvador, The Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, and Mozambique. Its goal is to provide emerging evidence of teacher leadership during the COVID-19 crisis, and to consider the ways in which teacher leadership can enhance education system resilience during times of education emergencies and crises.

As per the Terms of Reference, teacher leadership during COVID-19 in this study is defined as a form of *grassroots or bottom-up approaches to teacher-led initiatives, occurring at the classroom level, school level and/or community level.*

Methodology

A rapid qualitative methodology, comprising of a document review and country-level interviews with policy makers and educators, was used to identify pre-existing education strategies and processes to promote teacher leadership, and explore examples of teacher-led initiatives that emerged during COVID-19 school closures, including facilitators and barriers. Informants were also asked to share lessons learned and consider how teacher leadership can enhance education system resilience during times of crisis.

Countries were selected in consultation with UNESCO to reflect a mix of low- and middle-income contexts and geographical diversity. In selecting the countries, the research team was also guided by the availability of UNESCO counterparts in each country, and accessibility to local networks.

Data were collected through 70 key informant country-level interviews with primary and secondary school teachers, teachers' organizations and other stakeholders, and desk reviews of COVID-19 national education planning and programming documents.

Key Findings

1. Teacher leadership during crisis and emergencies was not well supported by national policies, nor is it well well-understood as a construct

Across the case study countries in this report, we found little in national policies about the need for teacher leadership during crises and emergencies. Indeed, the concept of teacher leadership itself was often not one that participants in the study readily associated with teachers. It was therefore not surprising that, when schools closed due to COVID-19, teachers reported receiving little by way of support or direction. Some described themselves as initially 'turning in circles' to adapt and find solutions to support students and other teachers with whom they worked and communities in which they lived. The ability of governments to provide information and guidance in the first wave of the pandemic was uneven, largely leaving teachers on their own. Furthermore, across the case studies we found that there were no systematic monitoring mechanisms, and limited feedback loops between teachers and policymakers, in place to document teacher-led activities during COVID-19 school closures. Policy leaders often reported having a limited idea of what teachers were doing to lead during the pandemic, though

sometimes they referred to media stories. Most examples of teacher leadership activities that were shared with us were small-scale and informal initiatives that were intertwined at the community and classroom or student level. Few examples were provided of teacher leadership activities or innovation being taken up by governments at a systems level, with the exception of the *Good Calling* initiative in Brazil where work is underway to cultivate partnerships and funding sources to expand the initiative nationwide.

2. Teachers Reported Many Instances of Self-led Action ('Leadership')

Despite a lack of familiarity with teacher leadership as a concept, both teachers and policymakers across the country case studies reported teachers taking action on their own to respond to the crisis. The report highlights three key areas where leadership was demonstrated:

a) Ensuring Learning Continuity and Reducing the Risk of Disengagement and Dropout

To respond to the crisis, teachers made valuable efforts to ensure learning continued, and acted as mediators between top-down distance learning strategies and the needs of local communities, which helped to ensure that vulnerable students were not left behind. In low-tech contexts, teachers took to using social media and messaging apps that focused on establishing school-home communication channels and raising awareness among families of the need to allow children to continue to learn and study while schools were closed, as well as ensuring that students return when schools reopen, especially adolescent girls and students who engaged in paid labour during the pandemic. Some teachers in high-tech contexts also reported innovations using online platforms. Given that not all students had access to connectivity or distance learning platforms, a key aspect of teacher leadership in these contexts was ensuring inclusion and equity, for example, through translating learning materials for ethnic and linguistic minorities, adapting materials to make them more locally relevant and appealing to students, and supporting access to children without connectivity through community learning circles. Teacher organizations also engaged in social and policy dialogue on issues related to equity for vulnerable students related to distance learning strategies, as well as advocating for labour rights for teachers during school closures, and promoting health and safety measures for the reopening of schools.

b) Information Sharing about COVID-19

Often acting without ministry directive, teachers utilized their 'voice', authority and credibility for community mobilization efforts to provide health and safety information about reducing the transmission of COVID-19 and to counter disinformation. Teachers also played a key role in informing students and parents about safety during the return to school. This finding highlights the ability of teachers to influence the behaviours, attitudes, and opinions of families and community members during health emergencies.

c) Providing Socio-emotional Support

An important component of the self-driven initiatives reported by teachers were directed at prioritizing and promoting student socio-emotional learning, including support for mental health, psychosocial well-being, and protection from heightened social and other risk factors that jeopardize continuity of student learning, such as early marriage, child labour, and food insecurity. This suggests that teacher leadership during emergency

situations focuses not only on student learning and achievement, but crucially on the perceived immediate needs of students' and communities' related health, protection and social welfare.

3. Teacher Networks Provided a Vital Foundation for Teacher Leadership

An interesting finding across the case studies was the extent to which teachers autonomously formed networks to provide support to one another and share innovations and solutions. These professional networks were expanded during COVID-19 school closures well beyond individual schools, to include teachers from different schools and regions, and even across countries. Peer learning networks were vital for sharing experiences and supporting teachers' own mental health and well-being. The country case studies highlighted how much teachers themselves want to learn from one another.

4. Teachers Would Like to Be Supported as Leaders

When asked what is needed to help them play effective leadership roles during education crises and for education system resilience, teachers across the case studies responded in similar ways.

a) Training on their roles as leaders during crises

Teachers noted that they had limited professional training and formal preparation on how their leadership could be harnessed during such a crisis. They also require time, mental well-being, and decent working conditions to be able to engage in leadership roles.

b) More access and training in the use of technology, and greater connectivity.

Teachers spoke of their frustrations with their lack of connectivity and access to technology. They hope to receive better training in the use of technology to support continuity of learning and home-school communications. Teachers suggested a need for a mix of technologies, including high-tech and low-tech solutions such as mobile-based apps. Far from rejecting a digital revolution, teachers want to play a central role in using technology – and not just during emergencies.

c) Greater support for teacher leadership and collaboration

Teachers reported that they want to continue to deepen and expand the networks they had established. They also recognized that technology can provide a key tool for teacher collaboration and problem-solving.

Conclusions

This report demonstrates that teachers have the motivation and capacity for leadership – defined as taking self-initiated action – during times of crisis and emergency. Our study is not the first to suggest that teacher leadership is an under-recognized and under-exploited resource in education systems. More can be done to strengthen teacher leadership and to activate teachers as a central pillar in any plan for resilience in education. Exploring productive ways to develop this support and facilitate teacher leadership in times of crisis is an important task for future research. Similarly, further research is required that collects empirical evidence to investigate the relationship between teacher leadership and educational outcomes, especially in low-income contexts, and to examine ways in which new forms of teacher collaboration and recognition for teacher leaders can be maintained beyond the pandemic.

1. Introduction

In 2020, governments around the world closed educational institutions in an effort to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus, resulting in rapid and often creative responses at classroom, school and community levels to support the continuity of teaching and learning (Asim, Carvalho, and Gera, 2020; Reimers and Schleicher, 2020). To commemorate this year's World Teachers' Day theme on 5 October 2020, 'Teacher Leadership in Developing Crisis Education Responses', UNESCO commissioned this rapid qualitative research to take stock of achievements and raise awareness about teacher leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic. This report presents illustrative case studies from primarily low-income contexts in Africa and Latin America, drawing on semi-structured interviews with 70 country-level key informants. We bring in the viewpoints of government, teachers and their organizations, as well as other relevant stakeholders, to capture a snapshot of teacher leadership following COVID-19 school closures, and to explore emerging lessons for affirming teachers' leadership in emergency and crisis education situations.

As per the Terms of Reference (see Annex 1), the country case studies examine teacher leadership during the COVID-19 period from March to August 2020 in the form of *grassroots or bottom-up approaches to teacher-led initiatives, occurring at the classroom level, school level or community level*. A recent systematic review of 93 publications found that the concept of 'teacher leadership' is defined in various and often divergent ways, based largely on research from high-income countries (Schott, van Roekel, and Tummers, 2020). Given the limited research on teacher leadership in low-income contexts, and especially during emergency and crisis education situations, we were careful to avoid applying an a priori definition of teacher leadership to the case studies. Instead, we allowed the case studies to be guided by an exploratory and inclusive conceptualization of teacher leadership, broadly focused on bottom-up, teacher-driven initiatives. We were interested in gaining a better understanding of the roles and activities that teachers were prioritizing and initiating on their own during COVID-19, primarily from the perspectives of teachers themselves. We recognized that teacher-led initiatives during COVID-19 were directed at facilitating improved teaching and learning, and sometimes they were directed at other goals such as protection from early marriage, food insecurity and COVID-19 health risks. The case studies were designed to capture diverse experiences of teacher-led initiatives and to allow meanings of leadership to emerge from the data.

This work was undertaken in a short time frame, and the methodology was crafted to provide rigorous and ethically sourced data during a challenging time of school closure and travel bans which necessitated remote data collection – with a total of 50 days to complete this work from inception to analysis and report writing. These are far from ideal conditions for qualitative fieldwork and therefore we make no claim to generalizability. We are confident that the findings provide a contextualized, single point in time view of the kinds of teacher leadership initiatives that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic. Our goal was to provide illustrations of this leadership, in a manner that may help to stimulate learning and future research in this complex but important area of teacher leadership in low-income contexts during the sudden onset of an educational crisis.

1.1 Conceptualizing teacher leadership and innovation

Teachers are recognized as being critical in the provision of quality and inclusive education, with leadership, including teacher leadership, second only to classroom instruction as an enabling factor in successful learning processes and outcomes (Leithwood et al., p. 5, cited in Wenner and Campbell, 2017, p. 134; see also, Crowther, Ferguson, and Hann, 2009; Novelli and Sayed, 2016; Sayed and Badroodien, 2016). Beyond playing determining roles in the delivery of quality education, teachers have also been framed more broadly as key agents in educational change and development processes (Chapman and Adams, 2002, cited in Fernandez Herмосilla, Anderson and Mundy, 2014, p. 2). Teachers have the capacity to lead via fostering a collaborative culture to support teacher development and student learning, promoting professional learning for continuous improvement, facilitating improvements in instruction and student learning, and upholding outreach and collaboration with families and communities (Frost, 2012).

Definition of teacher leadership

While teacher leadership has gained increasing research and policy attention over the past few decades, it remains an under-theorized and under-defined concept that ‘tends to be an umbrella term referring to a myriad of work’ (Neumerski, 2012, p. 320, cited in Warren and Campbell, 2017, p. 135; see also Priestly, Biesta and Robinson, 2015). The definition of teacher leadership remains varied because teachers engage in such a wide range of activities and roles that may involve leadership. The Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development (ASCD) observes that ‘teachers exhibit leadership in multiple, sometimes overlapping, ways’, and that while some teacher leadership roles entail formally designated responsibilities, ‘other more informal roles emerge as teachers interact with their peers’ (ASCD, 2007).

