THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA
MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND SPORTS

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY | Makerere University, School of Education

SYMPOSIUM PROCEEDINGS BOOKLET

National Stakeholders Symposium on COVID-19 and Education,
24 - 25 November 2021

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Acknowledgement

We are very grateful to the Ministry of Education and Sports. The Ministry paid fully all the hotel bills to enable the symposium to take place. We are exceedingly grateful to Maama Janet Kataaha Museveni, who loved the idea of holding this symposium right from the word go. Maama Janet gave us all the support we needed to hold a successful symposium. We are equally grateful to all Ministry officials, including Dr. Jane Egau–Director, Higher, Technical and Vocational Education; Ms. Irene Kawuma Kisaka,Under Secretary / Senior Private Secretary to the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports, Ms. Jolly Uzamukunda – Commissioner Higher Education; Mr. Jonathan Kamwana – Commissioner, Teacher Education; Mr. Timothy Musoke Ssejjoba – Principal Education Officer (University Education) and others.

We are exceedingly grateful to H.E. Ambassador Kevin Colgan for the generous support to the symposium. We wouldn't have the beautiful bags, banners, pull ups and others without His Excellency's support. We would not have had a colourful symposium without the support of Makerere University Council, Top Management and especially the Vice Chancellor Prof. Banabas Nawangwe. Our heartfelt thanks go to colleagues from the School of Education specifically Dr. Nicholas Itaaga (Head of Department Foundations and Curriculum Studies), Dr. Rebbeca Nambi (Ag. Head of Department Humanities and Language Education), Dr. John Ssetongo (Department of Science and Technical Education), Dr. Muhammad Musoke Kiggundu the master of ceremonies and Professor Mugagga Muwagga Anthony, the Director Institute of Research - CEES for their contribution to the success of the Symposium. To the NGO world, schools and institutions of higher learning, thank you for investing time and resources to ensure that the symposium takes place.

In the same vein, we express our gratitude to the World Bank that has given us technical support in all aspects and especially allowing Ms. R. Mukami Kariuki the World Bank Country Manager for Uganda, to give us a keynote address. We are equally grateful to Mr. Shawn Powers, the Economist in the Education Global Practice at the World Bank for coordinating all the symposium activities in the World Bank Country office. Our sincere heartfelt appreciation goes to UNICEF for enabling us to be visible in the media, and especially making sure that the symposium was covered live on television.

We are exceedingly grateful to the Country Director, Dr. Mary Gorreti Nakabugo Uwezo, and CRANE–Children at Risk Network, who welcomed the idea from the beginning and generously supported the symposium. Our appreciation also goes to Link Partners, who were very instrumental right at the time we conceived the idea of holding this symposium.

Finally, we are indebted to all members of the Technical Working Groups who worked tirelessly in their individual groups, carried out research, and analyze data; which were presented in the symposium.

Foreword

Education is a basic human right and forms a foundation upon which global and national sustainable development thrives. With the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, education like many other sectors was profoundly affected. The target of the Sustainable Development Goal 4 which clearly stipulates that all girls and boys should attain and complete free primary and secondary schooling by 2030 is in total jeopardy. It is also likely that whatever the efforts, "education will never be or mean the same again", since the closure of schools and institutions of learning for close to two years. Lessons learned from the pandemic will either propel the quality of education to higher horizons, or if its implications are not carefully analyzed and proper solutions provided, then the world might fail to realize the pre-pandemic education standards. COVID-19 has affected learners' psychosocial stability due to a number of challenges children are currently facing at home. We have heard in the social and main stream media about children as young as 12 years getting pregnant, boys being sodomized by close relatives, children asking as to whether they will join their pre-pandemic classes or jump a class. All these challenges and more are likely to result in loss of interest in learning; which is likely to escalate the drop-out rates when schools open. No one yet knows how many of the estimated 500,617 teachers in both government and private schools will return to class and in what form – although independent studies in other countries like United States already estimate between 27 – 30% teacher drop-out.

Makerere University School of Education and the Ministry of Education and Sports organized a two day (November 24th – 25th, 2021) National Stakeholders Symposium on COVID-19 and Education at the Imperial Royale Hotel, Kampala. The main goal of the symposium was to provide a platform for stakeholders in Education to analyze and discuss issues pertaining to COVID-19. To achieve this, pre-symposium activities such as the setting up of the Technical Working Groups (TWGs) were put in place. Technical Working Groups (TWGs) based on identified themes met to analyze and discuss key issues and innovations, spell out approaches that would work during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, list key recommendations and identify subsequent actors who were to implement the recommendations. The theme of the symposium was "Getting back a right to quality education during and after the COVID-19 pandemic."

The resultant outcome of the symposium is the formulation of a National Participatory Consolidated Plan of Action on COVID-19 and Education. The symposium was graced by the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports Hon. Janet Kataha Museveni. It was attended by Ms. Ketty Lamaro, the Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports; H.E. Ambassador Kevin Colgan, Head of Mission – Embassy of Ireland; Chair, University Council, Makerere University; and the Vice Chancellor, Makerere University.

Speech from the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sport, Maama Janet K. Museveni Official opening of the Symposium

Ladies and gentlemen, I welcome you to the symposium and thank you for dedicating time to dialogue on the important topic of COVID-19 and education. You are aware that we continue to battle COVID-19 as a public health emergency which has had far reaching repercussions on the key sectors of our society including education. You also recall that following the second wave of COVID-19, education institutions which had started re-opening in a phased manner beginning October, 2020 were closed again with effect from 7th June, 2021. In September, 2021 the government resumed a phased re-opening of the education institutions beginning with health training institutions. This has since been followed by phased re-opening for universities and other tertiary institutions.

It is important to remember that despite the challenges, the education sector registered some progress for which we thank God. For instance, a good number of graduates graduated from universities and other tertiary institutions. We also witnessed a better than expected performance by our young people who were able to complete primary seven, senior four and senior six end of cycle national examinations.

While the public remains concerned about the prolonged closure of schools, the risks associated with the hurried re-opening especially of pre-primary, primary and secondary schools outweigh the benefits.

The Ministry of Health and the COVID-19 National Response Task Force carefully appraised the situation and advised that pre-primary, primary and secondary schools would re-open in January 2022 when adequate measures had been put in place to minimize the risk of the pandemic. In accordance with the set timelines, the Ministry of Education and Sports in collaboration with the Ministry of health is preparing for the safe re-opening of schools. In line with this, the ministry developed a multi-sectoral strategy with COVID-19 related interventions under three broad objectives;

1. To ensure vaccination of the population focusing on all staff and students aged 18 years and above in education institutions, other front-line workers, the elderly persons aged 50 years and above and persons with poor mobilities.
2. To strengthen COVID-19 surveillance in education institutions for early identification, reporting, effective management and referral of positive cases.
3. To ensure observance of COVID-19 SOPs especially regarding social distancing, wearing masks, hand washing and promoting a safe learning environment in schools.

In addition to the above interventions to manage COVID-19 as schools move to re-open, the ministry has come up with a plan for the general readiness of the education institutions to re-open sustainably and the interventions under this plan include; Renovation and repair of schools, enhancing continuity of learning, review of the school curriculum for recovery of lost learning time, orientation of teachers and tutors on recovery of lost learning, promotion of safe and healthy learning environments through psycho-social support and the provision of additional infrastructure and staff in public primary schools to cater for the expected increased enrolment at primary one. The ministry will continue mobilizing for additional resources to implement essential interventions for educational institutions safe and sustainable re-opening

Once again, I thank you for the collaborative effort in addressing the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank our partners; I thank all those that have stepped up in the face of the challenge to address the situation before us. Together, we will overcome these situations and provide an enabling environment for the education of the learners.
It is now my singular honour to declare the symposium open.

Maama Janet Museveni

Remarks from Mrs. Rorna Magara Chairperson, Makerere University Council

Your excellency the Ambassador, Mr. Kevin Colgan, Head of Mission, Embassy of the republic of Ireland, the World Bank country manager for Uganda, Ms. Mukami Kariuki, The Permanent Secretary, ministry of Education and Sports, Ms. Ketty Lamaro, The Vice Chancellor, Makerere University Professor banabas Nawangwe, The principal College of Education and External Studies, development partners, all dignitaries present, ladies and gentlemen good morning.

I am here in two capacities, to represent the honourable Minister of Education and Sports, Maama Janet Kataha Museveni and also as the Chairperson of the Makerere University Council. Before I present the honourable Ministers remarks, I will make a few comments as chair of the Makerere University Council.

I wish to acknowledge the contribution of faculty members and the management of Makerere University in leading the education sector's response to COVID-19. Makerere University's researchers remain key actors within the scientific community leading the design and management of COVID-19 response. Compared to several countries globally, Uganda has managed the COVID-19 health crisis and we applaud all the scientists leading the fight. I wish to take note that with this symposium and other related interventions the university is contributing to cover other social sectors affectedby the pandemic of which education is critical. In the new strategic plan of the university, Makerere aspires to focus on teaching and research that addresses community's challenges and the needs for national development.

The university council has come out strongly to support initiatives for building the adaptability of university systems and processes to the challenges presented by COVID-19. In the recently approved budget for financial year 2022/2023, the council voted considerable resources towards improving the infrastructure for E- Learning, E-library resources and capacity building for staff in online pedagogy. I hope that these initiatives will enable Makerere University to cope better with the effects of COVID-19.

Thank you so much.

Remarks from H.E Kevin Colgan, Chair Education Development Partners and Head of Mission Embassy of Ireland

Honourable Minister of Education & Sports and First Lady.
Permanent Secretary, and your technical teams here present
The Vice Chancellor Makerere University,
Members of academia and the research community,
Development partners, UN Representatives,
Teaching and non-teaching staff,
Civil Society Organizations;
Distinguished guests,
Ladies and Gentlemen.
All protocol observed

I am delighted to be here with you this morning to represent the Education Development Partners, many of whom are in attendance. This two-day event is extremely important to us all working with education in Uganda and I am mindful that this is not a symposium in the typical or traditional sense.
The COVID pandemic has destabilised and disrupted our daily lives (esp. those of our children) in such a dramatic and unprecedented way, that we are very much learning as we go and it often seems that we are fumbling in the dark, but we have one clear goal, to return our Children to Education safely.

It is difficult to sum up the impact of COVID on the Ugandan education sector, but we all agree that it cannot be overstated. There is no greater challenge facing the country today. As in my country, the loss of learning, the psychosocial impact on children, teachers and parents, and the increases in vulnerability and inequality will have impacts for years to come. The urgent priority of getting students and teachers back to school is no small task and we know it cannot not be business as usual.

For example; we know teenage pregnancy has increased and so we must do even more than before to realise the universal right to education and provide adaptive pathways to education to those who need it. It is a daunting time with many unknowns, but there is one certainty–we must come together and move forward together.

More than ever, we must bring our resources, ideas, wisdom, innovations and energies together as Uganda's education sector opens up. This conference is an opportunity to begin that journey together and I would like to appreciate Makerere University and the Ministry of Education and Sports for organising this important event together. I know that education development partners have offered their support and commitment to making it a success.

The programme is extremely comprehensive and I know that multiple technical working groups have already been actively preparing for their compiled contribution to this main event. There is clearly an effort to tackle many of the key issues that face us–such as human resources, increased vulnerability, recovery of learning, child welfare and drop out, to mention just a few.

It's clear we cannot return to the status quo pre-pandemic–we now face additional and new challenges and we must think outside the box. Necessity is the mother of invention and we have never needed innovation more than we do now–Nelson Mandela said 'it always seems impossible until it's done'

Amid the challenges, we can and must find alternatives and seek innovation–ensuring equitable access to quality education remains key though we now need to ensure flexible approaches to delivery of education as we seek to accommodate multiple cohorts, provide remedial support and deliver abridged curricula–and all of this while minimising the risk of transmission of COVID!

