



International
Task Force on Teachers
for Education 2030

Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future

**Report on the Teacher Task Force
Regional Meetings to mark
World Teachers' Day, 5 October 2020**

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Every year on 5 October since 1994, UNESCO has celebrated World Teachers' Day to commemorate the anniversary of the signing of the [1966 ILO/UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Teachers](#). The Recommendation sets forth teachers' rights and responsibilities, and standards for their initial preparation, ongoing professional development, recruitment, employment, teaching and learning conditions. It also contains numerous recommendations for teachers' participation in educational decisions through social dialogue and negotiation with educational authorities. Complementing this landmark achievement, World Teachers' Day also commemorates the adoption in 1997 of the [UNESCO Recommendation concerning the Status of Higher-Education Teaching Personnel](#), which sets forth the rights and responsibilities of higher-education teaching and research personnel.

The [fourth Sustainable Development Goal](#) – “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” – recognises teachers (in its Target 4.c) as key to the achievement of the 2030 Education Agenda. World Teachers' Day provides an annual occasion to take stock of progress towards this target and goal. It aims to raise awareness about teachers' role in achieving global education targets and the challenges that teachers face.

In 2020 World Teachers' Day was celebrated with the theme, *“Teachers: Leading in crisis, reimagining the future”*, in the context of the unprecedented disruption that the COVID-19 pandemic was causing to already constrained education systems.

Objectives of the meetings

Building on the regional meetings initiated in May and June of 2020 on distance teaching and the return to school, the Teacher Task Force organized a series of discussions to coincide with **World Teachers' Day** to explore the topic of leadership and its key role in solving problems during the COVID-19 pandemic and strengthening the resilience of education systems. Five meetings were held:

- Arab States (Arabic, English and French): 8 October
- Asia and Pacific (English): 8 October
- Latin America (Spanish and English): 7 October
- Sub-Saharan Africa (English): 7 October
- Sub-Saharan Africa (French): 8 October

Leadership: A key response to COVID-19 and education challenges

The COVID-19 crisis created a unique opportunity for teachers to demonstrate leadership, creativity and innovation. It also underlined how important it is that ministries, educational authorities and schools develop strategies to reinforce leadership capacity right across education systems.

Teacher leadership constitutes a continuum of micro-, meso-, and macro-levels in which teachers, head teachers and other education personnel demonstrate multiple facets of leadership:

- **Leadership in the classroom (micro level)** highlights the experiences of teachers and how they have *led in teaching* in response to school closures (adapting teaching to students' needs and using remote and distance teaching); and during the return to school (ensuring effective classroom management, their students' health and safety, and their own personal and professional needs).
- **Leadership in the school (meso level)** encompasses *school-wide responses*, in collaboration with colleagues, and often brings additional responsibilities including administration and management tasks, and pedagogical advice.
- **Leadership in the community (macro level)** involves *partnerships with parents and community* within district-level coordination mechanisms to ensure continued learning, including teachers' creative and organic community-oriented solutions to mitigate educational challenges.

Leadership in the classroom – Micro Level

Meeting participants shared examples of how teachers demonstrated leadership both remotely – including in virtual classrooms – and face-to-face, during school reopening.

Changing pedagogical approaches

As distance education rapidly became the main approach to ensure teaching continued, teachers have shown leadership through translating traditional instruction to online environments. In sub-Saharan Africa, some teachers in Rwanda wrote scripts for radio lessons and taught lesson both using radio and television. Elsewhere, many teachers in Burkina Faso provided instructive feedback on broadcast radio and television to students. This included selective coaching of small groups and establishing and/or strengthening tutoring, while also respecting national protocols on health and safety.

In Asia and the Pacific, according to a representative from Zindagi Trust, teachers in Pakistan demonstrated leadership by starting informal WhatsApp classes, conducting self-directed learning on how to use technology for teaching, and tracking student progress. In Bhutan, where authorities launched e-learning and broadcasted via television, teachers also rapidly adapted their teaching using social media tools including WeChat, WhatsApp and Telegram Messenger. In Indonesia, teachers demonstrated greater agency through the Guru Berbagi initiative, which provided teachers with a platform to share and exchange lesson plan ideas and enabled collaborative activities like training and a discussion forum.

