

# The Repositioned Role of School Leadership on Learning to Thrive in the Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Era: A Narrative Review of Uganda's Context

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**Article History:**

Received 03.03.2023

Received in revised form

27.07.2023

Accepted

Available online 01.10.2023

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disruptions in the education system and has worsened inequality within and between nations. The competitive power in academic achievement across nations including Uganda rests on pedagogy followed by school leadership. School leadership alone explains up to 27% of the differences in students' learning achievement across regions. While there is glaring literature on school leadership, and its role in learner achievement, the repositioned role of school leadership to match the demands of the post-COVID19 pandemic era has not been given the attention it deserves. Therefore, this narrative review specifically answered the role of school leadership in ensuring learning to thrive in the post-COVID-19 era. This role of education as a very powerful tool for socio-economic growth, development and transformation is clearly spelt out in a number of documents including; Uganda's vision 2040 and the National Development Plan III. Despite the thorough planning, a number of weaknesses in the education system have been exposed by the COVID-19 pandemic which clearly indicated the need for learning to thrive. In this case learners are able to think, provide solutions, and adopt. Accordingly, school leaders have a duty beyond the managerial role and the post COVID-19 era demands re-evaluation of the processes within the school setting to ensure quality and inclusive education while considering the 21st Century demands. Therefore, school leadership has an instructional, distinct, and systemic role to foster learning to thrive in the post-pandemic era. This can be supported by working more collaboratively to share knowledge and best practices with other schools and communities.

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**Keywords:** Narrative review, COVID 19, Education, Learning to Be, Learning to Do, Learning to Live, Post-COVID-19 Pandemic era, School leadership

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## INTRODUCTION

"We cannot return to the world as it was before" [United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2022)], because the COVID-19 pandemic has posed a nightmarish situation in all sectors and economies (Tumwesige, 2020). It is clear that the disruptions due to pandemic have worsened inequality within and between nations and there is a significant likelihood of reversing decades of advancement, particularly in poverty eradication and gender equality. Even though prior to the COVID-19 crisis, the levels and trends in domestic and external financing already fell short of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) expenditure requirements, the pandemic has exacerbated the situation and the funding options for developing economies have been significantly reduced given the current global environment (OECD, 2020).

The pandemic has provided glaring evidence that we all share a socially intertwined humanity and planet hence human beings have a role to ensure sustainability of the various ecosystems for survival, wellbeing and development (UNESCO, 2020, Parveen et al., 2022). The ray of hope now rests in the pillars of the 21st century education of learning beyond knowing. According to Carneiro & Draxler, (2008), the 21st Century pillars of education are philosophical and pragmatic. They include: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together, (Carneiro & Draxler, 2008, Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015, UNESCO, 2020). They focus attention on the social function of education and the ensuing balance between learning for oneself and learning for others, or between knowledge and action. They offer an alternate perspective of education to the one where it is primarily seen as a means of constructing human capital, with the worth of this capital being determined by the rates of return on investment in education (Carneiro & Draxler, 2008).

The 21st Century education calls for a holistic education approach which Dr. Nelson Mandela according to (Africa & Initiative, 2002) considered the most powerful weapon that can be used to change the world. In that regard, educationists are a key component in redefining our place and power in this interdependent world. This is hinged on academic instruction as the first strategy followed by school leadership (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020). While a holistic tailor made approach is desired to meet the socio-economic demands of the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, school leadership and pedagogy remain crucial drivers in learning to thrive. Consequently, the role of school leadership should be repositioned to meet the demands of the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. A report to the Ministry of Education and Sports by Turyagyenda & Atima in 2019 on the strategic interventions towards improvement of school inspections, supervision and attendance indicated that heads of institutions are strategic partners in ensuring school effectiveness through support

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supervision in the schools. The Directorate of Education Standards (DES) has already developed a standard teacher supervision tool for that purpose (Unpublished).

The World Health Organization (WHO) deemed the COVID-19 pandemic a disease of public health emergency on January 30, 2020. After that, nations began to intensify their COVID-19 preparedness and reaction plans (Parveen et al., 2022). Early 2020, considering their vast prior experience with other outbreaks, such as the Ebola virus, most governments closed their borders to international travelers. For example, the government of the Republic of Uganda closed her borders and schools on 20 March 2020. The government's response included the immediate creation of institutional frameworks such as the swift pooling and distribution of cash, and the creation of operational instructions for players in the health system on how to respond (Federica et al., 2020).