During the pandemic, technology and online learning opened up new avenues of possibility (who heard of zoom for 2020!) and digital platforms will continue to present alternatives and solutions to some problems we face but of course we must ensure that limited access to technology does not deepen the divide and increase inequalities.

As we look towards January when all schools will reopen, we must do everything we can to ensure that schools can provide a safe environment for children–prevention measures, surveillance and effective case management must now become staples of the syllabus alongside the traditional subjects. We will no doubt continue to learn as we go - however, we can already draw from lessons learned in other countries.

Speaking as chair of the education partners group, I know that there is a strong commitment by donors, civil society and technical partners to ensure that expertise, learning and evidence is shared as much as possible. There is also strong and active participation in the various coordination and response mechanisms and COVID task forces.

Many education partners have mobilized additional funds to support national efforts in community led learning, surveillance, training of teachers and psychosocial support, to mention just a few.

And so to conclude, let me reconfirm that the education development partners remain fully committed to support the Ugandan Government and the Ministry of Education and Sports at this critical time. The tasks before us may seem daunting, but together we can and will progress. I would like to finish with a quotation from the Chinese philosopher and poet, Confucius, "The man who moves a mountain begins by carrying away small stones." Together we can move the mountain.

Thank you.

Remarks from Ms. Ketty Lamaro
Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports

The First Lady and Hon. Minister of Education and Sports
Maama Janet Kataha Museveni
Hon. Ministers and Ministers of State present
Your Excellences the Ambassadors and High Commissioners
Representatives of Education Development Partners
Leaders of Government Parastatals and Private Corporations
Distinguished ladies and gentlemen
Good morning

On behalf of the management and staff of Ministry of Education and Sports, I welcome you most warmly to this timely symposium on supporting education recovery.

Maama, allow me take this opportunity to thank you, in a singular way, for the initiative you took to host this historical engagement. This first-of-a-kind symposium clearly demonstrates our recognition of the importance of public-private partnership in addressing the challenges of education provision.

Maama, allow me inform our distinguished partners that in line with the theme of the symposium; that is: "Supporting Education Recovery," Ministry of Education and Sports has taken a very consultative and collaborative approach in our sector response to Covid-19.

Over the last one and a half years, we have worked very closely with key stakeholders, including Ministry of Health, Ministry of Local Government, other MDAs, international and local education development partners, school foundation bodies and proprietors of private education institutions.
Through these collaborative efforts, we developed and have been implementing the following:
1. The Education Sector Covid-19 Response Plan, which guides our short and medium term interventions against the pandemic.2. Covid-19 Education Response Project (CERP) through which we were able to access a US$14.7 million grant from Global Partnership for Education (GPE) to support our interventions at basic and lower secondary education levels
3. The Covid-19 Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) for Learning Institutions to help us minimize the risks of Covid-19 spread in our institutions
4. The Continuity of learning framework, through which we have been able to provide some level of learning, even when education institutions have been closed for prolonged periods
5. The Strategy for Recovery of Lost Learning Time. Through this strategy we are guiding education institutions to implement specific measures to ensure there is expedited implementation of the core curriculum, but at the same time ensuring that there is no learner left behind.
6. We have now come up with a multi-sectoral strategy on safe reopening of education institutions. This will be elaborated on in our subsequent presentations today.

Maama, distinguished ladies and gentlemen, education systems all over the world are only beginning to get to terms with the new normal under the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic. Even as we prepare to reopen all our education institutions, we need to develop coping mechanisms for recovery and resilience. In line with the third objective of our response plan, we need to work together to build the sector's capacity for recovery, resilience and response to the post Covid-19; regardless of what and when the post Covid-19 period really is.

While we acknowledge that it may not be possible to return to the old normal in the near future, we must find ways of ensuring that our children learn in a safe environment when schools reopen.

It is in this regard that I am delighted to have this symposium taking place at this critical time. I am further pleased to note that our key stakeholders and partners have heeded our call to be part of the solution to the challenge faced by the education sector today.

I believe this meeting will provide some of the solutions to help us reopen our schools in a safe and sustainable manner.

As the famous American inventor, Henry Ford once observed, "If everyone is moving forward together, then success takes care of itself."
Once again, I welcome you and thank you for coming.
Thank you!

Remarks from Professor Barnabas Nawangwe
Vice Chancellor, Makerere University

Our guest of honour, Mrs. Lorna Magara the chairperson of Makerere University Council representing the honourable Minister of Education and Sports. Your Excellency Kevin Colgan, the Ambassador of the Republic of Ireland, The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports Ms. Ketty Lamaro, Representatives of Government ministries and agencies, the principal, Deans and staff of College of Education and External Studies, and other Makerere University staff, all participants, ladies and gentlemen.

On behalf of Makerere University Management, I welcome you to this very important symposium on COVID-19 and Education organized by the School of Education, College of Education and external Studies. Like many educational institutions around the world, Makerere University has faced serious challenges due to COVID-19. The College of Education and External Studies has been instrumental in ensuring the continuity of teaching and learning at Makerere University through the wonderful efforts of our Institute of Online Distance and E-Learning. Many institutions have not been as lucky as Makerere University and we are willing to assist where possible.

COVID-19 brought out the best of Makerere University. With funding from the government of the Republic of Uganda through the research and Innovation Fund, our researchers came out with more than 500 innovations to address the effects of the pandemic. The College of Education and External Studies participated fully and some of the innovations and research results will be presented at the symposium. I believe that through research, Makerere can contribute to alleviating the challenges faced by the education sector in our country.

We have been able to swim through the turbulent waters because of the excellent guidance provided to us by our council chaired by Mrs. Lorna Magara. The council followed closely all our efforts
and gave us pertinent advice, but also demanded reports on what was happening. I commend the Ministry of Education and Sports and our development partners for all the efforts made to keep learners active during the pandemic.

Makerere University is a loyal partner to the Ministry of Education and Sports and we want to be as useful as possible as we struggle to return normalcy to our badly battered education sector as a result of COVID-19. We are taking the lead for example, in training teachers for the early childhood development program and the program to do this has been approved thought the organs of the university. I want to take this opportunity to thank the government and particularly the Ministry of Education and Sports for all the support we have received during this difficult time and even during good times

Since this is the first occasion of our new Permanent Secretary, the Ministry of education and Sports to attend a Makerere function, I want to say that we have received enormous support from Ms. Lamaro since she took over the office of Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Education and Sports. For example, the construction of the main building at Makerere University was in abeyance. However, within two week on assuming office she had written cabinet memo for cabinet to give us the money and the money has now been given.

I therefore would like to take this privilege to wish all of us a very successful symposium. I do believe that the results of this symposium are going to play a vital role in returning our education sector to normalcy, and we as Makerere University are determined to play our role in making that possible.

Thank you very much.

Remarks from Dr. Mulumba Bwanika Mathias
Chairperson, National Symposium Organizing Committee,
Associate Professor and Dean, School of Education, Makerere University

The Chairperson, Makerere University Council, representing the First Lady and Minister of Education and Sports
The Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Education and Sports,
H.E. Ambassador Kevin Colgan and Head of Mission, Embassy of Ireland,
The Vice Chancellor, Makerere University Professor Barnabas Nawangwe,
Ladies and gentlemen,
You are most welcome to the symposium on COVID-19 and Education

The symposium is hosted by Makerere University, School of Education and the Ministry of Education and Sports.
The symposium was conceived as a result of the outbreak of COVID-19, and how it has impacted on our lives, and the education sector in particular. The world almost came to a standstill with the out- break of the pandemic.
Individual stakeholders and organizations have carried out research and came up with anticipated solutions to tackle the impact of the pandemic. Therefore, there was a need to bring together stakeholders in education, to analyze the status of education during the pandemic, and lay strategies for ensuring that we restore quality education at all levels.

This symposium is the first of its kind to bring together major stakeholders in education to deliberate on the impact of COVID-19 on education, and come up with strategies that would take us through the pandemic and beyond. The outcome of the symposium and other consultations we shall have will result in the formation of a National Participatory Consolidated Plan of Action on COVID-19 and Education.

To achieve this, TWGs with clear cut themes were put in place prior to the symposium to carry out analyze and discuss key issues and innovations, spell out approaches that would work during and after the COVID-19 pandemic, list key recommendations and spell out actors who will implement the recommendations. Technical working groups are made up of experts and were carefully selected to ensure that they come up with data that would help to inform the National Participatory Consolidated Plan of Action to COVID-19 and Education. These teams are going to present in the symposium.

As we prepare to listen to the technical working groups, I would like to inform all stakeholders that we need to invest heavily in teacher education because the quality of education depends on the quality of its teachers. You cannot give what you don't have... goes the old saying. No country can develop when it's education system is limping. The quality of a country's education system determines the pace at which other sectors such as health, technology and others develop. As a result, I am exceedingly grateful to the First Lady and Minister of Education & Sports and the entire ministry officials for the various reforms they are carrying out in the Ministry. We are optimistic that the New Lower Secondary School Curriculum and the National Teachers Policy of 2019 will improve the quality of education and state of teachers in the country respectively.

However, for these reforms to impact society, we need to carry out research in teacher education not only to inform the implementation process but also to evaluate their progress and challenges. Therefore, we need a teacher education fund to enable us do more research in teacher education in order to inform the numerous innovations that are being carried out in our education system.
We are grateful to the Ministry of Education and Sports, embassies, organizations, institutions of learning, NGOs, and members of the technical working groups for the technical, physical and financial support which enabled the symposium to take place. Last but not least, our heartfelt gratitude goes to all participants who are attending the symposium physically, and those who are attending virtually. Thank you so much for coming, and thank you so much for logging on.

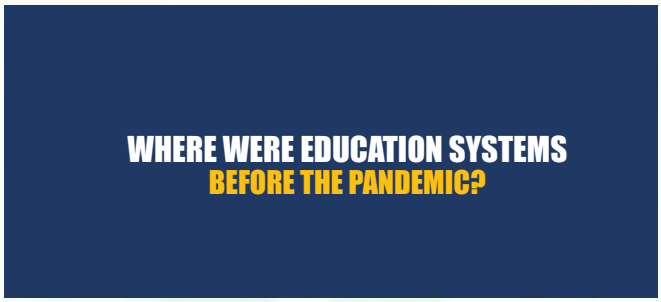
For God and my Country

National Stakeholders Symposium Organizing Committee

Key Note Address from Ms. R. Mukami Kariuki, The World Bank Country Manager for Uganda

Your Excellency, First Lady and Minister of Education Janet Museveni
Honorable Ministers
Ambassadors,
Permanent Secretaries
Senior Officials,
Esteemed members of Academia
Ladies and Gentleman

It is my pleasure to be here today to join you in this urgent and important discussion about the future of education in Uganda. A topic brought about by no less than the pandemic of the century, and therefore a challenge of immense and serious proportions that has the potential to set us back several decades in our journey to leave no one behind.

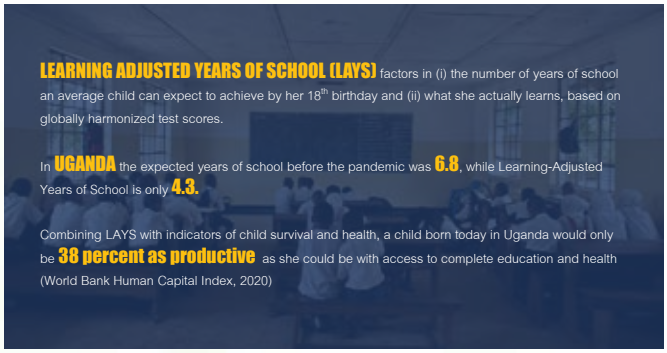


Understanding the challenge that was facing in the pre-COVID period is critical as it helps us to see how much more ground we have to cover to get where we were planning to go. Allow me therefore to set out a few markers on our journey to a post-covid education sector recovery.