In the Arab States, teachers in Lebanon volunteered to provide lessons on national television despite the pandemic and the economic and political crisis in the country. To support the transfer to online learning In the United Arab Emirates, teachers took the initiative in collaboration with school leaders to assess students' digital skills before developing a training programme titled My Smart School Initiative. They trained students at both national and regional levels.

Where no technology was available, teachers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo visited pupils door-to-door to deposit and collect school work including alternative pedagogical

materials they developed for students. In some cases, teachers also organized with parents for them to travel to the children's school on weekends to collect exercise books to bring back home for students.

In Latin America, teachers in Ecuador demonstrated leadership by constantly communicating with their students, providing them with socioemotional support and accompaniment to avoid dropout.

Ensuring health and safety measures

In sub-Saharan Africa, teachers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Mali and Senegal highlighted the roles of teachers as front-line workers raising general awareness about and establishing respect of strict hygiene and health and safety protocols. In Senegal, teachers took ownership of the design and radio broadcasting of preventive messages against COVID-19. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, new class schedules were introduced, dividing overcrowded classes into smaller classes of not more than 20 students. In Asia, teachers in Bhutan engaged in repair work, built taps and carried out other health and hygiene activities in schools.

Leadership in the school – Meso Level

Participants at the meetings also shared examples of how school leaders and teachers demonstrated leadership to ensure the continuity of teaching and learning, in particular efforts to build teachers' capacity and ensure a safe learning environment.

School leaders' capacity-building efforts

School leaders were instrumental in showing leadership and mentoring other teachers. In sub-Saharan Africa, pilot projects were set up in Benin during the reopening of some classes to identify promising practices and difficulties that were preventing teachers from working effectively. There, school leaders have a key role to reinforce these practices through monitoring and mentoring efforts. Elsewhere, in Senegal, school leaders helped teachers to produce digital resources, jointly with inspectors and trainers. Where technology is lacking, school leaders in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Mali organized door-to-door teaching to help students complete their exercises.

In Rwanda, authorities are continuing with previous efforts to train school leaders in the School Improvement Plan, which is meant to enhance their capacity in improving learning outcomes and will be updated to respond to COVID-19.

In Asia and the Pacific, school leaders in China led initiatives emphasizing researching at home, reading, and group study, involving interactions between teachers, parents and students. In Bangladesh, *Beside You* is an ICT-based training model developed by the BRAC Institute of Educational Development for pre-primary level teachers to facilitate the continuation of learning. As part of the response to COVID 19, the programme was adapted to also build the capacity of head teachers at primary school level to develop teachers' knowledge of approaches to healing and learning through play. In Thailand, school leaders encouraged teachers to develop and use

various ICT-based solutions for online learning management.

The director of the Institute of Education at the University of the South Pacific shared examples of good practices in Tonga, including peer learning between principals of different schools as well as the use of mentors. Tonga also focused on school leaders' use of classroom data to design targeted interventions. Other enabling conditions were shared, including additional capacity-building; building relationships between teachers, parents and ministries of education; and an adaptive approach developed on identified strengths.

In Pakistan, experience shows how mentoring can play a key role in overcoming fear and resistance to new methods. It has also shown that teachers can be better engaged to share their voice, experiences and knowledge with government officials, as well as benefit from available psycho-social support.

In Latin America, Ecuador developed a continuity plan that included a safe, voluntary and progressive return to classes, as well as a comprehensive proposal to promote teacher leadership and reduce administrative burden. The plan was implemented flexibly so school leaders and communities can decide which type of education they will deliver, according to context and available resources. Each school can choose between a model of alternating students, a model of online education (in which students pay 60% of total fees), or a home-schooling model (in which students pay 30% of total fees) that is under the responsibility of the family, supported and accompanied by the school. Families can choose at the beginning of the year according to their needs and schools can adapt the possibilities available.

In the Arab States, under the *My Smart School* Initiative, teachers in the United Arab Emirates organised online training workshops on applying Microsoft tools for 500 other teachers across the region. Meanwhile, a teacher opened a Telegram channel for teachers to exchange best practices.

Health, safety and teacher and student well-being

In South Africa, school leaders are involved in ensuring health and safety protocols and protecting teachers and learners. This includes setting up screening stations, implementing colour-coded schemes for learners to facilitate physical distancing and grouping children, restricting entry to only staff and learners, and conducting staff meetings online. School leaders are also engaged to ensure the mental health and well-being of staff and learners.