For example, Katzenmeyer and Moller (2009) define teacher leaders as those who ‘lead within and beyond the classroom, identify with and contribute to a community of teacher learners and leaders, and influence others towards improved educational practice’ (p. 5). Smith, Hayes and Lyons (2017) define teacher leadership as ‘an influential, non-supervisory process focused on improving instructional practice, with student learning as the paramount goal’ (p. 267). Finally, York-Barr and Duke (2004) view teacher leadership as ‘the process by which teachers, individually and collectively, influence their colleagues, principals, and other members of school communities to improve teaching and learning practices with the aim of increased student learning and achievement’ (pp. 287–288). Although the above definitions vary, they all describe a *process of influencing others* (Schott, van Roekel, and Tummers, 2020).

We were interested in exploring through the case studies to what extent existing definitions of teacher leadership reflected the type of self-initiated activities that teachers were engaged in during COVID-19 in low-income settings in Africa and Latin America. Given that schools were closed and the usual form of face-to-face collaboration among educators was not possible due to physical distancing measures, what would the process of influencing members of the school community look like, especially given limitations on internet connectivity and access to information and communication technologies (ICT) in these primarily low-income communities? Would teacher leadership initiatives during COVID-19 be defined by the goal of improved student learning and achievement or other goals?

Teacher leadership challenges

The critical literature on teachers and teaching suggests that education reforms over the past thirty years including, for example, decentralization, privatization, standardization and accountability-driven reforms, have negatively impacted two crucial enabling conditions for teacher leadership: teacher agency and autonomy (Bangs and Frost, 2012; Frost, 2003, 2012; Frost and Durrant, 2003; Priestly et al., 2015; Weiner and Compton, 2008; York-Barr and Duke, 2004). Changing lines of teacher assessment and accountability and the intensification of top-down and prescriptive policy and curriculum requirements, have resulted in losses both to teachers' autonomy and opportunities for teachers to exercise their leadership agency (Long et al., 2017; Mockler, 2013). Such losses can only work against the leadership and innovation roles and responsibilities expected of teachers, with serious implications for the quality of education and teacher retention, and subsequently public confidence in teachers and teachers' status in societies. Indeed, the literature on teacher leadership highlights critical tensions between notions of teacher development and professionalism (what teachers are expected to be and do) and the actual working conditions of teachers (Long et al., 2017). Too often, the environments where teachers work function to limit their agency and thus the exercise of their professionalism as they strive to innovate and deliver high quality and inclusive education.

Lastly, research on teacher leadership has largely focused on formally designated roles and positions, though more recent scholarship has explored teacher leadership as a core component of what all teachers ought to be prepared and supported to engage in (Frost, 2012), regardless of their formal roles. Here, for example, continuing professional development (CPD) has been framed as one essential space necessary for the cultivation of 'non-positional' teacher leadership for quality education reform and innovation (Frost, 2012, p. 211; see also Bangs and Frost, 2016; Frost, 2018, 2008). As with most emergencies, in the context of COVID-19 and the pandemic's educational ramifications, expectations for teachers to be agents of change and innovation have only been amplified. We recognize that the pandemic has created high-pressure and challenging situations for teachers, and we see this moment as an opportunity to counter deficit understandings of teachers and their work, as well as boost public recognition and confidence in teachers and public school systems by spotlighting teacher-led initiatives that are helping maintain learning continuity, build systems, and enhance parent, child and community-school relations, among other important contributions.

Research gaps related to teacher leadership

Research on teacher leadership is pertinent for low-income country contexts, where emergencies such as conflict, disasters caused by natural hazards, and disease outbreak, disrupt education systems each year. Scott et al. (2020) reported that literature on teacher leadership is largely based on education systems in high-income, English-speaking countries such as the USA, such that the 'American perspective is leading when studying teacher leadership, which may have implications in terms of country bias' (p. 5). This leaves questions about the generalizability of the concept of teacher leadership and its associated practices to other educational systems during educational crises in low-income contexts. We must acknowledge that we have focused on literature related to the topic of teacher leadership and may have missed studies from low-income contexts that used a different terminology such as 'school leadership' or 'teacher autonomy'. Adding literature on these areas is potentially worthwhile, but beyond the scope and time constraints of the current study.

Ultimately, many questions remain about how teacher leadership is conceptualized, researched, and theorized in low-income contexts and during education emergencies and crises. Furthermore, there is a need for research on: what teacher leaders do and how they are prepared and supported in such education systems; the effects of teacher leadership activities on student learning; and the factors that enable or constrain teacher leadership opportunities and experiences during crises settings (Pounder, 2006; Priestly, Biesta and Robinson, 2015; Warren Little, 2003; Wenner and Campbell, 2017; York-Barr and Duke, 2004).

1.2 Study objectives

To commemorate the 2020 World Teachers' Day theme of teacher leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic, UNESCO commissioned a research project to explore examples of teacher leadership in low-income contexts during the COVID-19 emergency education crisis. Four objectives guided this rapid qualitative research:

- To identify pre-existing education strategies and processes to promote teacher leadership in selected countries.
- To explore examples of teacher leadership and teacher-led initiatives that emerged during COVID-19 school closures.
- To investigate facilitators and barriers to teacher leadership in selected countries.
- To identify lessons learned and consider how teacher leadership can enhance education system resilience during times of crisis.

A series of research questions were crafted to help guide the achievement of the study objectives (see Box 1).

Box 1: Research Questions Guiding the Case Studies

Enabling environments for teacher leadership and education crisis response

What national plans and resources were already in place before COVID-19 to support crisis response to education and resilience? What systemic opportunities and support were already in place before COVID-19 to support teacher leadership?

Teacher leadership during the COVID-19 crisis

What are noteworthy examples of grassroots or bottom-up teacher-led initiatives that emerged during COVID-19 school closures and reopening? What were potential facilitators and barriers to teacher-led initiatives during COVID-19? Have monitoring and evaluation processes been established during COVID-19 to gather evidence of the impact of COVID19 and teachers' responses? Were any of these innovations picked up and scaled at the school, district, or system-wide levels?

Opportunities for teacher leadership to build system resilience

How can teacher leadership support crisis education and more effective system resilience in the longer term? What policies or mechanisms have been established to ensure sustainability of teacher leadership initiatives? What lessons were learned during the crisis about how to engage teachers and their leadership in contexts of crisis and more broadly?

2. Methodology

To provide timely examples of teacher leadership during COVID-19 over a short time period, the case studies utilized a rapid qualitative inquiry method (Beebe, 2014), with a focus on obtaining perspectives of teacher leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic at the country level, and to gain a preliminary understanding of complex educational situations related to the antecedents to teacher leadership and emerging lessons for longer-term systems' resilience.

2.1 Country selection

Six countries selected for the exploratory case studies were identified in consultation with UNESCO to focus predominantly on low-income contexts and to reflect diversity in terms of geographical regions. Each selected country represents a different geographical region where UNESCO works. Given the rapid nature of the research and constraints on starting a new research project in pandemic conditions, we identified countries where UNESCO regional or field offices could facilitate access to research participants and/or where the research team had strong existing professional networks and country experience. In order to not overburden UNESCO country offices and key informants, we avoided certain countries where other research activities were underway. In this way, the sampling of countries was based on a convenience sample whereby data could be collected quickly and efficiently, and thus is intended to be illustrative rather than representative. With the above criteria in mind, the following six countries were identified for inclusion in the case studies: Brazil (state of Maranhão), El Salvador, The Gambia, Ghana, Malawi, and Mozambique (see Table 1). Given the relatively few low-income countries in Latin America, we selected Brazil, with a focus on a relatively low-income state in the country.

Table 1: Selected Country Case Studies

<i>Region</i>		<i>Country</i>	<i>Classification by income level</i>	<i>Status of schools, March to August 2020</i>	<i>Number of children affected</i>
Africa	West Africa	Ghana	Lower-middle income	Closed~	9.7 million
	Southern Africa	Mozambique	Low income	Closed	8.0 million
	East Africa	Malawi	Low income	Closed~	6.9 million
	West Africa	The Gambia	Low income	Closed~	597,708
Latin America and Caribbean	Latin America	Brazil (Maranhão)	Upper middle income	Closed	2 million*
	Central America	El Salvador	Low income	Closed	1.6 million

Source: <https://en.unesco.org/covid19/educationresponse> (UNESCO, COVID-19 Impact on Education)
*<http://portal.inep.gov.br/documents/186968/484154/Resumo+T%C3%A9cnico+do+Estado+do+Maranh%C3%A3o+-+Censo+da+Educa%C3%A7%C3%A3o+B%C3%A1sica+2019/98a6d35d-801b-44c5-a72b-c492144a87ea?version=1.0> (National School Census - 2019). Note: (~) secondary schools were temporarily and partially open for students in secondary schools sitting high-stakes examinations.

Below is a short description of each country context and COVID-19 education responses that were implemented during the period in which this research was carried out.

- **Ghana** is a large, lower-middle-income West African country. Schools closed on March 15, 2020, but students sitting high-stakes examinations were allowed to attend school to prepare for the exams. Ghana Learning TV and Ghana Learning Radio provided TV and radio lessons for K-12 students, with online learning being offered to senior high school students.
- **Mozambique** is a low-income country in southern Africa where schools were closed on March 23, 2020. The Ministry of Education and Human Development launched ‘Teleschool’ on public TV and cable channels, as well as educational programming in Radio Mozambique. The education sector response also involved making hard copy worksheets available for students.
- **The Gambia** is a small, low-income country in West Africa. Schools closed on March 18, 2020, and students sitting high-stakes examinations were allowed to return to school in June and July to prepare for exams that had been cancelled or rescheduled due to the pandemic. The education sector response to school closure involved distance learning activities using radio, TV, and social media (e.g., WhatsApp).
- **Malawi** is a low-income country in East Africa. Schools closed on March 23, 2020. The education sector response to school closure has involved distance learning activities using radio, TV, and online platforms. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has worked with the private sector (TNM) to provide free Internet for students in support of learning continuity.
- **El Salvador** is a low-income country in Central America, which closed schools on March 11, 2020. The education sector response included a multi-platform approach (i.e., TV, radio, print material, website and online platform) and the goal of widespread digitalization of education, including training and the distribution of technological devices for teachers. Detailed pedagogical orientation for teacher work during school closures, in relation to curriculum, priorities and approaches have been issued by the Ministry of Education.
- **Maranhão (Brazil)** is a relatively low-income state in a federal South American country with a varied COVID-19 education response strategy across states and municipalities. Schools were closed on March 17, 2020, and remote learning was initiated by the state education secretariat through radio, TV and Internet. The federal government passed legislation to adjust the legally mandated length of the school year during the pandemic.