Our common aim is attaining the ambition of the SDG 4 goal – all girls and boys completing free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education –
requires our attention to two critical questions –

1.what will it take to ensure all children attain quality primary and secondary education and
2. more specifically what is required for our children to learn fundamental literacy and numeracy skills

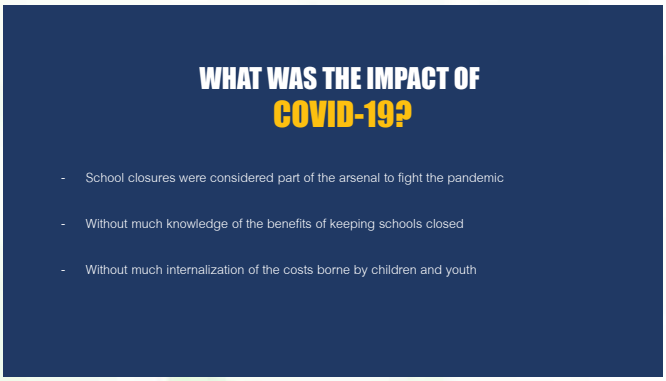
Let me focus in on one key measure of our progress – LAYS or learning adjusted years of school – a tool that helps to reveal the real outcomes we are achieving



So what are Learning Adjusted Years of School (LAYS).

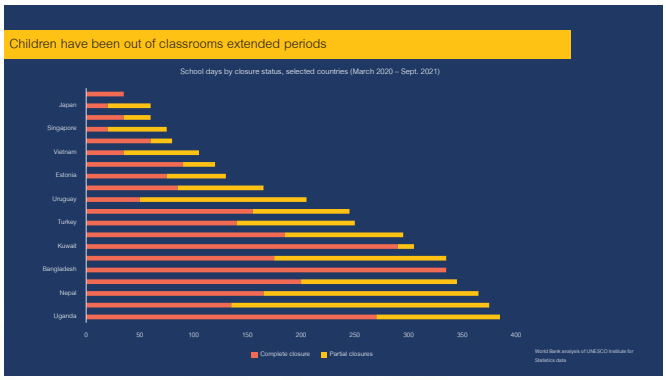
LAYS are a measure of the number of years an average child can expect to achieve by their 18th birthday AND a measure of what she or he actually learns based on globally harmonized test scores.

For example in Uganda prior to the pandemic the first measure – expected years of school – was 6.8 and the second measure – what she or he actually learned was 4.3. When combined with indicators of child survival and health, this means that a child born today in Uganda would only be 38% as productive as she would have been with access to quality education and health.



So how has COVID 19 impacted on our SDG 4 ambition.

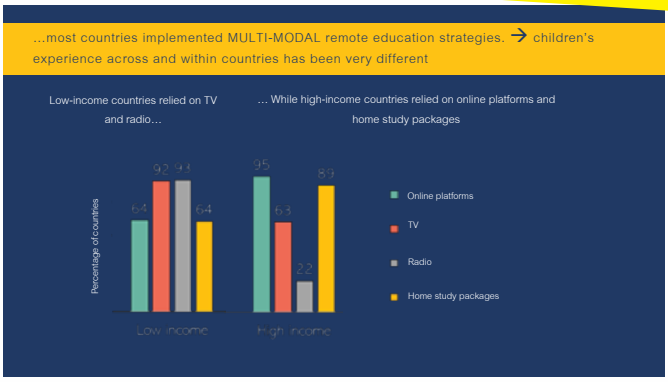
Firstly, while school closures were initially organized as part of the arsenal with which to fight the pandemic, this measure was taken without the full benefit of knowing what would be the impact (both positive and negative) of keeping schools closed.



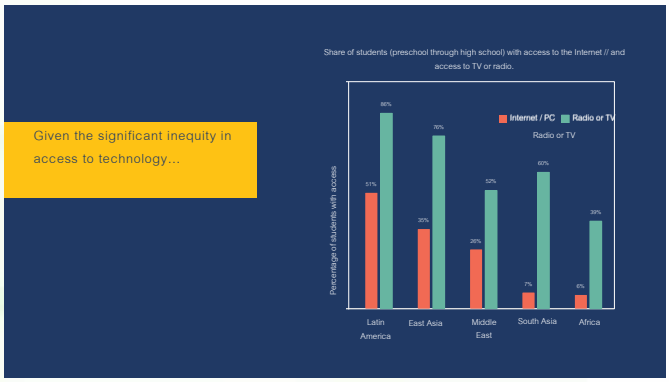
Across the globe, schools have been partially open or closed for as little as 40 school days to as many as 400 school days on average. But the specific measures taken to manage school closures has varied widely.

• **Overall, the pandemic closed schools in both rich and poor countries.** Just picture the figure reached at the peak of the systemic global schools' closure in mid-April: 1.8 billion children out of school. That is almost all school-age children, or 24% of the world's population. The school closures are not just a long interruption of the education academic and social experience, but an uncertain tide -and we don't know when it will really recede.

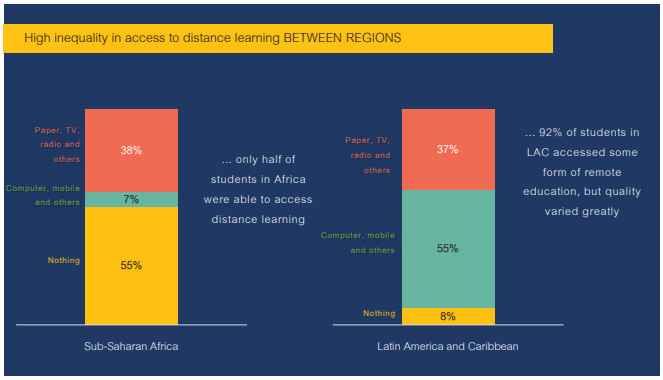
• **And while measures were taken to mitigate school closures, these were often not sufficient.**
• **Nearly all countries employed some form of remote learning.** 186 countries and territories used radio, television, or online platforms to provide children with learning continuity (Hares & Crawfurd, 2020). 94 % from Unicef https://data.unicef.org/resources/remote-learning-reachability-factsheet/
• **However, Many children were not reached by remote learning initiatives.** At least 463 million school children were unable to access remote learning during school closures in 2020 (UNICEF 2020).



• **In many jurisdictions, making up for differences internally meant that multiple modalities were deployed.** Concerned with overcoming the digital divide, countries activated a menu of options, typically a mix of digital and non-digital methods in order to reach the greatest number of children (UNICEF et al., 2020). They relied on online, TV, and radio education, as well as print materials and instant messaging.
• **And what we learnt is that while the provision of remote learning may help, it did not ensure take-up by all students.** Over a third of LICs and LMICs whose national distance education strategy included TV or radio reported that less than half of primary school students were reached by TV and radio. (Munoz-Najar et al 2021). It is important that countries avoid a "remote learning paradox" where technological solutions are not suited to the context, resulting in low take-up by students (Munoz-Najar et al 2021).
• **More fundamentally, the quality of remote learning alternatives varied.** Many education systems were unable to offer remote instruction that covered the equivalent to what children would have learned in school and that all students could access (UNESCO, UNICEF, and World Bank 2020).



Therefore, given the significant inequity in access to technology that we experience during the pandemic, **it is no surprise that we are living through the largest shock to the global education system in modern history.** It might be easy to underestimate the magnitude of the shock.



And these experiences were very heterogeneous - both within and across countries. The preponderance of evidence from low- and middle-income countries suggests that the remote learning opportunities countries deployed left much to be desired, suggesting plenty of room for improvement.

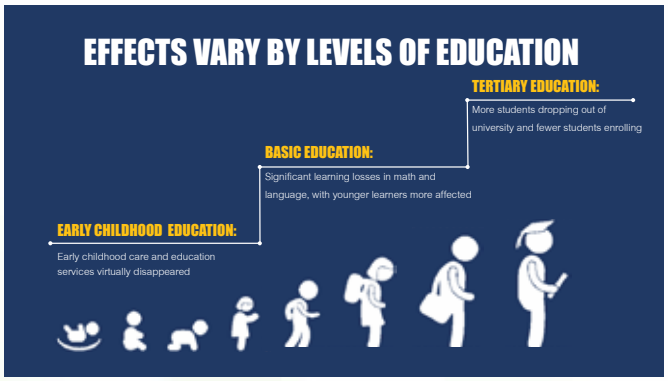
Consequently, one clear **emerging lesson from the last 18 months is that implementing a high-quality remote learning experience is a complex undertaking** – requiring not just the right alignment between technology, teachers and students but also a great deal of support from parents and families.

So with lockdowns and school closures having interrupted not just the education, academic and social experience,we must assess - where we are now? And determine where to go from here?

Among the numbers that illustrate the scale of the problem are:

- **100% increase in depression and anxiety symptoms in children globally:** A recent meta-analysis of 29 studies including over 80,000 youth shows that depression and anxiety have doubled globally, compared to pre-pandemic estimates (Racine et al 2021)
- **OVER 16 TRILLION DOLLARS of loss in future income***: The estimated cumulative financial costs of the COVID-19 pandemic related to the lost output and health reduction (Cutler and Summers 2020)
- **370 MILLION children in 150 countries missed out on a daily school meal***According to UNICEF, nearly 370 million children missed out on receiving a daily school meal in 150 countries (Borowski et al. 2021).
- **24 MILLON additional students will drop out of the school system*** (UNESCO 2020)
- **13 MILLON more girls will marry early between 2020-2030*** (UNFPA 2020)

Indeed, many children and youth have had to enter the workforce to help support families, and many parents will not be able to cover the minimum costs that education entails, even in free public schools or universities.



1) **The youngest children are losing out on crucial services that help early learning and development.** Some 167 million children in 196 countries lost access to early childhood care and education services between March 2021 and February 2021 (McCoy et al 2021).

2) A recent simulation of the cost of ECE program closures in 140 countries because of COVID-19 found **that the closure of ECE programs for 12 months cost close to 6% of GDP of LMICs and more than 2% of GDP of LICs** (the relatively smaller cost to LICS reflects the low enrollment of children in ECE pre-pandemic). To estimate the cost of ECE closures, the team simulated future earnings foregone when the children become adults as percentages of GDP due to declines in ECE participation net of ECE program costs.

3) **the increased stress, anxiety and depression parents and pregnant individuals have experienced during the pandemic, along with missed or reduced education, stimulation and play may have harmed young children's neurodevelopment.** Emerging evidence from an ongoing longitudinal study in the United States show that compared to children born before the pandemic, children born during the pandemic have significantly reduced verbal, motor, and overall cognitive performance.

Leveraging a large on-going longitudinal study of child neurodevelopment, researchers examined **general childhood cognitive scores in 2020 and 2021** vs. the preceding decade, 2011-2019. **Males and children in lower socioeconomic families have been most affected**.

Results highlight that even in the absence of direct SARS-CoV-2 infection and COVID-19 illness, the environmental changes associated COVID-19 pandemic is significantly and negatively affecting infant and child development. (Deoni et al. 2021).

UGANDA : SETBACKS IN ACCESS AND LEARNING, WITH SIGNIFICANT FUTURE CONSEQUENCES

ACCESS: National Planning Authority estimates 30 percent of learners may never return to school and that 3,507 primary and 832 secondary schools may close.

LEARNING: 2021 National Assessment of Progress in Education (NAPE) results show a significant impact of school closures on learning, with decrease of 4.7 percentage points in P6 literacy since 2018.

LONG-TERM: World Bank estimates Ugandans may lose an average of 0.7 to 1.4 LAYS, resulting in 600,000 – 1.1 million UGX lost earnings per person per year

Focusing in on Uganda estimated setbacks in Access and Learning are significant.