Leadership in the community – Macro Level

Participants explained how school leaders and teachers were working with communities and parents to strengthen community involvement, foster effective communications, ensure the coordination and continuation of remote teaching and learning, and provide a safe and healthy learning environment.

Broadening the range of 'educational actors' in the community

Participants from several Sub-Saharan African countries recognized the need to redefine the

roles of everyone involved in students' learning, including parents. Representatives from Benin and Burkina Faso mentioned the importance of collaboration between teachers and parents to coordinate and ensure participation of children in radio and television broadcast instruction. In the Gambia, community members were trained along with teachers and students to provide leadership and help ensure a safe return to school.

Community awareness and effective communication

Community awareness and communication campaigns were carried out through local organizers and facilitators. In sub-Saharan Africa, teachers in Rwanda were involved in the sensitization of parents and communities to the need to fight against COVID-19. In Mali, schools run educational chat sessions between students and teachers, parents and communities with school leaders ensuring the sustainability of activities, and the cooperation and investment of the community. Burkina Faso highlighted how parents had been mobilized to provide water and soap in schools.

In the Arab States, students in the Balata Refugee Camp in Palestine live in difficult conditions, but this does not stop them from achieving in school. For example, students are involved in decision-making through a children's parliament, working in partnership with teachers and parent coordinators about their education.

In Asia and the Pacific, teachers at the Thu Kha Han Tar Migrant Learning Centre in Myanmar raise awareness among students and parents about COVID-19 and offer preventive tips. They also offer suggestions on home-based learning, including how to provide psycho-social support to children and information on child rights, human trafficking and child sexual abuse. Teachers also helped to distribute masks, hand sanitizers and dry rations for students' families. In India's Ahlcon Group of Schools, leadership at the community level was also given a strong emphasis, so that education and teachers could succeed.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The COVID-19 crisis has created an opportunity for teachers and school leaders to demonstrate leadership, creativity and innovation. Teachers have been on the front line at all three levels: classroom, school and community. In the classroom, they have raised awareness of health and safety protocols. They have also developed strategies to adapt teaching to the context and use digital tools and resources to ensure teaching and learning continue. School leaders have demonstrated leadership throughout the school including capacity-building, mentoring teachers and monitoring implementation of initiatives. Working with communities and parents, teachers and school leaders have also led efforts to ensure there is a community wide-effort to ensure teaching and learning can happen. While some efforts have occurred organically, others were facilitated and supported by school, district and national efforts.

The pandemic has also underlined how important it is that ministries, educational authorities and schools develop strategies to reinforce leadership capacity. Yet few countries developed comprehensive strategies based on building the capacity of teachers as leaders to deal with multiple challenges. In most contexts, the notion of leadership was implicit to other initiatives, such as distance education, reformulating pedagogical approaches, introducing health and

safety measures, ensuring psychological well-being, and reinforcing communication strategies.

The following recommendations are aimed at supporting teacher leadership both during the COVID-19 crisis and in the longer-term to build better school and teacher resilience:

- Teachers' leadership role should be formalized in official ministry documentation, teacher standards and norms including comprehensive teacher policies, education sector plans, continuing professional development frameworks, statutory salary and remuneration scales and bulletins, and others.
- Teachers should be incentivized, supported and empowered to embrace leadership roles.
- Teachers' leadership role should be acknowledged by giving them greater professional autonomy.
- Teachers should have time and space to improve their leadership through formal and informal capacity-building initiatives.
- Teachers' leadership during the COVID-19 pandemic should be acknowledged and rewarded including through enhanced career structures and paths.
- Community engagement and its role in ensuring teaching and learning continue should be increased through effective communication campaigns.
- The increased role of technology and community engagement does not diminish the role of teachers and their need for leadership skills. Rather it puts a focus on new skills required for teaching, using new models that include face-to-face and remote modalities and a wider involvement of both professional and community members. Nothing can replace a qualified teacher.
- Holistic support for teachers needs to include an increased focus on their psychological and socio-emotional well-being. This is the key to fostering intrinsic motivation to take on a leadership mindset, including through bottom-up innovative approaches.