2.2 Data collection and analysis

As shown in Table 2, the research team conducted 70 semi-structured interviews with priority placed on interviews with K-12 schoolteachers and at least one representative from teachers' unions in each country. Interviews were also conducted with government officials and representatives from local non-governmental organizations, international organizations, and teacher training institutions. It should be noted that K-12 teacher participants were identified by education stakeholders as potentially engaging in leadership and/or innovation during COVID-19 school closures. In this way, the sample of teacher cases may exemplify positive deviance, and their behaviours and strategies may be uncommon within the education communities in which they worked.

Table 2: Key Informants by Country and Participant Category

PARTICIPANT CATEGORY	BRAZIL (MARANHÃO STATE)	EL SALVADOR	THE GAMBIA	GHANA	MALAWI	MOZAMBIQUE	TOTAL
Teachers¹	6	5	5	8	4	4	32
Government/ Teacher Task Force	6	2	2	2	1	1	14
International organizations	1	1	1	1	5	2	11
Teacher unions	2	1	1	1	2	1	8
Civil society/ University	2	1	-	2	-	-	5
Total	17	10	9	14	12	8	70

Participants

In total, 32 primary and secondary teachers were interviewed, including 13 female and 19 male teachers. Participants were all current teachers working in local education systems prior to and during the pandemic, and reflected a range of urban and rural contexts, as well as public and private school contexts. Eight interviews were conducted with representatives of the following teachers' organizations: Brazil National Education Workers' Confederation, Maranhão State Public Education Workers' Union (Brazil), ANDES 21 de Junio (El Salvador), Gambia Teachers' Union, Teachers Union of Malawi, Private Schools Employees Union of Malawi, Mozambique National Teachers Association, and the Teachers and Education Workers Union of Ghana. At least

¹ Of the 32 teachers interviewed, 20 taught at the secondary level and 12 taught at the primary level.

one key informant from ministries of education, including Teach Task Force focal points, was interviewed for each country. In total, the case studies include interviews with 14 key informants from government education agencies. Furthermore, 11 interviews were conducted with education stakeholders from international organizations, primarily those working in UNESCO regional and field offices and UNICEF country offices. Lastly, five interviews were conducted with academics and researchers involved in education COVID-19 response strategies, for example, from the State University of Maranhão and San Salvador University. See Annex 2 for a list of contributors who agreed to have their names published in the report. In line with our commitment to participant confidentiality as part of our research ethics protocol, we have presented contributor names without including other potentially identifying information such as country or position.

Data collection

The research team conducted the key informant interviews remotely using a semi-structured interview schedule, which explored: national plans and resources to support crisis response in the education sector; systemic opportunities and support for teacher leadership; noteworthy examples of grassroots or bottom-up teacher-led initiatives that emerged during COVID-19, including perceived barriers and facilitators; the establishment of monitoring and evaluation processes during COVID-19 to provide evidence on teacher leadership; evidence of any teacher-led innovations that have been scaled up; and emerging lessons on how teacher leadership can support crisis education and more effective system resilience in the longer-term. See Annex 3 for the key informant interview guide. Each interview lasted between 30 and 75 minutes. Interviews were conducted in English, Spanish or Portuguese. All participants gave informed written or verbal consent to take part in the case studies.

Data analysis

All interviews were recorded, and the main points were documented, compiled with real-time interview notes and synthesized using interview summary sheets (see Annex 4), which are a commonly used tool in rapid qualitative research to summarize emerging findings so they can be shared with the team while the study is ongoing. Responses were analysed using a thematic analysis framework (Gale et al., 2013) and charted systematically into an Excel spreadsheet matrix. Members of our research team thoroughly read and reread each summary and listened back to the audio-recorded interviews to become familiar with the whole data set. We made note of interesting segments of text that explained and elaborated on emerging themes. The analysis process entailed an unstructured familiarization phase of the qualitative data, a deductive coding phase initially framed by the research questions, and an inductive phase to identify new themes emerging in the data. In this way, responses could be analysed by country-case level and by code, which allowed for comparison and contrasting across cases. Regular team meetings facilitated our critical exploration of participant responses, discussion of deviant cases and agreement on recurring themes.

Scope and limitations

The findings of this study have to be seen in light of its scope and some limitations. It is acknowledged that in a small-scale study of this type, generalizations about teacher leadership are difficult to make. Moreover, conducting interviews with teachers when schools were closed and strict lockdown measures were in place required a dependency on the most accessible

informants, such as those who had access to mobile phone technology and were thus not representative of all teachers. Lastly, as rapid research, it was not possible to capture changes over time, particularly with respect to teacher leadership during school reopenings, as all school systems were closed, or partially closed, during the time period in which data were collected. Rather than exhaustive or representative of the population of teachers as a group in the countries studied, the accounts shared here are provided as illustrative evidence of diverse teacher-led initiatives emerging in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Main findings

Findings from the county-level case studies will be described in this section, but there are a few overarching findings that are worth mentioning before going into country-level details. To start, we found examples of teacher leadership at the community level across country contexts, for example, related to community mobilization for girls' education, community awareness-raising about COVID-19 transmission, and organizing community social safety nets to help vulnerable households improve food security. We also found examples of teacher leadership at the classroom level, particularly in Latin America where there was generally better access to ICT resources compared to the selected case studies in Africa. In Latin America, we found teachers initiating phone campaigns to improve school-family communications and bolster student psychosocial well-being, as well as teachers investing in their professional development to create high-tech solutions to support continuity of learning among their students.

There were some examples of teacher leadership at the classroom level in the case studies in Africa, for example, we found teachers who took the initiative to translate national distance learning materials into local languages, as well as teachers who created small community learning circles. However, teachers from the case studies in Africa often had left their school communities and returned to their home communities during COVID-19 lockdowns. Being physically distanced from their school communities, and without adequate ICT to maintain contact, teachers in this situation typically lost contact with students in their classroom during school closure. That did not preclude them from engaging in teacher-led activities, but rather than supporting students in their regular 'classrooms', they extended teaching and learning support to students in their home communities. Thus, the notion of teacher leadership at the classroom and community levels became blurred. With the exception of Ghana, where a teacher reported having worked with colleagues to pilot a pedagogical approach focused on improving students' independent learning skills (in the context of the partial reopening of secondary schools for students writing exams), we did not find examples of teacher leadership at the school level, which may be due to the small sample size or that most schools were closed at the time of data collection.

Although we had expected to capture examples of teacher leadership during school closure and school reopening, efforts to reopen schools were delayed across most case study contexts. All schools essentially remained closed during the data collection, and many participants were unsure about when schools would reopen. Hence, we have not been able to capture teacher leadership related to school reopening efforts as anticipated, in the examples that follow. Lastly, while definitions of teacher leadership often focus on improved student learning and achievement as the primary goal, we found that there were potentially shifting priorities in the examples of teacher-led initiatives shared with us. While teachers were engaged in self-directed

initiatives to support student learning during school closures, they were also engaged in efforts to protect student psychosocial well-being, to protect students from early marriage and labour and from food insecurity, and to protect students and communities from the health risks associated with COVID-19. In this way, we saw teachers prioritizing and taking the initiative to help ensure that children and youth, whether in their own classroom or their home communities, were protected from the risks of COVID-19 and associated school closure and lockdown measures. While these goals did not always have an immediate view on improved teaching and learning, ensuring student protection and well-being is a prerequisite for student achievement and growth. These examples illustrate that teacher leaders take on a myriad of roles and activities in crises contexts to protect and support students.

The findings related to teacher leadership from these six case studies are presented in four sections. First, we examine perspectives on pre-existing education strategies and processes to promote teacher leadership in selected countries, as well as plans to support education system responses in emergency or crisis settings (3.1). In the second section (3.2), we explore and document examples of bottom-up teacher leadership and teacher-led initiatives that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic, organized by country. In the third section (3.3), we present potential facilitators and barriers to teacher leadership in selected countries from the perspective of teachers and other key informants. Finally, we share emerging lessons learned and consider how teacher leadership can enhance education system resilience during times of crisis (3.4).

3.1 Pre-existing strategies and processes to promote teacher leadership

The desk review for the case studies revealed that the topic of teacher leadership is limited in most of the education sector plans, teacher policies, and COVID-19 education response plans reviewed (see Annex 5 for a summary). Teacher policies issued or discussed prior to the pandemic also did not target teacher leadership specifically. That is to say teacher leadership is not an explicit focus of existing education plans and policies. For example, a recent guidance note on crisis-sensitive teacher policy states that ‘leadership for crisis-sensitive planning rests with the ministries of education’, although it is noted that ‘teachers and their representatives’ have a role to play (Norwegian Teacher Initiative, 2020, p. 2), thus implying a potentially restricted arena in crisis contexts for teachers and their associations to exercise leadership vis-a-vis governments. Notably, the new draft Comprehensive National Teacher Policy in Ghana includes teacher leadership. In the first instance it states that teachers ‘are supposed to provide learner-level leadership’ and later that ‘the policy seeks to ensure that teachers develop competencies that can help them deliver quality teaching and learning while promoting leadership at all levels of education’, thereby signalling that teacher leadership may be an emerging topic in teacher policy development in some countries.

The interviews with key informants corroborated that teacher leadership is not a particularly well-established concept in the selected countries. None of the respondents were aware of government strategies that specifically promote teacher leadership. Teachers indicated that their past training focused on pedagogy rather than the development of leadership skills or qualities. Some mentioned that leadership initiatives developed out of their own means, interest or curiosity, and through ‘talking’ and ‘collaborating’ with other educators. In some cases, teacher leadership initiatives are being explicitly fostered through non-governmental organizations like Ensina Brazil and Lead for Ghana. Some respondents explained the conceptualization of

leadership in schools tends to situate leadership with school management, equating it with status, authority and position, rather than associating leadership to teachers' roles and activities. Some respondents described the education systems in which they worked as 'command-based' with 'ultra-centralized regimes', which were perceived as providing limited space and incentive for bottom-up, grassroots initiatives enacted by teachers. This is illustrated in the following excerpt from a participant in Mozambique:

Teachers are used to receiving guidelines from the top. Most things that happen in the school context are catalysed from the top, from the central authority and the ministry. In our context, teachers do not have much voice. They wait for guidance. We have to create this thing of 'teacher leadership'. I think we are still lagging behind in that. Leadership is usually discussed in relation to school management and not teachers. (MZ1)

In terms of existing education policies directed at education in emergencies responses, across all countries, participants reported an absence of pre-existing planning to deal with an educational crisis such as the COVID-19 pandemic, with one participant in Malawi describing it as having 'been caught pants down' (MA3), and another in El Salvador remarking, '[When schools closed] it was like an avalanche falling on top of our heads' (EL9). Adjusting education systems to crisis responses and disaster preparedness was already underway in some countries facing the threat of floods, drought and other natural disasters. However, existing disaster risk reduction and education emergency plans did not necessarily address pandemics or biological hazards, or response strategies for extended and widespread school closures. As a participant from Malawi stressed, 'the nature of this emergency was very different from the emergencies that we had seen. Very little was known about how this pandemic will play out. There was very little information coming from any level' (MA7). Some participants noted that existing policies and strategies for integrating technology and online learning initiatives (El Salvador), on the one hand, and mental health (Brazil), on the other hand, possibly facilitated the educational response to the COVID-19 pandemic in these countries. Overall, the general consensus among participants was that teachers and education systems were ill-prepared to deal with the COVID-19 crisis and school closures in case study countries. Participants commonly referred to educational responses as largely 'reactive', 'ad hoc' and 'chaotic'. Teachers described feelings of stress, uncertainty and grief brought on by school closures, especially in reference to the sudden and affective loss of face-to-face interactions with students. Teachers described themselves as 'turning in circles' to adapt and find solutions.