- An estimated 30% of learners may not return to school and upwards of 4000 schools may not reopen;

- Already, the country has seen an estimated 4.7% los in P6 literacy since 2018

- Long term, the WBG estimates loses of 0.7 to 1.4 LAYS will lead to loses of between 600-1 million UGX in earnings per year.

WHAT ARE SOME

LESSONS FROM THE PANDEMIC?

So, what can we learn from the pandemic?

1. Close the digital divide
2. Education is a social phenomena
   - → Schools/universities are a social space
   - → Teachers to coach, facilitate. inspire

A balance between technology and the human factor

3. Parents are key players in their children's education
   - Need to strengthen the home environment to assure
4. continuity of the learning process

Resiliency requires continuity of learning across school and home

Two key takeaways for us to factor into our post-pandemic adjustment are:

- The need for a balance between technology and the human factor

- That resilience requires continuity of learning across school and home

URGENT ACTION IS NEEDED TO ACCELERATE LEARNING RECOVERY

We cannot afford a permanent impact on this generation

Ultimately, accelerating the learning recovery will require urgent action on all fronts – public and private – if we are to avoid a permanent impact on this generation.

Mission Recovering Education 2021:

1. Bring all children and youth back to school
2. Measure Learning
3. Prioritize the fundamental skills and psychosocial wellbeing
4. Provide effective remedial learning to help catch up; teaching children at the right level
5. Support teachers to address learning losses and to incorporate digital technology into their teaching

unicef

So drawing on a call to action outlined by UNICEF, this requires urgent steps to

How can we accelerate learning recovery?

- Measure learning
  - All recovery strategies start by measuring learning losses
- Prioritize curricular fundamentals
  - Consolidate fundamentals within and between subjects
  - Prioritize the development of socioemotional competencies
- Expand instructional time
  - •Modify the academic calendar; extending the school day; summer school
  - Take advantage of additional time to implement recovery strategies
- Make classroom teaching more efficient
  - Implement remedial teaching strategies
    - •Teaching at the appropriate level
    - •Tutoring
    - •Self-learning programs
  - Support teachers' capacity to implement these strategies

Accelerating learning recovery requires a focus on:

What is the evidence?

Teaching at the Right Level

More than 15 studies in India, Kenya, and Ghana show improvements of between 0.08 to 0.75 standard deviations in test scores.

Ghana: Gain of 0.7 additional years of learning per $100 of investment

Small group tutoring

Italy: The Tutoring Online Program (2020) intervention that used university volunteers increased academic performance by 0.26 s.d.

Improvements in psychological well-being and future aspirations.

Self-study programs

(online or paper and pencil based)

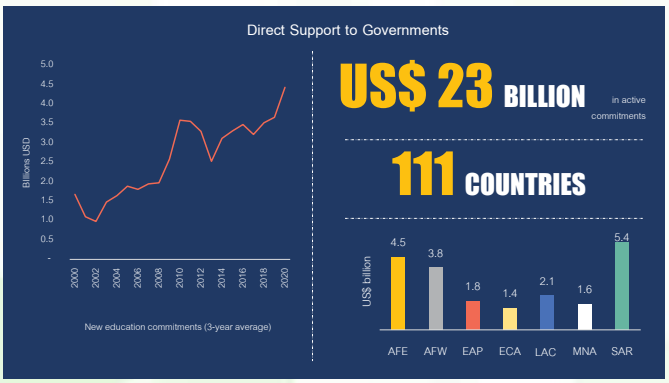
India: Significant improvements in mathematics and language with Mindspark

Uruguay: Plan Ceibal's Adaptive Mathematics Program achieves 0.2 s.d. in math gains

Building on a recent body of evidence on what works best

HOW HAS THE WORLD BANK SUPPORTED THE RECOVERY?

The WBG is committed to bridging the education gap post-pandemic, and through our Human Capital Programs worldwide, we are engaging on a number of fronts.



So far, the WBG has provided 23 billion US$ in learning to 111 countries in support of this crucial education agenda.

Global Initiatives and partnerships

Fighting Learning Poverty	Accelerator Program	COVID-19 response	Mission Recovering Education 2021
Childcare and Early Childhood	ELP		Continuous and accelerated learning
Assessments	LEAP, READ	Evidence in Education	Global Education Evidence Advisory Panel
Teachers	Teach, Coach		SIEF
Results-Based Financing	Results in Education for All Children (REACH)	Education Technology	Managing Education, EdTech Hub
Capacity Building		Education Financing	Global Education Finance Platform (GEFP)

GLOBAL TRUST FUNDS — Tertiary Education and Skills — Foundational Learning Compact

And finally, we are committed to working with a number of partners to develop new tools of the trade - innovating on ways to deepen and accelerate our support.

Pictorial

24th-25th November,2021
Organised by

NATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS
SYMPOSIUM ON COVID-19
AND EDUCATION
24th-25th November,2021

MAKERERE

UNIVERSITY
EDUCATION AND
STUDIES (CEES)

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

NATIONAL
STAKEHOLDERS
SYMPOSIUM ON COVID-19
AND EDUCATION
24th-25th November,2021
Organised by
MAKERERE UNIVERSITY,
SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
AND THE MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION AND SPORTS.

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

Curriculum, Content and Methodology during the COVID-19 Pandemic

Prepared by:

Christopher Muganga – NCDC
Nicholas Itaaga (Ph.D) – Makerere University

Precursor: "Covid-19 has made teaching and learning content and materials in many parts of the world obsolete. In order for education and schools to catch up again, there is a need for resources and the time to re-think the way the content will be delivered and the methods that will work in the "new normal." There will be need, however, to be mindful of the extended disparity among several schools, teachers, learners and the learning context"

Introduction

Since the outbreak of COVID-19 in Uganda in March 2020, all sectors, including education, were hit hard (Pokhrel, S., & Chhetri, R. 2021). The country's lock down was a measure to control the spread of the virus among the population and from the youth who are the backbone of the country's' human resource. Despite the phased approach to opening up the country, to date it is the education sector which has remained locked up which has adversely inflicted negatively on Government's effort to improve learning achievements and overall -quality of education. The loss and damage to Uganda's education sector is not yet established, but it will have a multiplier effect. The repercussions for every child, their family, their community and their economy will be felt for years to come. Many children will never catch-up. Current reports indicate that Uganda has had her schools locked down for the longest time, that is 22 months. This means that the country needs to address a crisis that requires urgent attention and collective action by all stakeholders and the community. The intervention needs to be feasible, multi-model and inter-ministerial to remedy the situation.

This report, therefore, presents the dimension of the crisis in relation to curriculum, content and methodology guided by the following reflections;

1. What is the status of the curriculum, content and methodology of schools and institutions during (and after) the outbreak of covid-19?
2. What can be done to rectify the situation in relation to the teaching and learning process?
3. What recommendations need to be made to soothe/mitigate the situation?
4. How will the recommendations be implemented?

The dimensions of this discussion paper have no permanent solution or cure, but suggestions upon which concerted inputs are sought for purposes of informing government decisions on how best to forge the way forward for the country to normalize or adapt to the 'new normal' environment.

1. The status of the curriculum content and methodology of schools and institutions during and after the covid-19 pandemic

Curriculum in Ugandan schools and institutions is developed to serve face-to-face interactions while in a school set up. This curriculum model/design, commonly referred to as ''Subject/Teacher-Centered Curriculum design'' is meant to represent knowledge, transfer cultural heritage and impact information. The design engages the learner through physical appearance and contact, formulated through the systematic cognitive, emotional and behavioural engagement. The planned and guided classroom experience is central to effective teaching and learning, learners' success and wellbeing. A lock down situation, however short, is bound to dis-engaging learners and the curriculum with its methodology. This is a risk that may contribute to low academic performance, most especially for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, besides unbecoming social outcomes, such as disruptive behavior.

1.1 What has changed in the curriculum, content and methodology?

Faced with the challenge of confinement for both teachers and learners, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and National Curriculum Development Center (NCDC) had to come up with a new curriculum model shifting to different methodological approaches of learning. The change was in methodology; remote learning. This methodology integrated two modes of curriculum design of subject/teacher centered with learner -centred design. The hybrid strategy used two approaches of; home learning using print media and electronic media (ICT) through the use of radio and television lessons. These two methods required a new approach to deliver curriculum content using remote methods of teaching and learning. These learning approaches differ from the conventional face-to-face classroom activities. Home schooling using printed materials was very new to most learners who were used to being organised and monitored by teachers. Most learners lack the discipline of self-drive and the skill of learning to learn. This method of learning is more effective with learners of upper primary, secondary and higher institutions of learning.

Radio and televised lessons required a different environment for learning which differs from where most of the learners live. This sudden focus on technology where it has not been a feature of the school response has created challenges for both teachers and learners.

The challenge is a manifestation of Uganda's education needs, such as training, attitude, technical competence, time management, pedagogy and methodology. However, despite some limited experience in home-schooling such as technical skills and time management, some schools and teachers tried to cope with on-line and e-learning, though this constitutes a very small percentage of about 2%.

Other challenges cited were, short concentration span of learners, lack of feedback for both teachers and learners on the educational needs, lack of steady power supply and infrastructure, unfriendly lesson timings which were disrupted by home chores and other distractions at home.

1.2 The proposed abridged curriculum for schools

The time lost during lock down cannot be recovered. Every learner has lost at least two years of his/her progression to the end of cycle and or graduate to the next education tier/level.

The pandemic has forced a massive shift away from learning and teaching in traditional settings with physical interactions. The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) through NCDC played a significant role in championing home-schools by providing the different modes to ensure continuity of learning during the school closures and lockdown. The proposed approach was to develop abridged versions of the curricula for all classes with a focus on teaching the learners the key concepts needed to have been covered in the previous class but which they will need in order to progress to the next class. To abridge simply means to shorten by omission without compromising quality and sense of. Duration is shortened and scope is reduced. It is an accelerated programme by compressing or condensing curricula, while using accelerated learning pedagogy.

The abridged curriculum version is proposed to salvage millions of learners who are adversely affected throughout the primary and secondary learning cycle threatened to; either repeat the classes or drop out of school. This problem is more likely to affect children living in poor communities countrywide, who often rely on the physical setting of their schools to provide educational materials, guidance, and, sometimes, the only decent meal of the day. The same poor children in their homes, especially during times of confinement or quarantine, faced multiple forms of abuse and violence. Crowded or poorly spaced environments, a general lack of resources, particularly digital devices and connectivity, means that the cost—in terms of education and general well-being—of the current crisis will be highest for populations that are already vulnerable.

1.3 What changes have happened in the methods of teaching and learning?

The pandemic has brought changes to Uganda's education system (Paschal, M. J., & Mkulu, D. G. 2020). There is no option apart from swiftly adjusting the model of instruction delivery in schools. Using the abridged curriculum will mean that the teachers will need to change the methodology of teaching from a broader knowledge acquisition to a contextual integrated approach.

1.3.1 Contextual methods of teaching cover the essential elements/key competences of the official curriculum. Learners ought to be active and more participatory rather than being passive and spoon fed. The conventional unfocused and frequent testing and examinations will be done away by allowing more time for learners to catch-up with the lost learning time.

1.3.2 Curriculum being compressed may require teachers to integrate many subject areas /aspects into a common theme when teaching.

1.3.3 Use of ICT is soon becoming inevitable for both the teacher and the learner. Teachers will need uploaded materials to plan and re-organise the teaching content and strategies while learners will make use of ICT to research, read ahead and digest current information on their own.

2. What can be done to authenticate the situation?

The post-covid era in schools termed as the 'new normal' shows major implications in the way teaching and learning will be done. The suggested remedies spread and move along the curriculum development and implementation cycle. What learners will learn (content) is part of curriculum development and how learners will learn (pedagogy) is part of implementation. The six areas listed here are very key;

2.1 Curriculum design: the 'new normal' curricula need to be shorter in content but broad in skills and competence acquisition (Pacheco, J. A. 2021). The nature in which the curriculum elements will be organised calls for a new design. Subject key components will require re-configure or re-focus more on conceptualized learning that can be applied in varied contexts. Curriculum developers will need to evaluate knowledge by selecting information that is critical from the mass of information flooding in the 21century society. This will require content and activities that probe and engage learners' convergent and divergent thinking over contextualized concepts. This is very key and urgent to redeem the lost time of schooling.