Whereas everyone was affected in one way or another, the young generations in education institutions were severely impacted in the short and long-term mental, physical, as well as their sexual and reproductive health. It was clear that they relied on schools to create important, and occasionally protective social networks. The lockdown consequently made teenage girls more susceptible to sexual gender-based violence, and both the girls and boys who were already struggling with an education that could not facilitate and empower them to address their day-to-day challenges prior to the pandemic, became more vulnerable and hopeless during the lockdown [Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), 2020; MoES Report, 2021]. This clearly indicates the gap left by the education system, which school leaders could ably fill given that they influence the activities of the school and are mandated to cause holistic child growth and development.

In Uganda, schools were closed for a period of about two years. During that time, the Ministry of Education and Sports developed a COVID 19 Response Plan with three key objectives: ensuring continuity of learning; preparing for re-opening of education institutions and developing resilience in the education sector to manage emergencies. To ensure continuity of learning, teaching and learning occurred using Televisions, radios and over internet. The latter had challenges of internet disruption and affordability of the required gargets for most learners (Fanelli et al., 2020). School leadership was tasked to ensure their learners accessed learning resources in one way or another so they could continue learning while the schools were closed. The printed self-study learning resources were also distributed to all schools and learners. Learners with special needs, depending on the type of disability, accessed learning through live presentations, recorded radio lessons that were stored on memory cards and in large print and braille (MoES Report, 2021).

After several consultative meetings and guidance, the government of Uganda reopened schools at the beginning of 2022 with Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) and specific guidelines approved by the Ministry of Health. Basic SOPs for education institutions included maintaining social distance of about two meters, having a foot operated washing facility at all strategic points, provision of soap or a sanitizer, and regularly disinfecting classrooms and supplies among others. One of the requirements under the guidelines was the vaccination of all education institutions staff and learners above 18 years ( MoES Report, 2021).

The opening of education institutions brought in learners at various level. While some had opportunity of learning with virtual systems, most of the learners especially in the rural parts of the country had lost two years of learning. Schools were expected to use the Abridged curriculum and other innovative ways to enable all learners to catch up. In addition to this, schools were expected to train the learners to be resilient and adaptable in order to manage the learning loss and acquire knowledge (to know), skills (to do), values (to be) and living together (Social cohesion) for transforming humanity and building strong communities and nations. These skills would enable Ugandan graduates to thrive and be competitive globally (MoES Report, 2021).

Learning to be or to become is a learning approach that was first proposed out of concern that the world would be dehumanized as a result of technology advancement (Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015). Accordingly, it was founded on the idea that the goal of education was human holistic development and complete fulfillment in as far as personality, expressions, and commitments as an individual member of not only a family but also a community, a citizen, a producer, an inventor of techniques, and creative dreamer (Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015). Therefore, curricular should clearly portray the global vision concerning education within and beyond schooling. However, the formal curriculum for primary level of education across the world has been classically comprised of the learning to know and learning to do, while learning to be, and learning to live together are often left to chance (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020).

Fortunately, the lower secondary curriculum approved by government in 2019, just before COVID 19 lockdown, is not only Competence Based Curriculum (CBC) but contains both generic and 21st Century skills (Mabhonga, 2021). The Primary curriculum rolled out in 2007 also has emphasis on competences and skills development in line with the objectives of education in Uganda in the Government White Paper on Education 1992 (Ward et al., 2006). In this regard, this study sought to document how best the Ugandan learners, who are global citizens, could thrive amidst challenges hence the concept of “Learning to be”, or learning to thrive, the third pillar of the 21st Century education agenda. Are school leaders ready to champion this cause?