3.2 Examples of teacher leadership during COVID-19

State of Maranhão (Brazil)

During the pandemic I felt there was a wall, a big distance between myself and my students. We missed our connections from school and from the classroom. With the Good Calling initiative, we can talk. The students open themselves and reconnect with us. (Maranhão, Teacher, BR11)

In the Brazilian state of Maranhão, schools were closed on March 17th, 2020. Remote learning was initiated in state schools through radio, TV and internet, while the government issued general pedagogical guidelines for the work of teachers in this novel context (Maranhão. Secretaria de Estado da Educação, 2020). Distribution of paper-based material and mobile phone

data packages for students were added in the state's response strategy at a later stage. During school closures, there has been social dialogue with civil society partners and the local teachers' unions to discuss school reopening, initially planned for early August 2020. In October, the government announced state schools would not be reopening for in-person classes in 2020.²

In Maranhão, there are numerous examples of teacher-led initiatives directed at the provision of food parcels, cleaning supplies, and cloth masks to students and families, for example, in the days and weeks before the government organized the distribution of items from the school feeding program. In this way, the initial response among some teachers prioritized what were considered immediate health and nutrition needs, and thus teachers' efforts focused beyond the classroom to the community, and beyond student learning. Furthermore, when schools initially closed, teachers displayed initiative with respect to the utilization of freely available social media tools (e.g. WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram) to establish teacher-student communications, as well as trialling new processes for teaching and learning, which preceded or expanded the government's guidelines regarding distance learning applications and platforms. Teacher leaders in this context explained that they prioritized establishing direct communication channels with students to keep them connected to the education and to mitigate the psychological impacts of sudden school closure on their students. Teachers explained that they jump-started efforts to sustain teacher-student communication immediately following school closure, during a time when the government was still organizing its educational response strategy with no clear guidance or communication to families.

A very specific example of a teacher-led initiative in Brazil is *Good Calling*, an outreach initiative developed by a small group of Ensina Brasil teachers in Maranhão. This initiative advocates for all teachers to make at least one student phone call each day, in order to support mental health and maintain teacher-student communication. The teachers developed a website which includes suggestions for conversation topics and a guiding protocol and has been reported to have been shared and accessed by teachers from more than 300 municipalities across Brazilian states, with positive feedback. This initiative has received support from philanthropic partners and is considered to score high in terms of equity since there is relatively widespread availability of mobile and landlines across Brazil compared to other forms of information and communication technology. Also, it does not require specific digital skills or experience, and is thus feasible for nearly all teachers: 'We created it thinking about the well-being of students,' reported a participant in our study, 'but teachers who are doing the calls also feel good about it. The voice is such a powerful instrument in building affection' (BR6). These examples illustrate bottom-up, teacher-led activities which helped to maintain continuity of school-family relationships following school closure, buying the government time to respond, and with a goal on students' psychological well-being during the transition from school-based to home-based learning.

El Salvador

I felt the need to create something myself (e.g. YouTube channel). Students are used to feeling their teachers' support. (El Salvador, Teacher, EL8)

² State-funded schools, which are mostly operating at the lower and upper secondary levels, were the focus of this case study. Municipal-funded schools, typically providing early childhood and primary education, might have different remote learning approaches and reopening plans.

In El Salvador, schools closed on March 11th, 2020. The education system responded to COVID-19 with a multi-platform approach that included TV, radio, print material, website and an online platform (El Salvador. Ministerio de Educación, 2020, 2020a, 2020b). The goal was to achieve widespread digitalization of education, including training and the distribution of technological devices for teachers. Pedagogical orientation for teachers' work during school closures, in relation to curriculum, priorities and approaches was issued by the Ministry of Education. School reopening was officially postponed until 2021. In this context, and similar to the findings from Brazil, respondents described examples of teacher-led initiatives directed at the early use of mobile platforms and social networks to maintain family-school connections. Teacher leadership also took the form of teachers extending their own learning for professional development through online courses, which was somewhat unique compared to examples found in other countries and may reflect improved access to technology. To enhance the relevance and appeal of national take-home study guides, teachers reported taking the initiative to utilize WhatsApp or even creating YouTube channels to contextualize and personalize the information for students in their class, helping to ensure that students 'felt' their teachers' support.

As a specific example of teacher leadership, a primary school teacher reported that when schools initially closed, he took the initiative to enhance his remote teaching skills. Taking advantage of available massive open online courses (MOOCs), he found a university-accredited programme on educational technology and successful online teaching strategies, which he then completed. Afterwards, he developed and conducted Zoom workshops with teachers at his school and a partner school for shared learning and professional practice. In another example, a secondary math teacher recorded weekly YouTube lessons for his students to help explain the content of the government-provided standardized study guides and textbooks. His videos were shared with the education district and other teachers in the region as a model of good practice, which energized him to make 'a stronger commitment' (EL8). Afterwards, this teacher collaborated with another teacher to increase the number of weekly videos, covering additional grades, which were shared with teachers in different parts of the country. Another example is a union-led weekly online discussion using social networks to voice teachers' concerns during the pandemic and function as a collaborative capacity-building space. While union consultations to its members might be ordinary business, the creation of this virtual space after schools closed was motivated by the recognition that peer-support was a key element in engaging teachers in learning continuity efforts, as well as the acknowledgement of the opportunity to construct a teacher-owned 'learning space' (EL10) for regular communication, experience sharing and support. In this way, informal teacher-led initiatives provided new opportunities to share knowledge and work together to find solutions to teaching and learning during school closures.

The Gambia

Teachers are reputable in their communities. If they go into the communities to make sure that the message is driven, you will see a lot of difference. (The Gambia, Key Informant, GA2).

In The Gambia, schools closed on March 18th, 2020. Students writing national examinations³ returned to classes in June and July 2020 (GunjurOnline, 2020, June 4). The education system

³ e.g. The Gambia Basic Education Certificate Examination (GABECE) and the West African Senior School Certificate Examination (WASSCE).

response to school closures has involved distance learning activities using radio, TV, online (e.g., Google Classroom) and social media platforms (e.g. WhatsApp) (Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education, 2020). The Gambia Teachers Union (GTU) has served on the government-led National Education Emergency Response team, working to develop the country's response strategy, the 'catch-up' plan for lost time during school closures, as well as strategy for ensuring a safe reopening of schools. Examples of teacher leadership and innovation mainly centred on the use of mobile phones (primarily WhatsApp and text messaging) for teachers to share information and provide social support among themselves; and to help provide academic support and learning continuity. The GTU has provided cash to teacher administrators of WhatsApp groups for the purchasing of airtime/data, to facilitate continued teaching and learning.

A strong focus of teacher-directed initiatives in The Gambia related to community and family sensitization about COVID-19 and how to prevent its spread, especially in rural areas where there was a surge of misinformation about the virus. As respected and important sources of expertise and information in rural areas, teachers took the initiative, sometimes in collaboration with local religious leaders, to raise awareness about the risks of COVID-19. As one teacher noted, 'We are at risk especially in the [rural] provinces. People think COVID-19 is an urban problem. They think their prayers are accepted. So we find it difficult' (GA5). Teachers reported that some community members thought that COVID-19 'wasn't real' (GA6). Participants in the case study also frequently described teacher-led initiatives with respect to communications and advocacy to parents about the importance of continued learning, and to allow children time for their studies by not engaging them in too many chores and other duties. Teacher participants described these activities as coming from their own initiative and being based on perceived student needs, and not something that was mandated by the government or expected of them by their schools. Similarly, teachers reported spending considerable time advising and mentoring students on the importance of education and returning to schools when they reopened. As one teacher reported, 'some students didn't even know that they were to report back to school' (GA8). In this way, teacher leaders acted as mediators and provided important information and guidance that may have otherwise not been accessible to students and the community.

Reflecting on an example of formal teacher leadership, rather than grassroots, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education identified and selected a small group of experienced teachers to create educational lessons for radio and TV, which were broadcasted nationally. However, in rural and remote areas, where most students do not have reliable access to computers, mobile devices and Internet, we found grassroot examples of teacher-led initiatives which strived to bridge the gap between top-down distance learning strategies and the needs of local communities. Participants relayed examples of how teachers recorded the radio and TV lessons and created small community learning circles where children could listen to the recordings. In some cases, teachers also translated ministry-produced distance learning materials from English to the local language. Many teachers returned to their home communities after schools closed and facilitated learning support for students in their local communities, in addition to their own students. As one teacher reported: 'Wherever you are, you have to help the children' (GA4). These examples illustrate that teacher leadership took the form of a brokering role as teachers helped to ensure that government-directed COVID-19 educational strategies were accessible to local school communities, especially in rural areas.

Ghana

In Ghana, schools closed on March 15th, 2020. During school closures, Ghana Learning TV and Ghana Learning Radio provided TV and radio lessons for students in primary and secondary schools, with online learning being offered to senior high school students (Ghana Education Service, 2020; Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA), 2020, July 2; Ministry of Education, 2020a; 2020b). Basic Education Certificate Examination (BECE) and West African Secondary School Certificate Examination (WASSCE) candidates attended school to prepare for the exams, following physical distancing protocols. For students sitting high-stake examinations, teachers played an important role in supporting mental health and providing psychosocial support, especially for those in dormitories who were separated from parents and caregivers during this stressful period⁴. As a participant noted:

When the students came back, the teachers worked with them to ensure that the students would stay safe and they would have the peace of mind that they could work in an environment free from any kind of stress, to psychologically prepare and support them to not panic and not fear, so that they would not come under any undue pressure. So the teachers would do that. You could see the beauty of it. You could see the teachers smiling with the students. They've been taught to do that. They are always inspiring students to not fear and to overcome the stress and be able to study very well. (GH3)

After schools closed, some teachers were able to quickly pivot to online platforms, including Google Classroom, using these technologies to share learning materials with other teachers and pre-recorded lessons with students. Teachers used existing WhatsApp groups and Facebook to promote and advise students of these learning opportunities during the school closures. In one case, a teacher was able to apply digital learning skills developed pre-COVID-19 through their involvement in an online education project with refugees in Kenya. But in other cases, especially in rural areas, teachers quickly realized that most of their students could not access the distance learning opportunities offered by the government on radio and TV. In response, participants explained that teachers took the initiative to meet with students in 'small batches', observing safety protocols, to establish 'learning timetables' with structured lessons and assignments given in hard copy.