2.2 Embracing emerging technologies of ICT; Ugandan learners need to catch up with the rest of the world. Speedy curriculum implementation to be purposeful, there will be need to embrace ICT methodologies, irrespective of the challenges of disparities and variations in access, social cultural barriers which are clear countrywide. An aggressive use of ICT to access information will enable learners to understand, evaluate and de-construct mass media and learn to use ICT effectively and safely. In terms of technology skill development, many young people lack the self-confidence to use a digital platform for learning, or have not yet developed the skills required to use technology in deep and critical ways, especially younger children; the country's infrastructure for using ICT in teaching and learning will need to improve with the overwhelming demand and necessity for every school and or learner to access ICT. More eventualities are prone to strike the world, which should NOT deter learners to access information for educational purposes. This, with time, will become cheaper, efficient and internationally compliant with technology and communication development.

2.3 Digital Inclusion; A digital divide already exists between learners from low and high social economic backgrounds, with learners from low social-economic backgrounds hindered to access technology. The progressive countries in ICT measure three complementary dimensions of digital inclusion, namely; access, affordability and digital ability. Although generally there is a gradual growth across these dimensions the scores of digital inclusion remain low in poorer households. There is a need to reconsider a policy

shift on use of phones in schools since they are the cheapest and more accessible across the country.

2.4 Flexibility in the learning process and calendar; School learning time 'may' become shorter, therefore, learners from upper primary up to secondary levels must urgently adapt to the new learning environment and pedagogy. Every learner has to learn how to learn, and how to think and be self- directed learners. Information in print and e-materials needs to become available and accessible than ever before. The challenge is with learners knowing how to access such information, which requires the technical know-how/ skill of searching and using information on their own. This will break the vice of rote learning and spoon -feeding of learners, which dis-enables their thinking capabilities.

2.5 School based teacher training; In-service teachers need assistance or retooling to keep abreast with new methods of content delivery and to handle accelerated curriculum. Catch up teaching instructions (pedagogy) differs from the conventional lessons because learner-centered approach requires active, and participatory methodologies which mainly focus on skills acquisition(competence). This is going to become a new style of content delivery to most teachers.

2.6 Prioritize addressing psychosocial challenge solutions before teaching. Many learners already had several challenges with their education. There is a possibility that with a long-term disengagement from school, learners may further disengage themselves from learning if they are not emotionally oriented back to school life. This will require schools to put in place systems of offering guidance and counselling services to the learners, besides supporting those who have become young mothers and those who have been involved in part-time employment besides those who have become orphans because of covid and other natural deaths.

3. Recommendations

3.1 Examine readiness of schools, teachers and leaners.

Schools especially the private schools, might find it difficult to re-open because of factors like loss of the teachers who have gone into other professions, failure of some learners to come back, failure to service loans that were taken before the lock down among others. Teachers will need to be re-equipped in order to help the learners cope with the demands of being in school again after a long period at home. School directors, managers and parents will have to minimize the pressure on teachers to 'make grades' to have more time devoted to teaching with more of the formative assessment which informs the process than the summative assessment.

3.2 Provide support to teachers and parents on the use of digital tools; many of the learners have been minimally exposed to varying degrees of technology integration within the education curriculum depending on their year level and the school they attend. However, misconceptions may exist around the level of technology proficiency of the learners more broadly. While teachers are assumed to be better than learners in their use of technology, even then, for many, the use is low level and predominantly for entertainment and personal use, rather than for learning. Teachers need to have a robust engagement with diverse technological use of tools on lesson/content delivery.

3.3 Formation of national guidelines that clearly details the expectations to be placed on schools and teachers over the coming months. These guidelines need to be developed and aim to discard underlying fears that schools are "failing" their learners during this time of crisis. The guidelines will take into consideration the issues of promotion of the learners, the use of technologies and how the learners will continue studying if the staggered term programme is adopted by MoES.

3.4 Enhance connections; Provide loans for laptops or tablets to assist teachers and learners with ICT skills access them with internet connectivity. With increased use of technology for online learning during and after the pandemic, there is a need to enhance connectivity with remote learning away from school.

3.5 Introduce distance learning programmes in Primary and secondary school levels
Distance or home learning is an option that can save a group of learners who may not go back to school. There are several girl children that fell prey to early pregnancies and eventually become child mothers, who can be recouped by letting them continue with their studies from home. The young boys who have made an early school exit for the world of work may reconsider late schooling if distance learning option is available.

3.6 Accept phones as the cheapest ICT tool in schools

During lock down phones were handy in all homes to transmit information. Learners must have got acquainted with them to dispel fears of parents and communities of their misuse. Phones currently are the cheapest tools for Ugandan learners to go ICT. There is a need to have a policy on how the phones can be used correctly to support the learning process.

4. How will the above recommendations be implemented?

4.1 Examining readiness of schools, teachers and leaners. This is more of an operational management intervention where school managers, parents and teachers agree to handle the learners who need care and guidance to go through the trauma of covid -19. There will be a need for more of the counselling sessions than punishments and rigid school rules.

4.2 Providing support to teachers and parents; teachers as adults will come back with different challenges of social, economic and methodological nature. School managers have a duty to listen to individual needs of teachers to enable them to settle in to the task.

4.3 Formation of national guidelines; Ministry of Education and Sports as a pinnacle station of government has to give guidance on how schools and stakeholders should handle the unprecedented challenges of the pandemic. The 'new normal' situation means a change of practice in almost everything in order to stabilize the system. Educational stakeholders have to know that it will take some time to go back to the normal.

4.4 Enhancing connections; government has to come in to give teachers assurance of accessing loans. The 'emiyoga' or 'sacco' funding for teachers should be directed to this cause to enable every teacher to have a laptop.

4.5 Introducing distance learning programmes at Primary and secondary school levels is a policy issue. Government should allow more flexibilities in modalities of access to education. This will save the challenges of school dropouts because of different 'road blocks' to schooling.

4.6 Accepting phones as the cheapest ICT tool in schools; once government pronounces itself on this issue, implementation will be voluntarily done, starting with the secondary school level and beyond.

5. Conclusion

The disruption of schooling and the school calendar because of COVID-19 pandemic needs to be well managed, as it impacts millions of young learners who are the bedrock of the country's future development. There are existing educational inequalities subjecting many vulnerable learners to an increased risk of negative social, emotional, and behavioural outcomes. Young learners need a sense of stability within rapid change to help them process, adjust and develop new strategies for coping with emerging and fluid contexts. For many learners, the school environment provides this stability, hence the reason for parents and communities demanding for the re-opening of schools. There is an urgent need for a multifaceted response to address the educational needs to avoid widening the existing educational disparities. Uganda can do well by following best practices already implemented in other countries and take advantage of the experience, knowledge and insights already gained.

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A Call to Action on Measuring, Validating, and Assessing Learning Progress during School Closures

Prepared by:

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[Concerning] the children of this pandemic ... [t]he models no longer apply, the benchmarks are no longer valid, the trend analyses have been interrupted.... When the children return to school, they will have returned with a new history that we will need to help them identify and make sense of.... There is no assessment that applies to who they are or what they have learned.
(Snyder in National Academy of Education, 2021)

Background:

The health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic in the world has impacted everything about our way of life, including education (EDT & Partners, 2021). In the field of education, the pandemic has left over 95% of the world's population out of school due to the massive closure of face-to-face activities of educational institutions in more than 190 countries in order to prevent the spread of the virus and mitigate its impact (ECLAC-UNESCO, 2020; EDT & Partners, 2021; UN, 2020). Suspension of face-to-face instruction in schools during the COVID-19 pandemic has led to concerns about consequences for students' learning (Engzella, Freya, & Verhagen, 2021). To address these concerns, education leaders and teachers have struggled to provide continuous remote learning options for their students. These include in-person, virtual, and hybrid learning modes (National Academy of Education, 2021; World Bank, 2021).

In addition, further strategies aimed at keeping students engaged and learning during the prolonged lockdown of school are in line with rolling out a wide variety of distance-learning platforms such as television programs, radio programs, web-based instruction, and phone tutorials from teachers (Angrist, Bergman, Evans, et al., 2020).

Although this seemingly appears a temporary solution, with less coverage and effectiveness, it is hard to imagine going back to where we were in the pre – COVID-19 era (Angrist et al., 2020; World Bank, 2021).

As adjustments are made in the mode of instructional delivery in this uncertain and fluid environment, the regular challenges of assessing what and how students are learning have become even more complex (National Academy of Education, 2021). Existing studies have measured how much children are engaging with educational content. But how much are they actually learning? Children do not lose learning equally: children from high-income families gain learning during school closures, whereas children from low socioeconomic backgrounds lose the equivalent of several months of learning (Angrist et al., 2020).

In light of the above, we sought to understand:

1. What are the purposes, audiences, and types of assessments in an education system?
2. What is taught and what skills are required?
3. How has assessment been conducted during the COVID-19 era?
4. What assessment practices can we adopt from COVID-19 Interventions to ensure that we assess the required skills in our education system?

What are the purposes, audiences, and types of assessments in an education system?

According to the National Academy of Education (2021), educational assessment is a process of obtaining information that guides making decisions about students; teachers, curricula, programs, schools, funding, and other aspects of educational policy. There are numerous audiences and users of information obtained from assessments. For example, parents and caregivers may use test scores to understand their children's opportunities and achievements compared to other students in the class or school. Teachers may use test scores to determine areas to focus on additional and varied instruction. Schools, districts, and national governments may use test scores to monitor student performance at a macro level, document and highlight inequities in the system, make graduation and placement decisions, allocate funds, evaluate teachers, and determine professional development needs.

In addition, national governments mandate assessments as part of an accountability system to ensure equal educational opportunities for all children. Such accountability takes many forms, including estimates of academic growth and trends over time.

Critically, the intended purposes and uses of a test should be defined and explicitly addressed both at the stages of design and interpretation of results. More precisely, uses should be clearly defined before designing the test and thus long before interpretation and use for decision-making. For example, given their "summative" quality and timing of administration, end of an education cycle exams (e.g., PLE, UCE, UACE) are not designed to inform classroom instruction (National Academy of Education, 2021).

Another way of thinking about the uses of assessment would be to categorize them as follows: assessments for learning, assessments as learning, and assessments of learning. Assessments for learning enable teachers to use information about students' knowledge and skills to inform the teaching of their learners (National Academy of Education, 2021), assess and monitor learning, and provide feedback by drawing information on each student's individual learning from diagnostic and follow-up exercises necessary to understanding school children's progress and taking appropriate pedagogical actions to improve it for example teachers to modify their teaching strategies and make them more effective. Moreover, the development of assessment for learning and self-assessment instruments facilitates a collaborative process between teachers and students for evaluating their progress towards intended learning outcomes (ECLAC-UNESCO, 2020). Assessments as learning occur when participating in an assessment not only tracks learning but affects it. Assessments of learning monitor knowledge and understanding, as demonstrated by performance on the tests, often in terms of progress toward defined learning goals (National Academy of Education, 2021).

Lastly, assessments should not only measure outcomes (i.e., what students have learned) but also processes (i.e., how teaching and learning are occurring) and "opportunity to learn" constructs. The COVID-19 pandemic in many ways brings to the forefront the importance of understanding and documenting the processes and contexts of learning and the need to account for them in the design and interpretation of assessments (National Academy of Education, 2021).

What is taught and what skills are required?

Today, knowledge and skills in mathematics, science, and English are still important, and they should be.

