

POLICY BRIEF EMANATING FROM THE RESEARCH PROJECT ENTITLED “EXPLORING SCHOOL LEADERS’ STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT CONTINUED STUDENTS’ LEARNING AMIDST COVID 19 PANDEMIC IN RWANDA”

Aim of the study

To explore school leaders’ strategies to support continued students’ learning amidst COVID 19 pandemic in Rwanda.

Methodology

54 out of 419 schools from 7 districts (2 urban, 5 rural) were sampled. Their respective head teachers were purposively selected. In addition, other 7 key informants were interviewed.

Key Findings

Strategies used to track students’ learning progress

- Home visits, communication with parents using telephone calls or whatsapp messages.

School Leaders’ continuous engagement of teachers to support their students.

- Delivering school messages, giving feedback to subject teachers and providing emotional support to teachers who manifested emotional distress due to COVID-19

Strategies used for ensuring successful return to school after school closure

- Working with local leaders and development partners in implementing back-to-school campaign and remedial and catch-up exercises

Key recommendations

- At policy level, remote learning should be adopted not as a back-up or alternative but an embedded teaching-learning strategies among others.
- Homes have become learning spaces. Hence, they should also be thought about in terms of access to ICT devices.
- The learning content across the curriculum should be digitalized, rendered interactive and self-guided to vivify active and independent learning among students.
- School leaders, teachers, parents, and students should be equipped with digital skills and connected one another through digital platforms.
- School leaders and teachers should continuously benefit of Continuous professional development courses. Some of the areas of focus would be (i) ICT proficiency, (ii) school counselling, (iii) Online learning and (iv) leading teaching and learning in a crisis context.
- Parents and communities should continue supporting schools to fulfill their education related mandates (eg. Sharing information about students, providing learning resources required to students)

Other emerging competences specific on requires of the school leaders going forward.

- Providing emotional support to teachers and students
- Ensuring a healthy and safety school and learning environment
- Using digital technologies in communication, monitoring teaching delivery and school management
- Forecasting/prevention and anticipate future scenarios whether with certainty or not.
- Careful but swift decision-making skills.
- Bringing people together

- Flexibility
- Disaster/crisis management and recovery
- Emotional intelligence/ability to provide professional and emotional support.