Positive teacher-student relationships that had been developed prior to the pandemic helped inspire teachers to reach out to children during school closures and try new ways of supporting their learning. For example, a teacher at a rural school spoke of their involvement in an arts-based learning project (pre-pandemic) that aims to nurture 'hidden potentials', critical thinking and leadership amongst students; explaining that she 'marvelled' at the students and their work - 'I'm amazed at what they do' - when schools closed, she was eager to do what she could to continue working with them (GH13). In the context of the partial reopening of schools for students writing leaving exams, teachers also used new pedagogical approaches (e.g. 'flipped classroom') that aimed to have students 'own their own learning' (GH4). The idea was to 'shift the paradigm from depending solely on the teacher to depending on themselves so that in case we can't be there, they can actually be able to depend on themselves for their own education or learning' (GH4).

⁴ A joint statement made by pre-tertiary unions concerning the partial re-openings highlighted the risks and challenges encountered for educators and learners (Musah et al., 2020).

Beyond the practical advantages of continued interaction between teachers and learners, a teacher explained the symbolic importance of such activities, saying, ‘We believe if our physical presence is absent, then there wouldn’t be any motivation at all for them to even go back to their books. We have to also let them realize that education is important, and nothing has changed during the lockdown’ (GH12). Teachers led informal community-based advocacy with parents and students through phone calls and home visits to make sure school closures did not expose students to child labour and domestic work in ways that might interfere with their learning and returning to school. Teacher-led outreach work also focused on sharing safety messages about how to prevent the spread of COVID-19.

Malawi

In Malawi, schools closed on March 23rd, 2020. The ministry postponed the reopening of schools due to rising numbers of COVID-19 cases and has not indicated a new date for re-opening (Masina, 2020). The education sector response to school closures has involved distance learning activities using radio, TV, and online platforms (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, 2020a; b). The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology has worked with the private sector (e.g. TNM) to provide free Internet for students in support of learning continuity. Teacher unions are represented on two COVID-19 task forces (national/government and Ministry of Education-led task forces), providing space for social dialogue concerning safety and equity in contexts of school closures and planning for school reopening.

Participants’ descriptions of teacher leadership were often associated with government-led initiatives, in which a small number of teachers were formally selected to deliver and record distance education lessons using TV and radio; however, such activities could not be considered examples of grassroots-level teacher leadership in the context of this study, based on our analytical framework (i.e., teachers were being asked or selected by their employer to carry out crisis education responses rather than initiating their own activities). Some teachers did initiate and lead efforts informally to help maintain learning continuity. For example, teachers made use of WhatsApp and SMS to deliver notes and lessons, particularly to junior secondary students who were preparing to write national exams; those teachers who trailblazed the use of mobile phones to keep students connected and learning during school closures ‘got other teachers onboard’. A stark contrast was noted, however, between the limited engagement of public school teachers and the ‘constant’ engagement of private school teachers, the latter being heavily involved with online learning activities, including the use of WhatsApp, Google Classroom and other platforms.

There was evidence of teacher leadership in community outreach efforts, in collaboration with religious leaders and community elders, focused on sensitizing them about keeping safe from and preventing the spread of COVID-19, including how to make masks and liquid soap. Teachers were reportedly involved by the government in assisting with distributing food to families (food that was intended to be used for school feeding programs), and teachers used these home visits as opportunities to inquire and advise on parents’ and students’ overall health and psycho-emotional well-being. When some students returned to school recently to prepare to write their leaving exams, teachers were engaged in safety planning and preparation.

Mozambique

It is not that we are idle [during school closures]. We have a strong role in giving advice. (Mozambique, Teacher, MZ6)

In Mozambique, schools were closed on March 23rd, 2020. Gradual return to schools was initially scheduled for July 2020 (República de Moçambique, n/d), but in the face of concerns regarding the absence of adequate sanitation and water access in many areas, as well as the prevalence of large class sizes in urban regions, reopening was postponed. A phased resuming of in-person classes began in October 2020, starting with upper secondary students. The Ministry of Education and Human Development launched TV lessons, as well as educational radio programming, with the participation of small numbers of teachers mostly located in the capital city. At country-wide level, teachers were called upon to develop and hand in paper-based worksheets for their students. Digital technology has been used for remote learning engagement in some of the urban contexts, with accounts of video and audio lessons being shared through email, WhatsApp groups, YouTube and Facebook. However, online learning has taken a more limited approach, given lack of widespread access to electronic devices and the Internet among teachers and students. As such, paper-based study guides distributed by teachers remained the predominant strategy for continuity of learning.

Participants reported that teachers leveraged their authority and credibility to act as knowledge brokers, providing valuable guidance, information and mentorship to students and communities during COVID-19 school closures. This action was directed at helping to reduce COVID-19 transmission and advocating for educational issues such as mitigating risk factors related to school dropout throughout the pandemic. In particular, there were accounts of teacher-led regular informal community meetings with adolescent girls during school closures to foster empowerment and strengthen protection from early marriage and teenage pregnancy in an effort to ensure continuity of education during the pandemic and beyond. Collectively, teachers helped focus community attention on this issue and sought to secure support for girls' education through household visits and telephone calls with families and community leaders, including local religious authorities and midwives. Teacher-led activities focusing on protecting girls' right to education were promoted by the teachers' union committee for youth and women. A relevant part of this strategy, as described by participants, refers to actively monitoring attendance lists once schools reopen, so as to track the return of female students and tailor outreach responses accordingly.

Besides this gender-sensitive focus, teachers also described actively providing COVID-19 infection prevention information to students and the wider community. Given limited access to mobile and Internet technology, teachers found innovative and alternative means to reach and communicate with students in ways that adhered to physical distancing rules and the local context. For instance, one teacher described how he took a megaphone to communicate key messages to students and families in the community on COVID-19 preventative measures, including cough etiquette, use of masks, and hand hygiene habits. Teachers acted as 'multipliers' by passing along health and safety-related information, some of it provided to them by the teachers' union via regular radio programming. Finally, the national teachers' union has taken an active role in social dialogue with the government in the development of safe school protocols and the preparation and monitoring of school buildings for safe reopening.

3.3 Facilitators and barriers to teacher leadership

Every time we change something, there is some noise. But I know many things are happening and many teachers in many schools are doing things. There is a huge sharing of experiences among teacher groups. (Brazil, Teacher, BR15)

The pandemic brought a lot of bad things, but it also stirred an essential feeling, which is empathy. All of a sudden, the pandemic put everyone in the same situation, including teachers and students, all as victims or connected to victims of COVID-19. [The] greatest lesson is one of solidarity, of how it's important to support and be supported. (Maranhão, Teacher, BR13)

If we consider the examples presented in the previous section, there are certain personality characteristics among individuals engaged in teacher-led initiatives during COVID-19 school closure, such as capacity to problem solve, generosity, willingness, and self-initiation, to name just a few. These teachers also showed flexibility in terms of adopting new roles and experimenting with new forms of distance learning modalities: it was often noted that it was easier for younger teachers to adapt, especially to new technologies, compared to older teachers. In some cases, teacher leaders invested quite heavily in their professional development. Aside from personality, the results point in particular to one important source for the development of teacher leadership during COVID-19 school closure: involvement in teacher networks, knowledge sharing and peer exchange. This specific skill and expertise, something that could form part of teacher training in the future, will be described below.

The educational crisis brought a unique opportunity for wide-reaching virtual education communities, because teachers everywhere were affected, resulting in a rich talent pool for teachers to draw on for idea sharing and mutual support. Teachers in the case studies spoke about how they utilized educational applications, platforms and resources for peer-to-peer learning on new technological approaches, collaboration and collegiality, as well as for their own psychosocial and mental health support. COVID-19 meant that teacher networks were largely transferred to platforms such as WhatsApp, Facebook and Zoom. Virtual teacher networks and collaboration helped teachers to 'not feel alone', included them in an informal 'support system' and 'gave them hope' (GH7). As a participant from Ghana described, 'Zoom meetings have been used to discuss how to assist the students. All teacher fellows share their experiences. We learn from each other's successes and challenges. It's been very helpful. It has been a learning platform' (GH11). During COVID-19, teacher professional spaces and communities of practice were expanded well beyond individual schools, affording access to more varied expertise, skills and experience. Underlining the importance of teacher collaboration during crisis responses, a teacher in The Gambia said, '[With] all these people working together - we can do great things' (GA1). In some ways, these virtual teacher networks, which took place outside of formal school structures, provided a democratic space for teachers to freely communicate, innovate and act in collaboration with other educators.

Turning now to barriers, teachers noted that lack of time and stress related to financial and health concerns brought on by the pandemic were potential inhibitors of teacher leadership. Family needs, health concerns and economic challenges were exacerbated during the pandemic, and further limited the amount of physical and emotional energy that teachers had available for

leadership activities. Teacher-led initiatives depended on collaborative work and professional development, which requires an investment of time. As one participant noted, ‘teachers have to have time to study, to get together, to get motivated to innovate and lead.’ (BR5). In the context of COVID-19 school closure, there were extra demands on teachers’ time in their personal lives - for example, caring for children at home, which may have had an unequal impact on the capacity for teacher leadership among teachers who were mothers of school-aged children. There were also extra professional demands placed on some teachers. This was especially the case for teachers who returned to school for partial re-openings or examinations, requiring that they teach students during the day and then find time in the evenings or weekends to continue working with students who had not gone back to school. In some cases, teachers reported having started up their own small businesses to help ensure the economic survival of their households. These issues added up to teachers' perspectives related to not having sufficient time in their ‘regular teaching job’ to be able to take on extra tasks and responsibilities associated with leadership.