However, the Industrial Revolution required learners with these skills because the focus of employment during this period was to expand mechanically, technically, and scientifically and this required the knowledge and skills required from these subjects (The Open University, 2020).

To make learning and assessment easier, where the assessment of learning was concerned, learning was standardized. Additionally, academic ability in several key areas became the focus of attention – mathematics, science, and English were among these subjects. This was because success and employment were predicated upon a society where 'the idea of academic ability' formed the basis for most types of learning as well as a measure of intelligence (The Open University, 2020).

Currently, society offers a wider range of employment opportunities that are not exclusively focused on key areas of the education curriculum. Further, how learners are assessed on what they have learned may not be reflective of how they will demonstrate these skills in working life. So, what skills are required in today's society?

Sir Ken Robinson in The Open University (2020) talks about how it is difficult to predict the skills needed for education in the future. His comments are relevant because the current education system still values the skills and competencies that were important during the Industrial Revolution. Even today, learners are directed towards university education. For instance, The Office for National Statistics (2017) states 'in 2017, 21.7% of those who graduated before 1992 were overeducated, whereas the corresponding figure for those who graduated in 2007 or later was 34.2%'. These figures indicate that the population is becoming educated to a higher level as time progresses.

Henseke et al. (2018) in The Open University (2020) indicate that, since 2006, in Britain, generic work-based skills such as using a computer and complex problem-solving skills have increased continually whereas literacy and numeracy skills have stagnated. Further, from 1986 to 2017 jobs that required no qualification upon entry moved from 38% to 23%, and jobs requiring higher-level qualifications moved from 20% to 38% in the same period (Henseke et al., 2018). The implication for this is that as more people become better educated the requirements to enter the workplace have changed. This is something Robinson (2006) in The Open University (2020) discusses when he notes that a process of academic inflation is present. Here, the prevalence of people with a certain qualification reduces its significance. This results in employers raising entry-level requirements to apply for jobs. This practice is also evident at universities where entry requirements can be increased or reduced to ensure places on degree courses are not over or under-subscribed.

Table 1, from data first published in 2016, presents the difference between skills and competencies required from the workforce in 2015 and 2020.

Table 1 Top 10 skills required from the workforce

In 2020	In 2015
1. Complex problem solving	1. Complex problem solving
2. Critical thinking	2. Coordinating with others
3. Creativity	3. People management
4. People management	4. Critical thinking
5. Coordinating with others	5. Negotiation
6. Emotional intelligence	6. Quality control
7. Judgment and decision making	7. Service orientation
8. Service orientation	8. Judgment and decision making
9. Negotiation	9. Active listening
10. Cognitive flexibility	10. Creativity

Source: World Economic Forum (2016) (in The Open University, 2020)

Therefore, to achieve these top 10 skills from learners, there's a call for educators at all levels to keep track of questions like;

1. Assuming your learners will progress to university, what skills do your learners need to progress in education from now until they graduate?
2. Assuming your learners may leave the education system and not attend university, what skills will all the learners need to progress into employment?
3. Assuming your learners will progress to university, what skills do your learners need to progress into employment after they graduate? (The Open University, 2020).

How has assessment been conducted during the COVID-19 era?

How are you conducting exams during COVID-19?

1. Exams have been canceled 14%
2. Exams have been redesigned to fit home situations 48%
3. Exams have been conducted with remote proctoring solutions 23%
4. Others 14%
   Source: Times Higher Education in EDT & Partners (2021).

The COVID-19 crisis is creating drastic changes in the assessment practices of education systems and institutions (Cahapay, 2021). High-stakes final assessments such as written examinations, undertaken conjointly, in timed, silent conditions are impossible during a pandemic. What's more, they are bad for student wellbeing, do not accurately represent skills such as creativity, and often bear little resemblance to the post covid real-world settings students will be entering after university. Moreover, these high stake examinations have a focus on recalling information rather than exploring a topic. (Cowell, 2021).

Failure to administer high-stakes exams resulted in schools' adoption of new assessment practices such as using previous grades from mock exams, applying observational assessments of teachers, and considering prior grade expectations (Cahapay, 2020). In higher education like the Philippine's teacher education institutions, the changes were made within the temporal, logistical, and cultural contexts. The changes were evident in the grading components, grading system, laboratory work completion, research work completion, and grade point average computation. The changes were a result of the issue of internet accessibility and the midway termination of the semester (Cahapay, 2020).

Locally, in Uganda, universities like Makerere University, Uganda Christian University, and Uganda Martyrs University grappled with similar challenges. These had to seek clearance from the National Council for Higher Education to adopt alternative forms of assessment from the traditional in-class examination. Specifically, at Makerere University, the following alternative forms of assessments were adopted: take-home papers and open book exams, portfolio, reflective journal articles, group/collaborative assignments, wiki, individual peer assessment of contribution to group work, video/audio recordings podcasts, blog, claim, ready to submit manuscripts, independent study project, field/ lab reports, case study analysis of real-life instance/ event, online forum discussions, and oral exams conducted over zoom (The Academic Registrar, Makerere University, 2021). Whereas these assessment approaches were helpful in assessing learning outcomes at higher education institutions through rewarding curiosity and academic inquiry as well as making assessment a part of the learning journey (Cowell, 2021), their suitability for secondary and primary education requires further exploration.

Elsewhere in Africa, there were ongoing research projects in countries like Botswana, where internet access is both limited and inconsistent, seeking to evaluate student learning by phone during the COVID-19 school closures to avoid putting assessors and youth at risk. Pilot experience with phone-based testing among the team members provided preliminary guidance to orient those who would assess learning for out-of-school children when face-to-face assessments pose a public health risk (Angrist, Bergman, Evans, et al., 2020).

Assessment practices to adopt from COVID-19 Interventions to ensure that we assess the required skills in our education System

Following a virtual round table meeting, this technical working group recommended the following innovative ideas for educators to consider as we plan our instructional practices in order to ensure that we assess the required skills: Writing Abstracts, Book, website, journal article or program review, Case studies / Care plans, Concept and mind maps, Critical incident accounts / Journals / Blogs and Practicum experiences/Field attachment / School practice/internship. Others are participating in debates, interviews/conferences, make or design something, grant application, individual projects/presentations, group projects/presentations, learning logs, teaching a lesson/micro-teaching, workbooks/worksheets, instant reports, peer assessments, written papers (research, essays, term, position, reflection, etc). Besides, educators may also explore the use of essay plans, observation/-checklists, lab reports, portfolio / E-portfolio, simulations, quizzes, essay exams, and multiple-choice exams, adopt online discussion boards, online wikis, question banks, role-play, simulations, Social Media Platform Exam, Student-Created Exams, gallery walk exams, and oral/ video exams (Wehlburg, 2020). There is a need to streamline, which assessment approaches will work best for the various levels of the education system: Early childhood Development (Nursery schools, primary, secondary, and post-secondary institutions) However, Pre-primary and primary may continue with written response exams (fill in the blanks, short paragraph), selection exam formats (matching), observation as an addition to other assessment practices.

The future of assessment

The assessment strategy should now emphasize less tangible creative and analytical skills, such as leadership and

entrepreneurship. Trial & error and iteration are the hallmarks of the innovation era and not easily taught through traditional methods. There is a strong influence of context, including cultural context, on developing and assessing these skills (EDT & Partners, 2021).

We must keep students engaged with dynamic, adaptive assessments that adjust question difficulty according to individual learner performance and estimated ability. It is important to get a deeper understanding of learner progress across individuals or groups of all sizes with reports, live tracking, and specific item analysis. Institutions must also control how assessments look, feel, and perform (EDT & Partners, 2021).

Change in teaching and/or learning strategies for either individual students or for the whole class should be aimed at completing the formative assessment cycle (EDT & Partners, 2021).

The assessment of student learning begins with educational values. There is a disconnect between what institutions value and what they measure (EDT & Partners, 2021).

Assessment is not an end in itself but a vehicle for educational improvement. Educational values should drive not only what we choose to assess but also how we do so. We recommend that assessments from now on are constantly questioned and permanently integrated into a valuable student experience. Practice does not make perfect. Perfect practice makes perfect (EDT & Partners, 2021).

Way Forward

1. Revise the education system so as to create professionals who are hands-on and able to create their own jobs.

2. Retool teacher educators with appropriate competency-based curriculum pedagogies to nurture teachers who can teach the current Competence based curriculum in secondary schools.

3. Emphasize the use of oral assessment in regard to what students have learned in the course of the term or semester.

4. Emphasize individualized criterion-referenced assessment as opposed to the norm one.

5. Urgent need to change the mindset of employers from seeking grades and qualifications to competencies.

6. Urgent need to change the mindset of parents from celebrating successes of children with first grades/ classes to competencies. Similarly, parents need to reduce the pressure exerted on teachers, schools, and children to produce the best grades.

7. Emphasize continuous assessment, regularly document learning gains of a student, and use the results on summative assessment.

8. Formative assessment results should have a significant contribution to the national summative results of a candidate. Similarly, teachers should be reminded about ethical and integrity issues in handling formative assessment results.

9. Build capacities of teachers on appropriate assessment approaches.

10. A framework of assessment that assesses one's ability to memorize, present orally a task, collaborate with colleagues on a project, and individual accountability of their contribution to the success of a group project needs to be adopted.

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Teachers and Human Resources Issues during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Objectives

1. To establish the status of teachers and human resource issues are after the outbreak of COVID-19
2. To propose what can be done to rescue the situation
3. Suggest some recommendations and how they should be implemented

Introduction

As the teacher slogan is "The nation is because we are", it does not spare our teaching community from worries when the global pandemic of COVID-19 broke out. This community comprises teachers, school administrators and our dear leaners. After over nineteen months of no school, this to date, possesses a puzzle of the status of teachers and the entire human resource in our schools and what we can do to redeem the situation.

To detail the status of teachers and schools during the COVID-19 pandemic, the following comes out vividly:

- Teachers in most private schools have lost their source of income
- Some teachers, especially from sciences, have used the lockdown to offer private coaching to students.
- Some parents and government officials have mocked Teachers. Some blame them for being responsible for spreading the virus to students and, as a result, many have lost self-esteem and pride in their profession.
- Many private school teachers have gone through the lockdown without pay
- Many teachers have looked for other forms of employment like street hawking, brick making, security guards' jobs, bodaboda, etc.
- Some even died or lost dear one due to lack of survival means in the private sector, mostly.
- Many had got loans which were not paid effectively therefore their properties like houses, land, bodaboda etc. were confiscated by the banks e.g. centenary, DFCU, Equity and pride bank.
- Domestic violence increased in some teachers' families e.g. fighting for TV remotes.
- Families, some teachers are in prison because of breaking of Covid guidelines, e.g. walking at night and those caught when coaching students at school.
- Some joined bad peer groups like drunkards.
- Families of some teachers disintegrated, affecting the stake holders.
- Some teachers thought of options for early retirement is to try out other opportunities.
- Secondary school teachers are so nervous of how to make a living and deal with the new change of the learner secondary curriculum.
- It led to cancellation of exams, which leads to confusion for many students and there is no room for curriculum
- Because of the closure of schools, many students were suffering from not having enough food for survival.
- It has forced educated parents to teach their children throughout the pandemic, but we require understanding that there are some illiterate parents and their feeling of helplessness to help their children in their education.

Just like a coin has both sides, COVID-19 so are the effects of COVID-19 to the teacher and school fraternity

- Some teachers have diversified to other sources of income into trade, farming. Probably this will boost our income and we settle to facilitate learning.
- Some teachers have gone back to study to acquire marketable skills like social media, e.g. tiktok, graphic design, photography etc.
- Many teachers have embraced online teaching and learning.
- Technology paves the way for education, thus helping the students and teachers to connect virtually though online classrooms, webinars, and digital exams and so on, though it is not available to many students all over the nation.
- Everything is happening for the wellbeing of the students so that they can stay safe at home without getting affected by the life-threatening virus.
- Closure of schools has also helped teachers who are experts in blackboard, chalkboard, books and classroom teaching to the new digital teaching which has made them adopt.

b What are the psychosocial issues for teachers and other human resources since the lockdown of schools?