Operationally, the period that proceeded the reopening of economies and schools is referred to as the Post-COVID-19 pandemic era. Schools that were able to start but with difficulty due to inadequate resources to run the day-to-day operations, and there was a decrease in the number of female students in some schools due to pregnancies or marriage. There was need to rethink and reimagine education amidst the growing fragility, uncertainty, and complexity posed by the pandemic to shape the future of humanity and the planet (Tumwesige, 2020). In light of this, evidence shows that there is a need to learn to be self-driven and innovative. This requires proactive leaders that are able to rethink through the most appropriate strategies to permit the acquisition of the 21st Century skills for survival and adoptability within the post-COVID-19 pandemic era (Geofrey, 2021), reason this paper was advanced.

In most schools around the world, Uganda inclusive, school leaders include the headteacher/principal, deputy, the director of studies, class teachers and prefectural body (Okiria, 2017). School leadership plays a very active role in the direction and development of a positive school culture, including the proactive school mindset, as well as the support and enhancement of staff motivation and commitment. Their actions are necessary to foster improvement and promote success for schools in difficult situations (Day & Sammons, 2014). While School Management Committee (SMC) oversee activities at primary school level, the Board of Governors oversee activities in secondary schools and other Certificate Awarding institutions. The SMC/ BoG members are selected among those who possess dedication, skill, and experience but sometimes, they are not properly coordinated and are unaware of their responsibilities especially on academic matters. The SCM/BoG oversee the work of school leadership.

Research shows that inadequate leadership may explain up to 27% of the difference in students' learning achievement, second only to classroom instruction (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020, Brief, 1800). The evidence suggests that positive change at the school level is uncommon without effective leadership. A successful, extensive, and long-lasting education reform requires strong school leadership that supports continuous improvement and offers instructional assistance (UNESCO, 2020). When leaders encourage a culture of Active Teacher Learning (ATL) and provide necessary incentives, the learning outcomes are holistic. According to an earlier study, school leaders are most effective when they have enough discretionary authority and support, invest time in instructional leadership, and foster an environment of cooperation and shared accountability (Brief, 1800). A learner that goes through an education system with effective instructors and leaders is able to solve day-to-day challenges and adopt anywhere in the world (Africa & Initiative, 2002). Therefore, the post-Covid-19 pandemic era requires such educational leaders. Incidentally many school leaders in Uganda did not demonstrate these skills before COVID-19.

In order to facilitate a quick and smooth adoption of education to mitigate the effects of learning loss and psychosocial effects in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era, there has been series of seminars and workshops to educationists on the COVID-19 pandemic, preparedness and response, the standard operating procedures, the teacher and learner wellbeing, the National Teacher Policy, and the integration of ICT in the teaching and learning process. The curriculum has been adjusted to cater for regressed and missed learning, hence the Abridged Curriculum. Several trainings have taken place regarding support supervision, Competence Based Curriculum (CBC), teacher effectiveness and learner achievement (MoES Report, 2022). All these efforts have been dedicated towards enabling stakeholders adopt to the new normal and to ensure effective holistic learning that will enable learners to bounce back and acquire competences for fruitful living (Support, 2021). Whereas there is wide literature on school leadership (Menter, 2010, Day & Sammons, 2014), the roles, and challenges (Tumwesige, 2020), and the four pillars of Education for the 21st Century, (Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015, Smith, 2018, UNESCO, 2020), there is little evidence on repositioning the role of school leadership to facilitate learning to thrive in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. This documentation specifically narrates the catalytic role of school leadership in ensuring learning to thrive in the post-COVID-19 era. It provides information on what learning to become is in relation to the competences required to thrive in the current age

and times, and the fact that its application as the third pillar of education has not been emphasized by most curricular in the country (Common Worlds Research Collective, 2020). In addition, it provides an interpretation of the relevancy of learning to thrive in context of the post COVID-19 pandemic era. This paper is appropriate to the time and age considering the gaps the pandemic has exposed in our education system and the ambition to contribute to education for Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

## **METHOD**

The research was basically desk review. This manuscript was written based on a narrative review approach due to inadequate data in place concerning the post-COVID-19 era to permit other review approaches. A narrative review offers a non-systematic summary and analysis of the body of research on a particular area of interest. Strangely, there are no recognized official rules for writing narrative reviews, presumably because the "method" is not systematic (Gregory et al., 2018). For example, historical perspectives, reviews of research involving various animal models, and reviews of patient data from routine (uncontrolled) clinical practice are all considered types of narrative reviews. They all address topics for which the more recently developed systematic review format is unsuitable or where, realistically, the topic is better covered as a narrative review, for example, in situations where there is no adequate data to be used for a systematic review (Gregory et al., 2018). This study would have been comprehensive, if it considered a cross-sectional design; however, this approach was used to indicate the gaps in the existing literature, which will be a basis for further studies that will document school leadership perspectives on the subject.