Lastly, a perhaps obvious but common challenge to teacher-led initiatives during school closures concerned poor and unstable Internet connectivity, particularly in more rural and remote areas, not to mention its costs. The reason that this is positioned as a barrier to teacher-led initiatives is that without access to ICT and relevant training during lockdown situations and school closure, the extent to which teachers can initiate, communicate and engage in student-focused initiatives is extremely limited. Teachers often expressed frustration that they could not do more for students during school closure, due to the limits on face-to-face interactions and lack of ICT to help compensate for such. As a teacher in Ghana suggested, ‘if we had a good [network] system in place I'm sure it won't be difficult delivering lessons or touching base with students or even for them to benefit from the free lessons that are aired on TV’ (GH11). Inadequate or completely absent training opportunities for teachers on the use of digital teaching and learning technologies was viewed as being a central impediment to teacher-led responses to school closures.

3.4 Lessons learned for teacher leadership to enhance education system resilience

During the interviews, participants shared their perspectives on lessons learned during the COVID-19 crisis in terms of fostering teacher leadership and resilience in the education sector more generally. Three main areas for attention emerged from these views with the view that future efforts in these areas would help to stimulate teacher leadership during crises and more broadly: teacher recognition and support, ICT infrastructure and capacity, as well as initial teacher education and professional development.

Recognize and support teachers as leaders

[We need to prepare] our teachers to be able to take action in every time, every circumstance, every situation so that they don't see themselves only as people who transmit knowledge, but also see themselves as a change agent in society beyond education. (The Gambia, Key Informant GA2)

The need to recognize and support teachers as leaders and collaborative problem-solvers is a key insight emerging from the crisis education responses in the case study countries. ‘It’s very important that teachers are considered leaders, as people with ideas who can offer solutions to problems. If they can see teachers as people who have ideas and solutions to problems, we can

make a lot of strides' (MA5). Participants in the case studies typically did not think of teachers as leaders, and some were hesitant to embrace a role that they perceived as assigned to principals. Thus, participants indicated that the need to recognize teachers as leaders and innovators is a change that must be reflected at all levels of the system, from government to school leaders/managers, and is important for building education system resilience for future emergencies. Speaking to the issue of ensuring recognition as leaders, a participant in Ghana highlighted the importance of providing teachers with sufficient resources and support:

[I think we've learned] that teachers can be made to take certain initiatives and that if they are properly equipped - socially, psychologically, and physically - they will be able to handle [crisis] situations very well with their students. So the lesson we are learning is that we need to sufficiently equip and support the teachers, resource them, so that they will be able to play those [leadership] roles effectively. (GH3)

Similarly, a teacher in Malawi emphasized that 'teachers know how, they have knowledge... it is part of their paid duty, their social responsibility, they have a role to play in society ... so let them, support them' (MA10). The absence of monitoring systems in the case study countries to identify and track teachers' activities during COVID-19 school closures stands in tension with calls emerging from this research to recognize teacher leadership and innovation. Moreover, we found little evidence, except for the *Good Calling* initiative in Brazil, of any meaningful efforts to scale up the teacher-led initiatives or innovations, and most were occurring on a small-scale level. Teacher leaders also need opportunities for continuous professional growth in order to develop their role, and time needs to be set aside for professional development and collaborative work and planning, as well as for the building of teacher networks. While the case studies have shown that teachers do obtain intrinsic rewards through leadership activities, such as increased influence, collegiality and benefits for students, these also came with strongly increased workload and responsibilities, often without adequate compensation. Some form of remuneration or reward for teacher leaders is critical for sustaining teacher motivation for leadership.

Practising leadership may be experienced as fraught with potential risks for teachers when processes for recognizing their leadership are weak and/or absent. For example, some teachers reported concerns about being held accountable if they took initiative and acted in an innovative manner. In Brazil, a participant noted, 'if an innovative teacher records a YouTube lesson but misuses a word, or gets misinterpreted, in our context of political polarization and fake news, their life and reputation might be terribly attacked' (BR6). Another participant reported, 'those who look for alternatives, they might end up feeling silly for trying and conclude that it is better just to sit back and wait for the government to do something' (BR1). In a sense, engaging in leadership raises the stakes for teachers and challenges traditional views on their role. Lack of teachers' professional autonomy was a further issue highlighted by participants: in systems where curriculum and pedagogical practices are highly prescribed, it is often easier and less risky for teachers to behave in ways that maintain the status quo.

The research found that 'teacher leadership' could be a meaningful construct to teachers and education participants when it was introduced as a way of describing how teachers can collaborate and develop professionally through collective endeavors in ways that positively affect

students and school communities. ‘Teachers can be helpful in influencing local behaviours in emergency and crisis contexts,’ mentioned a participant in Ghana; ‘we have a wonderful resource which is the teachers. They are in the communities. They are everywhere. It's important that we realize that this resource can be used every time, every moment and [in] every circumstance’ (GH1). Interview participants suggested that COVID-19 may be teaching the relevance and urgency of the concept of teacher leadership. As a result of their work during COVID-19, teachers in some contexts are receiving recognition and more visibility from the government and wider public.

Extend and strengthen digital infrastructure and training

A further key lesson to be learned from the experiences of the countries in the case studies concerns the unavoidable dependence on digital technologies for teaching and learning in emergency education settings. When schools closed and countries went into lockdown, digital learning tools became the primary means of continuing contact and interaction between teachers, learners and families. As discussed above, it was only in rare situations that teachers were able to physically meet with students in small groups and following safety protocols; for most teachers, phones, SMS, WhatsApp and online learning platforms such as Google Classroom offered the only means for them to reach their colleagues and students for academic purposes, to provide psychosocial support, and to share information and advice concerning staying safe in the pandemic. The urgency of preparing teachers to use digital learning technologies was further underlined by a teacher in Ghana who stated,

We can't be left behind in the ICT revolution. It has awakened us to the dawn of an era that started long before COVID. That we cannot advance teacher training, teacher professional development, and teaching and learning, if our teachers are not equipped with the skills of this generation, which is ICT. COVID is not asking us to do anything that is strange, it is asking us to do things that we should have been doing, but we were dragging our feet. (GH5)

As suggested by study participants, investments in digital infrastructure and training of teachers on the use of digital technologies for teaching and learning purposes, should be understood as helping ensure that enabling conditions are in place to help motivate and nurture teacher leadership and/or innovation. In the context of school closures, it was clear that having the ability to access and effectively use digital technologies was pivotal in facilitating collaborative problem-solving amongst teachers during school closures, and in turn, their leadership and innovation. In sum, digital technologies and related infrastructure are not necessarily drivers of teacher leadership in and of themselves; however, we suggest that they may be critical antecedents for teacher-led initiatives during school closures.

Reform teacher education

Another key lesson concerns the need to reform pre- and in-service teacher education and training: ‘now we have to change teacher education, to make sure teachers are prepared to deal with challenging adversities ... especially focusing on the technological component of education’ (MZ3). Participants highlighted that the pandemic experience has shown the deficiencies and limitations of existing teacher education practices. For example, concerns were raised about teachers only being prepared to teach larger groups of students face-to-face in physical

classrooms and how this gap is being spotlighted in the context of school closures. It was suggested by individuals across the participant groups in our sample countries that teacher education and training practices must be reformed to prepare teachers to use distance and online technologies in what can be more individualized virtual spaces (e.g. one-on-one, small groups). A teacher in Ghana framed the lesson as being about ‘modernizing’ teacher education, suggesting that,

Teacher preparation is outdated. For me, COVID has presented an opportunity for policies or initiatives that we have been advocating for a long time; that the public school teacher must be a sophisticated teacher. The public school teacher must have access to trends, research data, new knowledge, emerging issues, new technologies in education, and the modern teacher cannot be connected with modern trends in educational development if they are not computer literate. So, COVID has presented that opportunity to us, to modernize our teacher training and modernize our teachers and modernize our learning process. (GH5)

In addition to integrating digital learning and preparing teachers to effectively use it in their professional practice, participants suggested the importance of reforming teacher education and training to explicitly and substantively address teacher leadership, to cultivate leadership skills and attitudes and to motivate teachers to apply these in innovative ways. Teacher education and training practices need to focus more on developing teachers’ leadership capacities and motivation, something that was thought to be possible through the use of appropriate incentives (e.g. wages, resources, opportunities to collaborate with other teachers), because ‘without adequate conditions, it is not possible to do the job well. For teachers to lead well, those conditions have to be in place’ (MZ6).

4. Discussion and conclusion

In these low-income contexts, an emphasis was placed on what teachers perceived as immediate and pressing needs affecting students, including psychosocial support for students, raising health awareness, and safeguarding students from child labour, early marriage and pregnancy. As a teacher from El Salvador reported, ‘teachers have a direct impact in the lives of their students, including in the provision of emotional support to students. Teachers had this reference role before, but this becomes even more important in contexts of crises when families are undergoing extreme stress and anxiety’ (EL5).

During this study, we found that the term ‘leadership’ was not commonly a word that teachers and education stakeholders readily associated with teachers’ work. That being said, the findings reveal that many teachers were in fact engaged in bottom-up teacher-led initiatives during COVID-19 school closures. Furthermore, participation in the semi-structured interviews triggered thought and reflection about the issue of teacher leadership and an acknowledgement, especially among teachers, that they were engaged in different forms of primarily informal teacher leadership roles. Examples of teacher leadership in these primarily low-income contexts largely took the form of grassroots initiatives. In the context of school closures, where ‘business as usual’ was not an option, we found evidence of teachers working outside the classroom and schools to bring their ‘voice’, knowledge and expertise to influence children, families and the wider

community on practices to reduce the transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Teachers also initiated social safety net activities to ensure that the immediate health and nutrition needs of families were being met. Furthermore, teachers raised awareness in their local communities, sometimes alongside community elders and leaders, about the importance of returning to schools when they reopen, and they engaged in community dialogue about prevention of early marriage. Teachers also offered advice to parents on time management and how to balance household needs for children's labour with children's need for time for their studies. We have defined these activities as forms of teacher leadership because they were initiated by teachers themselves and were not expected or demanded of them in their regular teacher roles. Teachers responded to the pandemic with these types of initiatives based on their close contact with and perception of the needs of families, and communities in which they lived and worked. Thus, at the community level, teachers displayed leadership with respect to promoting information sharing about COVID-19 and led mobilization efforts to reassure students and parents when it was safe to return to school.

We found some examples of leadership at the classroom level focused on establishing initial lines of communication and contact with families via messaging or social media apps (e.g., WhatsApp), and contextualizing and personalizing distance learning materials provided by the government to ensure they 'fit' the needs of the students with whom teachers had direct contact. In Latin America, there were some examples of high-tech solutions initiated by teachers which utilized existing online platforms (e.g. Google Classroom) and YouTube videos to provide personalized learning to their classroom students during school closure.