- Some teachers hanged after failing to deal with loss of livelihood because of COVID-19.
- Many teachers are frustrated with the profession, regret why they went for this profession since most of us did not get any relief. (The Nabanja money) in terms of food ratios, cash and other forms of relief. We look as if we are outsiders and unwanted in our country.
- Secondary school teachers are so vulnerable about how to make a living and deal with the new change of the lower secondary curriculum. As a matter of fact. The anxiety among many teachers is the first day back to class about how school is to begin despite the vaccinations with vaccines which do not prevent COVID-1 but only improve immunity not forgetting the new policy of scrapping of certificate teachers from the education system.
- Some private school proprietors have turned schools into other business-like houses rentals, chicken houses, so this worries teachers who will lose jobs and begin another hunt.

c) What are the implications of the above issues for the reopening of schools [readiness and commitment?

- There is a likely low turn up of students and teachers.
- It will take some time for the government &schools to have teachers students settled in schools for serious teaching and learning.
- The morale of teachers and other human resource will be low because of the financial status. There will be some gaps to fill in the human resource department.
- The lockdown has been too long. Many of the teachers must have lost track of the professional ethics and code of conduct.
- Some human resources are still unstable and undecided on the way forward
- Schools are affected by low funds to reopen.

• The parents will struggle with payment of fees because many have lost jobs and businesses.
• Many teenage girls are to report when pregnant and so need for special attention.
• Schools will have to spend a lot of money on counselling and guidance
• There will be a need to recruit more staff for those who have left teaching and this will affect some learners who were used by their old teachers.
• The private teachers will be keen to start serious teaching.

2. What can be done to rescue the situation?

a) In terms of training/guidance and counselling, resources, etc.?

• Teachers need to be encouraged inspired with the message of hope through counselling services.• School management &parents should commit to pay teachers promptly; they should set up savings and credit schemes &provide loans to teachers.
• Schools should organize more capacity building workshops for their staff in order to manage the two syllabi at the same time.
• Teachers should be encouraged to go for vaccination and government avails the vaccines.
• SOP equipment should be provided by the stakeholders on the school premises and sops, followed by everybody.
• Private schools need tax waivers and given incentives in order to keep in business.
• New study materials that will implement the new curriculum should be provided to both private &government schools.
• Pregnant girls& ones who have given birth during lockdown need a remedy or policy to address their challenges.

3. What are our recommendations?

• The government should prioritize vaccination of teachers to ease reopening of schools.
• The support of private teachers should be affected by the government.
• Teachers should not lose hope.
• Savings schemes should be encouraged among teachers to prepare for crisis through SACCOs.
• The government should empower teachers to use ICTs adopt to changing realities in the classroom and deliver distance learning.
• The government should also aim at equipping in-service teachers and teacher trainers with skills in delivering online lessons, digitizing learning and teaching materials to use a range of online platforms and tools, all skills that will continue to be relevant once schools reopen
• The government and other development partners should priorities teacher capacity development as one of the key pillars to support the digital agenda.
• Government to increase funding to schools
• Support supervision of schools by various stakeholders
• Training of staff in guidance and counselling
• Vocationalize schools to cater for different ability and talents
• Validation of staff to find out those that have left teaching
• Continuous sensitization of stakeholders about the role of a teacher in the society.

4. How will the above recommendations be implemented?

a) What should be done and when?

• Government, school administration and parents should provide SOP equipment on the school premises before opening of schools.
• Create more classroom space for streaming in order to avoid congestion in classes before opening.
• Provide food baskets [food ratio] to staff.
• Hire counselling experts to conduct workshops for staff.
• Government should provide study materials.
• Government should recruit more teachers.
• Create counselling department in schools.

Strengthen the career guidance department &establish physical offices in schools.

• Establish isolation places in schools.
• Ban visitations at school.
• Do not allow the non-vaccinated members at school.

b) Who are the actors [organization, institutions, individuals, associations, etc.]?

• The Ministry of Education
• The Ministry of health
• Inspectors of schools.
• Head teachers
• Non-government organization.
• Civic leaders.
• Members of parliament & parents
• School Administration.
• Covid task force.
• Local government
• Teachers.

c) What resources do they need?

• Funds.
• Trained Counsellors.
• Resource persons.
• Sensitization talking posters in schools about Covid -19.

Call to Action on Health, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background:

Globally, education remains one of the top-most priority areas for building peace and driving sustainable development. The COVID-19 pandemic has created unprecedented school interruptions all over the world but specifically in Uganda resulting in over 17million learners getting locked out of school. Returning to school is highly dependent on the ability to lower the risk of further spread of the COVID-19 disease; prevent severe infections and lower the risk of death. We are living through the largest shock in the education history, and with the added inequities including of access to digital learning and economic disparities across the population divide we remain concerned that some learners may never complete school and achieve their dreams. It is anticipated that globally 24 million learners will drop out of school. In Uganda, 30% of our 17 million learners may never return to school. In addition some teachers may not return to school because of the fear of getting infected while at school, and or not being able to have access to the standard protective equipment. Whereas we are overly concerned about children returning to school, we need to include teachers as well in the psychosocial interventions to improve a smooth return to school.

We therefore sought to understand:
1/What is required for learners to stay safe in school during the COVID-19 Pandemic?
2/What are the health risks related associated with keeping learners out of school?
3/How do we leverage from the good practices elsewhere?

What is required for learners to stay safe in school during the COVID-19 Pandemic?

So far, data suggests that children under the age of 18 years represent about 8.5% of reported cases, with relatively few deaths compared to other age groups and usually mild disease. However, cases of critical illness have been reported. As with adults, pre-existing medical conditions have been suggested as a risk factor for severe disease and intensive care admission in children.
Face masks are a simple, proven tool to help stop the spread of the virus to students unable to get the vaccine or to those who may have a condition that puts them at higher risk of getting sick even if they have been vaccinated.

Fully vaccinated people can still become infected with COVID-19 and spread the virus to others. New variants of concern keep coming up such as the delta, delta plus, and now the omicron COVID-19 variants which are circulating and may be more contagious and cause more severe illness to people who are vulnerable. People who have gotten the COVID-19 vaccine are less likely to get very sick or die from the variants. As a bonus, masks can help stop the spread of other infections like the common cold or the flu. That is one reason why everyone over age 6 years should keep wearing a mask that covers the nose and mouth. There is the constant concern of the younger children less than 6 years who are not able to comfortably wear their masks and need closer supervision. For these preschoolers, the onus would then rest on the adults to always wear a mask, and encourage the preschoolers to wash their hands regularly and remain socially distanced.

The mask should fit well and be worn correctly and consistently. Even most children with medical conditions can safely and effectively wear face masks with practice, support and role-modeling by adults. It is very important for parents and teachers to consult with the paediatrician if they think a child has a medical or developmental condition that would limit mask use. Furthermore, during these uncertain times, parents should offer pro-bourno services to schools and offer free medical care and treatment.

Physical distancing:
Students — including those who are fully vaccinated — should remain at least one meter (3 feet apart) within classrooms when possible. In general, CDC recommends people who are not fully vaccinated maintain physical distance of at least two meters (6 feet) from other people who are not in their household. However, several studies from the 2020-2021 school year show low COVID-19 transmission levels among students in schools that had less than 6 feet of physical distance when the school used other prevention strategies, such as the use of masks.

When possible, schools should use outdoor spaces and unused spaces for instruction and meals to help with distancing. Activities like singing, band and exercising, for example, are safest outdoors and spread out.

Testing
Screening testing for COVID-19 identifies infected people. It can be used to identify those with or without symptoms and people who may be contagious before they have symptoms. This can help slow the spread of the virus to others. Screening testing can be offered to students who have not been fully vaccinated and may be most valuable when there are higher levels of COVID-19 cases in the community. Screening testing can also offer added protection for schools that are not able to provide optimal physical distance between students. Screening testing should also be offered to all teachers and staff who have not been fully vaccinated. To be effective, the screening program should test at least once per week, and rapidly (within 24 hours) report results. Diagnostic testing is recommended when someone has COVID-19 symptoms, or recent known or suspected exposure to the virus.

Exposure:
Children appear less likely than adults to have symptoms

and severe illness from COVID-19. Even with physical distancing, masking and vaccination, schools need to plan for exposures especially with new virus variants circulating.

If a student or staff member has close contact with someone known to be infected with SARS-CoV-2, they should quarantine as recommended by local public health officials unless they are fully vaccinated. Fully vaccinated people who have a known exposure to someone with suspected or confirmed COVID-19 should be tested 5 to 7 days after exposure, whether they have symptoms or not. It is important to note that some children may get complicated and severe COVID-19 disease.

Other considerations:
In addition to safety plans, there are other factors that school communities need to address:

Students at higher risk
If a child has any chronic, high-risk medical conditions, they may need extra accommodations to stay safe. Paediatricians and school staff (including school nurses) will options for safe in-person, blended, or remote learning.

Students with disabilities and comorbidities:
The return to in-person school may have had a greater impact on students with disabilities. Students may still have a hard time transitioning to in-school learning and missed instruction time. Or they may have had less access to school-based services such as occupational, physical and speech-language therapy or mental health support counseling. Schools should review the needs of each child with an Individualized Education Program (IEP), and provide services even if virtual.

Immunizations and wellness exams:
It is especially important for all children to be up-to-date on their immunizations during the pandemic. Routine childhood and adolescent immunizations can be given with COVID-19 vaccines or in the days before and after. Children with comorbidities such as diabetes, sickle cell anemia and obesity should be encouraged to get vaccinated before returning to school. The Pfizer BioNTech has now been recommended to children aged 5 years and above in the USA. Getting caught up with repeated micro epidemics and multiple waves will threaten our learners with staying out of school for a longer period than is necessary.

Behavioral health and emotional support:
More than 3,000 children have experienced the death of a primary or secondary caregiver during the COVID-19 pandemic in Uganda.
Schools should be prepared to support a wide range of mental health needs during the pandemic. This includes recognizing signs of anxiety or distress. Students may be grieving loved ones lost to COVID-19, for example, or feeling the stress of lost family income. Schools also can help students with suicidal thoughts or behavior get needed support.
The personal impact of the pandemic on school teachers and staff also should be recognized.

Organized activities
Sporting events, practices, and other extracurricular activities may be limited in many areas. In schools that do offer sports and other physical activities, special safety steps should be considered.

Screenings
Vision and hearing screening and oral health programs should continue in schools, when possible. These services help identify children in need of treatment as soon as possible so health issues don't interfere with learning.

Nutrition
As the pandemic continues, schools are able to provide free meals to all children, regardless of household income, through June 2022. Many students receive healthy meals through school meal programs. Check with your school district for more information. Schools should provide meal programs even if the school is closed or the student is sick and stays home from school.

Why safe, in-person school is so important
The benefits of in-person school are much greater than the risks in almost every way. Schools are safe, stimulating, and enriching places to be while parents or guardians are working.

Children and adolescents receive more than just academics. They also learn social and emotional skills, get exercise, and have access to mental health and other support services. For many families, schools are where kids get healthy meals, access to the internet, and other vital services. As children return to school it is important to have enough space to socially distance the students.