## **RESULTS**

### **School leadership role in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era in Uganda**

In Uganda, the headteacher has a threefold role of being the school leader and manager, administrator and instructional leader. As a manager, the head teacher is expected to spearhead the planning, organising, supervision, leadership and controlling of school systems and activities. In addition, the school leader is responsible for sharing a clear vision, fostering a positive culture, eliminating gender disparities and promoting equal access to education for all (Day & Sammons, 2014). According to Yobuta A. M. (2019), the headteacher or the school principal is the overall school leader. The school leaders have been responsible for monitoring the appropriate use of education resources and ensuring that school activities take place as planned and by responsible personnel (Kabonesa, 2018). They are accountable for all of them. As an administrator, the headteacher is responsible for understanding and implementing policies from national level, Local government and school governance level. The headteacher also oversees the implementation of day-to-day activities.

As an instructional leader, the headteacher is expected to understand the curriculum, interpret it for the teachers, supervise the teaching and learning process, train, support, mentor and coach teachers to ensure effective implementation of the curriculum. The Headteacher can delegate some of their duties to Deputy head teachers and Director of studies (DOS) and teachers (Kabonesa, 2018, Okiria, 2017). In some schools, the headteachers have not performed as desired in terms of coordinating curriculum and developing policies that are geared toward students' advancement (Oloka, 2017).

Before the 21st Century and the COVID-19 pandemic, an educator's main responsibility was to teach and get students ready for the precise assignments they would need to finish (be it a trade, craft, or profession) (Parveen et al, 2022). People would combine traditions and forge original belief systems that are not learned in school, but emanate out of experiences and interests (Brief, 1800, Lalrinzuali & Hnamte, 2015). The headteacher would supervise and provide support to the teachers to ensure the learners pass well and acquire good certificates.

However, in the current era, the world has totally changed socially, economically and technologically, for this reason, adjustments have been made to fit in the new normal. Schools are educating and training learners for jobs that do not yet exist. Society currently is a fusion of numerous diverse cultures and ideologies. The globe has become more accessible because of globalization and technological developments. People can now communicate in novel and fascinating ways. Therefore, this era, requires rethinking of the school leadership position as well as that of teachers to produce lifelong learners who are flexible with appropriate competences, values and attitudes. There is need for re-evaluation of what educational beliefs may be worth clinging to or letting go to meet not only the 21st Century demands but also those of the post-COVID-19 pandemic era. At school level, this transformation is facilitated by the headteacher.

The COVID-19 crisis has provided a chance to rethink school leaders' functions as genuine agents of learning and transformation in their institutions and communities. To support teachers and school-based learning teams, which are essential to ensuring that all students receive a high-quality education, it is necessary to refocus leader roles on evidence-driven instructional and transformative leadership. This can be done by fostering peer learning, ensuring teachers collaborate to improve teaching techniques, transforming schools into centers for professional development, and promoting an emphasis on common objectives (Brief, 1800).

Education is a very powerful tool for socio-economic growth, development and transformation. A number of countries recognize this globally. Uganda too acknowledges education as a key driver of economic growth, and human capital development in its vision 2040 (National Planning Authority, 2007) and the National Development Plan III of 2021/2022-2024/2025 (National Planning Authority, 2020). Uganda is committed to ensuring provision of quality education to her citizens as demonstrated in the Ministry of Education and Sports "Quality education, training and sports for all", although this has been disrupted by the unforeseen COVID-19 pandemic which caused a different turn (Tumwesige, 2020). Since then, Uganda's education system has been struggling to regain its balance in as far as the provision of quality education to its school going population is concerned (Kyagaba, 2021).