However, it should be noted that the lines of demarcation between classroom level and community level became blurred during school closures, particularly in the examples from Africa. Teachers often left their school communities and returned to their home communities during the COVID-19 lockdown. With limited access to mobile phones and other technology among students and families, it proved challenging for teachers to initiate activities that were directed at their classrooms and schools, because they were physically distant. In some cases, teachers that returned to their home communities assumed a universal teacher role and provided distance learning, as well as community mobilization discussed above, to students close to home. The fact that teacher leadership largely occurred at the community level during COVID-19 school closures, raises questions about the relevance of the classroom-school-community framework of teacher leadership in contexts where schools are closed and opportunities to maintain contact at the classroom and school levels are limited due to physical distancing and lack of ICT to bridge the gap.

A key aspect of teacher leadership during COVID-19 school closures was directed at ameliorating student vulnerabilities, whether related to nutrition, mental health, or protection from exploitation, as well as supporting inclusion and equity for rural and marginalized students with respect to accessing government-directed distance learning opportunities. For example, through translating learning materials for ethnic and linguistic minorities, adapting materials to make them more locally relevant and appealing to students, and supporting access to children without connectivity through community learning circles. In addition to supporting continuity of learning and inclusion, a critical part of teacher self-driven initiatives during COVID-19 school closures was directed at prioritizing and promoting student socioemotional learning, including support for

mental health, psychosocial well-being and protection from heightened social risk factors that potentially jeopardized student learning.

Existing definitions of teacher leadership which often posit improved student achievement and learning as the ultimate goal of teacher leadership (e.g. Smith et al., 2017; York-Barr and Duke, 2004) do not necessarily fit the description and goals of teacher leadership during emergency situations in low-income contexts. The examples that teachers shared with us of initiatives during initial COVID-19 school closures, focus by and large on ensuring student welfare, health, protection, and psychosocial well-being. The findings therefore suggest that COVID-19 may have re-shuffled student needs, and teachers' priorities expanded beyond an exclusive focus on student learning to ensure that immediate needs are being addressed. Thus, teacher leadership in crisis settings might have a different set of intermediate goals compared to the learning goals that usually account for teacher leadership in regular school operations.

In addition, the case studies did not show that 'influence over' peers was a critical element of teacher leadership, as set out in definitions of teacher leader in the literature. Rather, the case studies showed that peer learning, collaboration and exchange was an important driver of teacher leadership, above and beyond peer influence. It is not clear whether this is a reflection of the crisis setting or more general teaching environments in selected countries. The results indicated that teacher professional spaces were expanded during COVID-19 school closures well beyond individual schools. Teachers collaborated widely and received practical and psychosocial support from educators across different schools and regions, and even countries. These peer learning processes and networks were vital for sharing experiences and successful practices to learn how to address the various challenges, and for supporting teachers' own mental health and well-being. The cases highlighted how much teachers themselves wanted to learn from one another. Although there was not strong support for teacher influence over peers during COVID-19, there were numerous examples of teachers influencing local communities and families. The role of influence in teacher leadership during crisis situations in low-income contexts needs further study.

When asked what is needed to help teachers play effective leadership roles during health emergencies and other crises, and for building system resilience, teachers across the case studies responded in similar ways. Firstly, when educational institutions are closed, participants reported that ICT platforms are needed for teachers to take a lead on educational responses, including to promote continuity of learning and home-school communications, as well as to promote teacher collaboration and set up ways of allowing teachers to work together. This includes a need and demand for a mix of technologies including high-tech and low-tech solutions such as mobile-based apps. Related to this, teachers reported that they needed support in using such tools during the crisis and longer-term: they needed new training on using ICT skills for remote teaching and for collaboration. Enabling teachers to integrate technology in a pedagogically relevant way, as well as to collaborate and problem solve with peer teachers, was viewed as being central to teacher leadership and innovation when schools are closed.

Lastly, the case studies showed that teachers have the capacity for leadership, for the use of innovative practices, and for designing new initiatives at grassroots levels; however, teachers reported that there is a need to recognize and appreciate teachers at all levels of the system for

their leadership potential and capabilities. As a result, in terms of antecedents to teacher leadership in crisis settings, we find certain aspects that relate to previous training, such as ICT skills and expertise in remote teaching. In addition, teachers in the sample described the interplay of personal motivation, awareness and self-initiation as important sources for the development of teacher leadership. These attributes might also be enhanced through training. But it is also likely that they are maintained through rewarding, recognizing and appreciating the work of teachers in order to motivate teacher leaders to continue to enhance their practice and support for students and communities.

In terms of building longer-term education resilience, the case studies highlighted that in crisis settings teachers may take on new roles beyond teaching and learning. They are well-placed and well-regarded with respect to providing communication and advocacy, and their initiatives often, but not always, focus on promoting inclusion and bridging the gap between top-down educational response efforts and the needs of local communities. Although teachers in the sample shared numerous examples of their own initiatives during school closures, it was notable that they rarely referenced specific teacher-initiated activities with respect to preparation for safe school reopenings or the return to school. This may be explained by the fact that schools were closed in all countries, and were at different planning phases for reopening, but it could also relate to the fact that teachers have less autonomy and initiative when it comes to decisions and activities related to the formal school environment, in contrast to their ability to exercise initiative in more informal community settings.

Our study is not the first to suggest that teacher leadership is an under-recognized and under-exploited resource in education systems during emergency situations (see for example, Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), 2019; Novelli and Sayed, 2016; Novelli et al., 2014; Schott et al., 2020). Exploring productive ways to develop this support and facilitate teacher leadership in times of crisis is an important task for future research. Similarly, further research is required that collects empirical evidence to investigate the relationship between teacher leadership and educational outcomes, especially in low-income contexts, and to examine ways in which the new forms of teacher leadership which highlight collaboration and recognition for teachers as both school based and community based leaders can be maintained beyond the pandemic.

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Annex 1: Key Informants

We wish to acknowledge and thank the following individuals for contributing to this study:

- Mariam Abdul-Rahman
- Elisa Adler
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- Roberto Franklin de Leão
- Daniel Dotse
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- Nadya Dutra
- Portia Dzamvivié
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- Lamin Fatajo
- Vinobajee Gautam
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- Kaddijatou C. Jallow
- Nuha Jatta
- Momodou Jeng
- Mark Dankyira Korankye
- Divine Kpe
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- Falison Lemani
- Carlos Lenuzza
- Lauriane Madeira
- Rose Mandere
- Ricardo-Brenes Martinez
- Walter Martin Ulloa Marquez
- Joyce Mbebe
- João Paulo Mendes de Lima
- Arthur Oltramari
- Israel Montano Osorio
- Rebeca Otero
- Carolyn Medel-Anonuevo
- George Mindano
- Fletcher Msukwa
- Milandu Mwale
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- Darlington Nuwertey
- Caíque Paixão
- Leonan Pereira Rodrigues
- Carlos Rodriguez
- Mario Ruiz
- Remane Selimane
- Essa Sowe
- Eusébio Joaquim Waera Vareiro
- Andrés Alonso Henriquez Villalobos
- Bernard Kwarteng Yeboah
- Mussarrat Youssef

Annex 2: Informed Consent and Interview Protocol

Research Information and Consent Letter

Research Project Title: *Teacher Leadership in Covid-19 Developing Country Crisis Response to Education*

Principal Researcher: Dr. Karen Mundy

Research Team Members: Tatiana Feitosa de Britto, Carly Manion, and Kerrie Proulx

Research Participant's Name:

Thank you for agreeing to speak with us as part of the above UNESCO-commissioned study. You have been invited to participate because of your experience and knowledge of education systems and/or teacher leadership in one or more of the countries in our sample. The research is intended to generate new insights into teacher leadership shown in the wake of COVID-19 and to explore promising policies and strategies to affirm teachers' leadership in emergency education situations. The results will be used for a UNESCO commissioned report and virtual presentation for World Teachers' Day, October 2020. We are interested in learning more about your perceptions and experiences related to teacher engagement in COVID-19 crisis education responses in Ghana.

We have scheduled 60 minutes for our conversation. We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop our conversation or withdraw from the research at any time.

Ethical standards for research require that participants explicitly agree to speak with us and understand how their information will be used. This form is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of your involvement and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Would you therefore **please read the information below and then sign at the bottom if you agree**, to certify that you approve the following:

- You must be 18 or older to participate in this research project.
- The conversation will take place over Zoom and it will be recorded.
- The recording will not be transcribed; rather, it will be used to develop further the notes taken by research team members during the conversation.
- Data from the conversation will be analysed by the four team members named above.
- Access to the recording and notes will be limited to research team members only.
- Records will be kept confidential. Your identity will be kept private.
- When the results of this study are written or presented your name will not be used.
- Participants will receive a signed copy of this consent form for their records.
- The recording and notes will be destroyed 6 months after submission and approval of the final project report.

By signing this form, I agree that;

I am voluntarily taking part in this project. I understand that I don't have to take part, and I can stop the conversation at any time;

The recording and notes from it may be used as described above;

I have been able to ask any questions I might have, and I understand that I am free to contact the researcher with any questions I may have in the future.

Participant's Signature

Date

Researcher's Signature

Date

Please contact the Research Coordinator, or Principal Researcher if you have any questions or concerns.

Research Coordinator: Carly Manion carly.manion@utoronto.ca

Principal Researcher: Karen Mundy karen.mundy@utoronto.ca

Semi-structured Key Informant Interview Protocol

Part I: Introduction/participant Background

Thank you for meeting with us today. To start, would you please indicate your position, how long you've been working in this role, and what your primary responsibilities are. As previously explained, the focus of this research is on teachers and particularly their leadership and innovations in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. With this in mind, what opportunities do/have you had to interact with and/or learn about the activities of K-12 teachers in [country name]? What other opportunities or sources of information are available to you to learn more about what teachers are doing in the context of COVID-19?

Part II: Topics

During the crisis (school closures and *safe return to school, as applicable*)

Before moving on to the next questions, which focus on teacher leadership and innovation, we wanted to briefly share with you how we are conceptualizing “teacher leadership”. For this study, teacher leadership involves bottom-up and teacher-initiated and led activities. These activities may cut across thematic areas associated with child safety and development: a) support for students’ (online) academic learning and socio-emotional well-being b) health, hygiene and/or nutritional support and related outreach work c) social protection, including safety and violence prevention d) planning and preparation, including communications. In turn, we see these horizontal thematic areas of teacher leadership as potentially occurring at classroom, school/family/community or system levels. I hope this explanation helps. Do you have any questions before proceeding?

RQ 2a. What are noteworthy examples of grassroots or bottom-up teacher-led initiatives that emerged during COVID-19 school closures and reopening? What are the potential effects, and for whom?

RQ 2b. What were potential facilitators and barriers to teacher-led initiatives during COVID-19? Follow up to RQ2b, ask the following (pre-crisis related questions) (probe for role of teachers’ organizations in supporting teacher leadership and innovation, broadly and in the context of COVID crisis):

RQ 1a. What national plans and resources were already in place before the pandemic to support crisis response and resilience in the education sector?