According to Kyagaba (2021), learners who were able to return to class in at least 55% of primary schools and at least 72% of secondary schools in Uganda, shared that they had endured quite a number of challenges. These challenges included child labor, domestic violence, sexual abuse by family members and other community members, the occurrence of early marriages, insufficient funds to support the family, inadequate parental support for girls/teenage pregnancies, kidnappings/arrests by police/idleness/joining bad peer groups, inability to worship, and uncertainty about religion. Such learners greatly need psychosocial support. Nonetheless, some gained fundamental skills such as those related to household tasks, and some changed their behavior positively, learned new information, had a happy attitude, and developed entrepreneurship abilities. This was mainly because parents of the latter had time with their children during the lockdown which they never had during the normal time as due to the struggle to earn money for survival. Such skills had not been prior gained because the learners focused mainly on highly examination-oriented formal education system.

Evidence from existing literature show that implementation of primary education curriculum is rooted on rote learning approaches with very limited application of concepts (Tumwesige, 2020). Accordingly, teachers believe that because they are "teaching," the pupils must be picking up something (Smith, 2018). The belief among the learners is that they have learned anything because they have read their assigned literature and have committed facts to memory. This kind of learning deprives learners of the competences for innovation, critical thinking, team work, collaboration and problem solving required in the 21st century work places. Teachers cannot continue to rely solely on knowledge that is acquired "for" practice from their training and through practice. They should be ready to move beyond a knowledge "of" practice to "knowledge beyond practice" that positions them as continuously desirous of engaging with the opposing perspectives, and others in novel contexts (Smith, 2018). At school level, this can be made possible through inter and intra school debates and other out of class activities prescribed in the curriculum and the basic requirements and Minimum Standards (2010). The extent to which these are done depends on the school leadership and programs.

Inspection reports from the Directorate of Education Standards over the years indicate that most headteachers in public schools do not demonstrate effective leadership and management. This is demonstrated by consistent absenteeism which translate into teacher absenteeism; inadequate school-based supervision; lack of school-based continuous professional development (CPD); poor delegation, lack of clear shared vision, goals and strategies; negligence and lack of accountability. These translate into poor performance of the schools and low learning outcomes. If the nation is to achieve the gains from Education, this has to change. For example, secondary school teachers have been trained in the CBC embedded in the Lower Secondary Curriculum. As a result, their preparation for teaching, their classroom environments, continuous assessment and keeping track of students' regular success in terms of demonstrating competences have improved. Even the, continuous training is required for teachers to keep up to speed of the changing world. Again, the effective implementation of competence based curriculum is hampered by overcrowded classes, inadequate instructional resources and a proportion of teachers are still limited in innovativeness, use of the available learning environments and understanding of the application of curriculum content (Mabhonga, 2021, Olema et al., 2021). The ability to effectively implement this curriculum will depend on the

innovativeness and commitment of the headteacher to regularly conduct school-based training, mentoring and support supervision.

The Primary curriculum is also competence-based and include skills development subjects under Creative Arts and Physical Education (CAPE). Lower primary (P1 to P3) implements Thematic Curriculum using the Local Languages as the main mode of instruction in homogeneous communities while English is used in the metropolitan areas. Primary four is the transitional class and upper primary (P5-P7) are subject-based curricular with English as the language of instruction. Literature shows that mastery of literacy in the mother tongue or Local languages facilitates easy of learning other languages provided they are well taught (Ssentanda, 2014). The reports by National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) by Uganda National Examination Board (UNEB), UWEZO and other researches over the years indicate that learners at various levels are not acquiring the expected levels of competences. This is an indicator that school leaders are not doing their roles well. This could have been made worse by the loss of learning during COVID 19 lockdown. If the primary level which forms the foundation for education is to meet its objectives, the school leaders have to reposition their roles. Are the school leaders able and ready to reposition their roles? The focus of this paper is to interrogate this issue.

Since the start of the pandemic, school administrators have been given a large amount of additional duty. They have frequently been forced to implement remote learning programs, modify regulations, consult with stakeholders, provide safety for the girl child and otherwise participate in crisis management. Providing resources for developing reopening plans, fostering collaboration among schools, and assisting schools in tracking their reopening progress are all ways that nations may empower their school leaders, (MoES Report, 2022).

Regardingly, the roles of headteachers must change and be repositioned to cater for the changing environment and education landscape. They should promote learners' interests and advance their competences to meet the education for sustainable development agenda (UNESCO, 2020). They should ensure that teachers are motivated, have desired competences as well as inculcating a culture and environment which helps to improve educational outcomes ("Improv. Sch. Leadersh.," 2010).

#### **Learning to thrive in the post-COVID-19 pandemic era in Uganda**

Future educational thinking and planning now include the phrase "21st century" as a necessary component (Carneiro, R., & Draxler, A. 2008). The educational system is changing quicker than ever before, and educators and administrators are continually looking for new ways to help learners get ready for the future. Despite learning about the abilities that students will need to have in order to succeed in the 21st century and what educational beliefs may be worth clinging to or letting go, schools and teachers are still left trying to determine what their role needs to be in the education of their 21st century students.

The prevailing situation in this post COVID-19 era demands us to re-evaluate the processes taken to ensure quality and inclusive education while also bearing in mind the 21st Century demands. It requires stakeholders to follow a certain path to disseminate approaches that have been fit within the new normal such as e-learning strategies or any other means that could supplement or replace our conventional class-room-centric educational delivery systems (Tumwesige, 2020).

The school going population in Uganda have sufficient opportunities for access but have been facing challenges of quality and relevance of education to their socio-economic needs. In fact, 80% of those who reside in rural areas, lack basic amenities and have inadequate support systems for schooling and other endeavors (Tumwesige, 2020). There is a likelihood that the globe will become even more polarized, violent, and nationalistic following COVID-19. Similar findings were indicated by Fanelli et al., (2020) show that the rural communities were less likely to have access to the technology required to properly execute remote learning during the COVI-19 pandemic lockdown. For example, in Uganda, only 65.3% had accessed radios, 21.8% accessed a television set, 10.8% a household phone and could access internet whereas only 5.9% could access a computer (Fanelli et al., 2020). Accordingly, it can be observed that such limited resources hamper the attainment of desired learning skills for the 21st century and require collaborative approach to address. Indeed, some of these challenges were addressed through community cooperation where the limited resources were shared enabling a more swift and peaceful resolution of the situation (WEF, 2020). The learners need to be prepared at school to face and overcome these challenges.

## DISCUSSION

The primary goal of education is to empower learners to succeed in life and make positive contributions to society. The fundamental purpose of education has not altered in the 21st Century and with the COVID-19 pandemic that ravaged the whole world. Our society has evolved. For that reason, Uganda cannot continue to prepare learners for the society that existed yesterday. There is need to sufficiently prepare learners for the society that exists today and that of tomorrow (Nicholas, 2022).

The COVID-19 situation has revealed the leadership's perplexity in handling and promoting the "no one is left behind" mantra. Millions of young youngsters missed the opportunities to continue with learning and the social contacts necessary for learning and developing life skills when schools were physically closed being the center of social activities and human connections. Unfortunately, even after reopening, the ongoing education has not been able to meet the minimal competency requirements in reading, writing, and math for millions of learners especially in rural areas and disadvantaged families, hence lagging behind their wealthier counterparts and those in urban schools (Parveen et al., 2022).

The findings of this review indicate the need for school leadership to create a better education system for long-term learning outcomes. Since the curricula already provide the framework for acquisition of both soft and hard skills, the School leaders need to enhance the performance of teachers in planning, delivery of content and general professional growth. These results were further supported by a study by Chalikias et al., (2020) in Athens where the professional growth of teachers was directly impacted by the school principal's training and commitment. It was determined that the school's leader, the principal, should serve as both a learning manager and an inspiration for lifelong learning while also guiding teachers in professional development. Can such a policy be implemented in Uganda?

There is need for school leaders to reposition and retool themselves to foster the desired changes in leadership styles, be able to offer relevant support supervision, provide logistics and supplies, share, and promote the school vision and mission. School leadership ought to reflect and critique the various observed processes, and create awareness of what is and ought to be, demand adequate planning, prompt feedback on several activities, adjustments in expectations and communication, code-switching, and being very sensitive (Smith, 2018). These findings are supported by a study by Diamond C. (2022), who stated that given the COVID 19 pandemic situation, school leadership have a limited amount of time to make quick ethical and considerate decisions on staffing, school hubs, and blended learning goals so that a school system that addresses society needs is established. New approaches to learning have been demanded by a wide range of social groups.