RQ 1b. What systemic opportunities and support were already in place before the pandemic to support leadership and innovations from teachers and their organizations?

RQ 2c. Have monitoring and evaluation processes been established during COVID-19 to provide evidence on teacher leadership and the challenges faced by teachers? If yes, please explain.

Part III: Going Forward/Prospects for Nurturing and Sustaining Teachers’ Agency in the Context of Crisis Education Responses

RQ 3a. How can teacher leadership support crisis education and more effective system resilience in the longer-term?

Ask the following: Where and how do you see teacher leadership contributing to crisis education responses and more effective education system resilience in the longer-term?

RQ 3b. What policies or mechanisms have been established to ensure sustainability of teacher leadership initiatives (post-crisis)?

Ask the following: Are you aware of any policies or mechanisms that have been established (or are being discussed) to help ensure sustainability of teacher leadership initiatives going forward?

RQ 3c. What lessons were learned during the crisis about how to engage teachers and their leadership in contexts of crisis, and more broadly?

Ask the following: What lessons would you say have emerged during the pandemic crisis about how to encourage teachers and their leadership in contexts of crisis, as well as more broadly?

Conclusion/Wrap-up

Are there any other teachers (or others) that you would recommend that we try to speak with about teacher leadership and roles in the context of the country's emergency education response to the COVID-19 crisis? (Would you please be able to introduce us by email, or could you please share their contact details?) Is there anything else that you would like to share concerning teachers that has not already been discussed?

Thank you for your time.

Annex 3: Interview Summary Sheet

DD-MM-2020 – Country: Interview with Name - Organization

General		
<i>Date</i>		<i>Team members present</i>
Interviewees and ID		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Organization and job title</i>	<i>Email</i>
Note-taking		
<i>Name</i>	<i>Date completed</i>	<i>Recorded</i>

PART 1: Background

PART 2: Topics

Record responses by topic with clear headings, not necessarily in chronological sequence of discussion. Make clear when a direct quote is recorded; and add headings and sub-headings as needed and recorded against research questions.

PART 3: Documents provided or recommended

Seek full reference and/or follow up to obtain a copy of the document

PART 4: Other interviewees recommended

Obtain full contact details

Annex 4: The Positioning of Teachers as Described in Education COVID - 19 Response Plans and Guidelines

Country/State	Summary Analysis
Brazil (state of Maranhão)	<p>Teachers are framed in a mixed way in the state guidelines for the special education regime taking place in the suspension of face to face classes due to the pandemic. While they are required to establish routines and orientation for students during school closures and prompted to use pedagogical discretion as to the choice of the most appropriate technological tools in their specific contexts, they are also positioned as "deliverers" of the prescribed curriculum, being required to provide evidence of ensuring the mandated workload and number of school days and to organize assessments of what has been remotely learned when schools reopen. Recommendations as to what kinds of material to provide (in print and digitally) are also specified, as well as suggestions of virtual platforms and teaching approaches.</p>
El Salvador	<p>While teachers are framed mostly as deliverers of the learning continuity strategy devised and detailed at the central level, the government has acknowledged their key role in ensuring learning continuity and socioemotional support during the pandemic. This acknowledgement has included a ministry-led initiative to identify and celebrate what have been considered good teacher practices put in place during school closures. Ministerial documents refer to teachers' responsibility in activating communication networks with their school community and in recommending complementary activities for home learning. In these tasks, teachers are to take into account the material made available by the ministry in its website, TV and radio programming. As the country moved towards embracing the widespread adoption of Google Classroom and education digitalization, teachers are expected to participate in online capacity building and organize teaching around curricular priorities established at the central level.</p>

The Gambia	<p>Teachers are largely framed as "doers" and not "leaders" in The Gambia's Education Sector COVID-19 Response plan as well as the country's application for GPE's COVID-19 Accelerated Funding. Even then, the strategies identified in the document appear to focus on just 100 subject specialist teachers and their involvement in distance learning via TV and radio. More generally, teachers are amongst those targeted for awareness-raising and behavioural change activities to participate in and support "home-based learning". Teachers are also the target of ICT training activities and the strategy includes the provision of "cost-free" access to online teaching and learning platforms. According to the country's COVID-19 Accelerated Funding grant application, "adequate megabytes" for teachers and learners will be facilitated through two payments during the course of the project. The strategy also includes capacity building for teachers who will be expected to deliver accelerated learning programs post-crisis to mitigate loss of learning time during school closures. Capacity building for teachers on inclusive education practices is also part of the government's crisis response plan. Teachers are targeted for psycho-social support, but their potential leadership in providing such support to their learners, families and communities is not mentioned.</p>
Ghana	<p>Teachers are largely framed as service deliverers and not leaders in Ghana's COVID-19 Coordinated Education Response plan as well as the country's application for GPE's COVID-19 Accelerated Funding. In the country's education response, teachers are targeted for capacity building for facilitating and delivering home-based, distance and remote education; inclusive and accessible education; crisis management, health, psychosocial well-being and child well-being in response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and, rapid assessment of student learning and the delivery of remedial and accelerated learning for when schools reopen. Leadership does not appear anywhere in either document, with the focus instead being on "enabling" teachers, through the provision of resources, support and training/capacity building to a) create supplementary content and deliver online instruction; b) promote online capacity development and collaboration through Professional Learning Communities; c) enable remote student assessment, monitoring and tracking; and d) engage parents and communities in student learning.</p>

Malawi	<p>Teachers are mentioned infrequently in Malawi's National COVID Preparedness and Response Plan but are framed in one instance as "influencers", particularly with respect to communicating information and good practices for COVID safety. Otherwise, teachers are framed as part of the target groups for government action in terms of ensuring their safety when schools reopen. In the country's application for GPE COVID Accelerated Funding, teachers are described as being "the backbone of any education system and the key to reaching quality learning outcomes, regardless of context and situation" (p. 14) and that the education system COVID-19 response will "continue to ensure that teachers are at the front line in ensuring continuity and quality of learning under remote distance education conditions" (p. 14). While mobilizing innovative technologies to ensure continuity of learning at pre-primary, primary and lower secondary levels, the plan stresses it will be important that teachers are also involved to facilitate quality of instruction through radio, TV and other distance learning platforms for all learners. In addition, it highlights teachers will be essential in communicating measures that prevent the spread of the virus, ensuring that children and their communities are safe and supported.</p>
Mozambique	<p>Teachers are included as one of the implementation human resources groups in Mozambique's application to the GPE COVID-19 Accelerated Funding. The document recognizes teachers have no sufficient ICT-training or resources to monitor learning taking place at the students' homes or to provide psychosocial support during crises. It targets teachers for training and capacity-building in education in emergencies, disaster risk reduction, psychosocial support, and remote learning alternatives. It also includes the goal of enhancing teachers' knowledge about health and hygiene COVID-19 preventative measures and refers to the expectation that teachers prepare worksheets for primary and secondary students without access to online, TV and radio lessons provided by the government during school closures. There is mention to some teachers participating in the recording of these lessons, not only in Portuguese but also in native languages. Overall, there is the expectation that teachers will learn about symptoms and prevention of COVID-19, so as to be sensitized and committed to promoting learning continuity during school closures, as well as engaged in safe school reopening and learning acceleration after students return to face to face classes.</p>

Sources: Documents reviewed included country COVID-19 response plans (national and/or education sector specific) and where applicable, country grant applications for GPE's COVID-19 Accelerated Funding.

Annex 5: Conceptualizing Teacher Leadership at Different Levels: Definitions from the Project's Terms of Reference

Classroom-level leadership (Micro): This refers to both face-to-face and virtual classrooms. This leadership level considers interaction of teachers with their learners where teachers' authority and competence are central. The teacher makes decisions regarding teaching, interpreting the curriculum, sequencing learning, facilitating learning, monitoring and assessing outcomes in specific subjects and other cross-curriculum learning outcomes, based on knowledge of students' ability levels, talents and challenges. The teacher goes beyond adhering to narrow role definitions but leads the teaching-learning process by being innovative and making impactful decisions. Teachers' leadership at this level also applies to their decisions about the selection of ICT tools, learning management systems and online learning platforms, OERs, social media, radio, or TV, to support the teaching-learning process and meet expected learning objectives, whether in distance learning situations or as part of a blended approach.

School-level leadership (Meso): Teacher leadership at school level represents additional responsibilities, such as performing administration and management tasks, serving on committees (e.g. improvement committee, patronage of clubs) and pedagogical experts. Headteachers and others lead on the identification and selection of virtual learning platforms, e-learning software, textbooks, and other teaching-learning materials to be used on a school- or district-wide basis. As pedagogical experts, headteachers and other classroom teachers are uniquely positioned to lead on articulation and implementation of distance learning preparation plans to enable continuity of education during times of crisis. Through these roles, teachers align professional goals with those of the school and share responsibilities for its success and contribute to shaping its culture. Senior and experienced teachers' mentor or coach juniors and peers, participate in the local community of practice, encourage students and colleagues to learn and do things differently, thus serving as catalysts of change, and confronting obstacles to achieve the school mission.

Community-level leadership (Macro): In addition to teachers' leadership role to ensure internal coherence between curricular components (i.e. learning objectives, subject curriculum/syllabus, teaching methods, textbooks, assessment rubrics), they can also ensure external coherence between curriculum **and societal needs**. The notion of curriculum as a contract between society and education actors helps to ensure i) coherence between interdependent education sub-sectors; ii) consistency between different stages (early childhood to tertiary and lifelong learning); and iii) forms of education (general, TVET, non-formal, informal). This framework is important to define teachers' leadership roles and the contribution they can make to achieve the community and society's desired social, economic and cultural aspirations. Teacher leadership at community level is often demonstrated within district-level coordination structures that have been put in place for the purpose of school accountability efforts such as teacher appraisals, performance evaluations, and school inspections, as well as individual and whole school professional development opportunities and management of teacher career structures. During the COVID-19 crisis and school closures, community-level grassroots demonstrations of leadership can also emerge where teachers develop organic solutions to mitigate educational challenges confronting communities when classrooms and school-level arenas are compromised.

System-level leadership (Macro): Teachers unions usually discuss their role in “social dialogue” as essentially involving the defence of wider issues of social justice. Additionally, though, teachers play an important role in leadership and management within education systems, for example, via professional memberships on administrative bodies and planning committees, involvement in governmental task forces and the like. Thus, during the COVID-19 crisis and in the context of school closures and school reopening, teacher leadership may be exercised, for example, via their participation in COVID response planning and preparations at the system level.

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The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to *"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."* The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.



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