Accordingly, findings of this study indicate that blended learning has been well disseminated and introduced to the various levels of education system across the globe. In fact, there has been a need to rethink and overhaul E-learning in Uganda (Tumwesige, 2020). This need is indicated in a systematic review study among the K-12 public schools during the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, school leaders that were innovative embraced blended learning to counteract disruptions made by schools closure. The main difficulty was to encourage and engage some of the school leaders, staff and students in blended learning methodologies in order to prevent learning loss and maintain the caliber of training, whether it be online or in-person (Parveen et al., 2022). This study is in agreement with a study that was done earlier before the pandemic but which looked into school leaders' innovativeness during crises. The study indicated that school leaders should innovate new teaching strategies to match the prevailing need; however, it cautions that such strategies might seem strange at first, therefore attempt to support the understanding and application of each new educational strategy by stakeholders should be made. This makes it easier to master the knowledge and abilities that make up "major learning" (Wirth & Perkins 2013).

Schools are facing enormous upheaval in this time of crisis with limited capacity to look back on the past. Therefore, collaboration is becoming more and more crucial. According to Support, (2021) crisis management should be approached as a team by relying on distributed leadership techniques. Emerging data supports the significance of school leaders working together during COVID-19. During the first few months of lockdowns in England, school officials recognized networks between schools as a significant and expanding source of support. Schools must be able to interact together both internally and externally in order to function effectively today. Ministries of education, state and local educational authorities, and other educational stakeholders can foster the development of these networks (Support, 2021).

## RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a need for stakeholders particularly the government of the Republic of Uganda to engage with other stakeholders to provide support to enhance the training of all school leaders on mindset change and build competences for facilitating quality education in the post-COVID 19 era.

The curricula should integrate contemporary issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic and other emergencies so that Ugandans are able to prepare, manage and thrive amidst internal and external challenges which is the gist of the whole concept of learning to be fruitful (UNESCO, 2020).

Although the school leaders were trained in preparation for reopening of schools, there was no sufficient practice to help teachers to effectively support learners acquire values that facilitate learning to thrive in the post-pandemic period. Therefore, learning to thrive tailored training should be conducted for school leaders.

The government should develop and implement a policy that requires all school leaders to have the well desired 21<sup>st</sup> century skills, and schools should design a mentoring system for the teachers to cascade such skills to peers and learners.

Other studies that are field-based could be conducted to document the school leadership perspectives on learning to thrive in the post COVID-19 pandemic era for stakeholders to take necessary action.

## CONCLUSIONS

School leadership has an instructional, distinct, and systemic role to foster desirable competences in the post-pandemic era. It has a transformative role to instigate inclusiveness, enhance school performance culture, teaching, learning, and community influence with intention to elicit learning beyond knowing but rather, to be with the world and live with one another harmoniously. This is more supported by working more collaboratively to share knowledge and best practices with other schools and communities, which promotes peer learning while raising the level of professionalism among educational leaders. With school leaders' roles repositioned, the products of the Ugandan education system will meet the skills demands of the 21st Century work places, be competitive regionally and globally and live with one another.

## LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There was inadequate data on the subject since it focused on secondary data published post pandemic. The study however, relied on the available published data and a few unpublished reports by the Ministry of Education and Sports to present its findings.

## Declarations

### Conflict of Interest

There are no potential conflicts of interest to disclose.

### Ethics Approval

Not applicable being a narrative review, however, complete referencing has been done to acknowledge all the authors of the reviewed studies.

### Funding

No specific grant was given to this research.

### Research and Publication Ethics Statement

This is a narrative review that has not gone through ethical approval process:

- This material is the authors' own original work, which has not been previously published elsewhere.
- The paper reflects the authors' own research and analysis in a truthful and complete manner.
- The results are appropriately placed in the context of prior and existing research.
- All sources used are properly disclosed.

### Contribution Rates of Authors to the Article

The authors provide equal contribution to this work.

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