What are the health risks related associated with keeping learners out of school?
School closures have many potential adverse consequences for students: These include interrupted learning as well as depriving children and youth from in-school learning opportunities (UNESCO 2020). When children and youth are out of school there are interrupted access to in-school resources such as free school meals and other nutrition programs (Minardi, Hares, and Crawford 2020; UNESCO 2020). Interrupted access to in-school safety: Children are at greater risk for child labor, early marriage, and sexual exploitation, especially in conflict-affected or fragile contexts (Manardi, Hares, and Crawford 2020). Negative psychological and physical impacts: Children who have been quarantined have higher posttraumatic stress scores (Wang et al. 2020). Social isolation: Schools are hubs of social activity and human interaction. When schools close, many children and youth miss out on social contact that is essential to learning and development (UNESCO 2020). It is at school that children and the youth are able to learn and promote healthy practices, such as hand washing (UNICEF 2020). Moreover, in school monitoring and contact tracing for highly contagious diseases such as tuberculosis can be done; and programs such as supplemental immunization activities for measles and polio can be done. There could also be a need to help children cope with stress (UNICEF,

WHO, and IRC 2020). Strain on healthcare system: Women often represent a large share of health-care workers and often cannot attend work because of childcare obligations that result from school closures (UNESCO 2020). Learners out of school remain vulnerable to sexual and gender based violence and as we already know many adolescent girls and young women have become pregnant and may not have the opportunity to return to school.

How do we leverage from the good practices elsewhere?

In countries where school openings have been successful SOPS such as social distancing, mask wearing, vaccination for eligible students, all teachers, and all adults; keeping parents and other people off school as much as possible; good ventilation of classes, dormitories, and public spaces; regular surveillance; formation and training of school covid-19 committees have been successful interventions. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that all eligible children and adolescents who are 5 years of age and older receive the COVID-19 vaccine. Adults and children should get fully immunized as soon as possible (AAP 2021). The current covid-19 vaccine situation in Uganda still requires that we vaccinate high priority groups, individuals aged 18 years and above are eligible for vaccination; and recently the MOH 2021 announced that children with co-morbidities aged 12 years and above should be vaccinated.

Our call to action therefore:

Includes the immediate safe return to school of all learners making sure that they have adequate water, sanitation and hygiene. We also call upon policy makers and implementers to learn from the best practices of safe school returns from the neighboring countries especially regarding adapting all the standard operating procedures. In addition, all teachers, parents and support staff should be vaccinated and still maintain the SOPs. We acknowledge that sometimes isolated breakouts of the COVID-19 pandemic will occur but they should be handled in isolation without causing massive school closures. We recommend the continuation of school using various approaches such as online learning; blended learning and block re-opening whenever possible. We call upon all stake holders to join hands and ensure that all learners return to school safely since education is key and core to the development of our nation. Accelerated learning recovery should be mandated with simple interventions such as expanding instructional teaching time; making classroom teaching more efficient; small group tutoring; promoting self-directed learning; and supporting teachers to implement these innovations. Teachers should be encouraged to get vaccinated with the available COVID-19 vaccines.

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Access and Participation of Special Needs Learners in Education during the Covid-19 Pandemic

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Background

According to the World Health Organization one billion people, equivalent to 15% of the world's population, have a disability (WHO, 2011) with the majority (80%) living in developing countries. In Uganda, current statistics indicate that 12.5% of the country's population have at least one form of disability (UBOS, 2019). This implies that globally and in Uganda Persons with disability (PwDs) constitute a considerable proportion of the population yet they are not given equal opportunities, non-discrimination and full participation in society as enshrined in various international laws, agreements and protocols.

Uganda has ratified various international conventions and protocols that safeguard the rights of PWDs, including the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights; United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD); Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Salamanca Statement and Framework for Action on Special Needs Education, and Marrakesh Declaration on access to published work for persons with visual impairment (2013). These protocols guide the national regulatory frameworks on PWDs and require inclusion of the disability perspective and persons with disabilities in all aspects of society and development.

With respect to inclusive education, Article 24 of UNCRPD requires countries to attain a right to education for persons with disabilities without discrimination and on the basis of equal opportunities at all levels of education. The UN Sustainable Development Goals(SDGs) and SDG4 in particular promotes equitable and inclusive quality education and lifelong learning opportunities for all, and Target 4.5 requires ensuring equal access to and effective participation at all levels of education for the vulnerable groups, including persons with disabilities. Target 4.A requires education to be disability sensitive and for learning environments to be safe, non-violent, and inclusive for all.

Uganda's commitment to inclusive education is reflected in its legal and policy frameworks including the Constitution of the Republic of Uganda (1995), the Special Needs and Inclusive Education Draft Policy (2011), the Persons with Disability Act (2006); and the Copyright and Neighboring Rights Act of (2006). These frameworks coupled with other relevant structures guide mainstreaming disability across the education system so as to eliminate barriers to accessibility and ensure an inclusive educational environment for all categories of people with disabilities. For example, The Persons with Disability Act also requires the state to provide public facilities that are accessible to PwDs, while the Copyright and Neighboring Rights Act of (2006) provides for transcription into Braille or sign language for educational purposes.

Despite the foregoing global and national commitments to inclusive education, barriers to inclusion and full participation of PwDs persist in Uganda and other countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNICEF, 2013). For example, the proportion of PwDs that have never been to school in Uganda at 31% is more than twice that of non-PwDs at 13%. Similarly, education attainment at tertiary level is only 3.7% for PwDs compared to 7.1% for non-PwDs at the same level (UBOS, 2019).

Uganda's disability inclusion policies and programming in primary and secondary education levels, coupled with affirmative action at admission to higher education are bearing fruit reflected in the increased enrolment of persons with disabilities in universities. However, the disability inclusion interventions made at the lower education levels have not been made at higher education level. Therefore, despite progress registered in increased enrolment, there is evidence of exclusion and discrimination of students with disabilities in Uganda's HEIs which limits their full participation in university education (Emong & Eron, 2016).

Research on inclusion and participation of students with visual impairment (SVI) in higher education institutions shows the following as barriers negative attitudes, inaccessible learning environments, inadequate and inaccessible library resources, inaccessible instructional materials, staff capacity constraints for inclusive teaching approaches and limited access to specialized equipment, assistive devices and support services (Sikoyo, etal, 2021 Namugenyi & Wamea, 2021; Ojok, 2018, Wandera, et al., 2017; Emong & Eron, 2016; Kimoga, et al, 2015).

The foregoing analysis shows that the access and participation of learners with disabilities was constrained even in the pre -Covid-19 period, hence the pandemic exacerbated existing systemic and institutional barriers.

Interventions for continuity of learning during the pandemic

COVID-19 interrupted economic and social life especially the World Health Organisation recommended social distancing. In Uganda social distancing led to closure of schools, places of worships, crowded markets, non-essential services and companies, international boarders, suspension of all public and private transport as well as imposing a curfew from 7:00pm to 6:30am, among others. The closure of schools left many children especially from peri urban and rural areas without any learning materials. In a bid to leave no child behind, the Ministry of Education and Sports working with different stakeholders, under the guidance of the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC) developed and distributed standardized study lesson packages in the core subjects for primary and secondary levels. The design of MoES package aimed at ensuring that all learners irrespective of their social and

economic status, geographical location or disability status (MoES, 2020) access the materials. The materials were expected to be accessed through:

a) Print and self – study home package with large prints and braille
b) Radio live recorded lessons and live presentations
c) Television - lessons with interpreter of Sign language.
d) Online uploads

The NCDC Print self-study packages for primary and secondary schools were distributed through local government structures – LC1s and as inserts in Bukedde and New Vision Newspapers. The digital format was available for downloaded on the NCDC website.

In addition to the government interventions, there were other initiatives including school specific distribution of -study materials and organization of online learning lessons. Individual families also hired teachers to provide private tutoring for their children.

Barriers to access and participation of SNE learners during the Covid-19 Lockdown:

Accessibility of learning materials is important for learners with disabilities. Learners with visual impairment – especially the blindness rely on their senses of touch (tactile) and hearing (audio) – hence they learn best with materials and environments that harness audio and tactile senses and affordances. On the other hand, learners with hearing impairment rely on their visual senses for learning as explained below;

"A deaf student uses eyes to see and to listen and also uses hands to listen, without seeing the hands signing or reading lips they cannot learn effectively, they read lips"

(Headteacher, Wakiso School for the Deaf)

Figure 1: Teaching using sign language for learners with hearing impairments

Figure 2: A Learner with visual impairment using braille materials

During the covid-19 lockdown, most of learners with special needs at basic education level were excluded from accessing and participation in education because of the limitations of the learning modes, media and formats of the materials which were inaccessible to them. Limitations with learning modes adopted during the pandemic.
In the first phase of the lockdown, i.e., in 2020 the NCDC home study materials were not adapted for learners with hearing and visual disabilities. For example,

- Print materials were inaccessible to learners with visual disabilities (low vision and total blindness)
- Television lessons were inaccessible to learners with hearing impairments because there was no provision for sign language interpreters
- Digital materials were not affordable by most learners given the costs for printing download and printing in large print for low vision learners
- Lack of specialist support services such as sign language interpreters, braille and special teachers exacerbated the barriers to participation of SNE during the lockdown.
- Access to assistive devices and technologies was challenging to many learners as most lack personal devices and rely on the school facilities.

Overall, the print materials were inadequate and limited in reach for majority of learners across the country (Ezati and Sikoyo, 2021). Related costs of accessing the different modes of learning such as TV subscriptions, dry batteries, electricity and devices (TV, Radio, computers) was a further barrier to participation of all learners from low-income households, including those with SNE.

Further Interventions for SNE learners

The lessons learned during the phase 1 of the lockdown informed improvements in the design and production of self-study material by NCDC. In Phase 2 (from late 2020 to date) NCDC has designed and adapted home-study materials for learners with disabilities – visual and hearing, this is ongoing. Provision has been made for adaptation in accessible formats e.g., braille, digital, audio and visual versions. This has been possible with support from Development Partners (The World Bank and UNICEF). The following processes have been done so far;

i. Alternative formats- braille, sign language, visual, mode to supplement print materials for primary and secondary schools:
ii. Adaptation for learners with visual disabilities
    - Recording audio-visual lessons for Television learning
    - Converting audio-visual lessons into digital format for online access
    - Transcribing print packages into braille format,
    - Developing large print materials for low vision learners
iii. Mathematics from Upper primary to secondary was not adapted due to technical issues
iv. Production of alternative home study materials for learners with hearing disabilities at primary and secondary levels
v. Developing lesson plans to be video recorded into sign language
vi. Developing accompanying teaching and learning materials(aids)
vii. Presenting model lesson demonstrations classroom teaching situation
viii. Video recording lessons and Editing lessons to select the best for TV broadcasting
ix. Converting video lessons into digital formats to be accessed online

Mobile learning initiative at Wakiso School for the Deaf

At Wakiso School for the Deaf learners missed out on learning during the lockdown just like their counter parts at primary school level. However, one of the teachers of mathematics (who is a deaf person) out of personal initiative created a WhatsApp group for S4 class that he used to send notes to the class and for teaching with sign language.

Despite the initiative, only six (6) out of 29 students accessed the WhatsApp group as most students come from rural areas and lack devices for mobile learning. Tablets, smart phone or tablet – are crucial devices for learning of deaf students

Figure 3: *Students of Wakiso School for the Deaf signing*

Access and participation of University Students with disabilities during the pandemic

Online learning was the main mode of remote learning at University level in Uganda. For example, Makerere University adopted a blended modality of online learning comprising synchronous video-conferencing mainly Zoom, and asynchronous self-paced learning via an institutional Learning Management System. In addition to online learning, Email and WhatsApp were used to send learning materials as well as for communication with learners. However, because some staff were not conversant with online teaching, the University organized rapid orientation sessions to prepare staff to teach online but did not do the same for students yet many including those with disabilities lack basic digital competencies to effectively participate in online learning. In addition to the limited skills and experience with online learning.

There was limited uptake of online learning – some universities like Kyambogo which enrolls students with disabilities remained closed during the pandemic therefore students missed out on education.
Assistive devices and technologies are critical for students with disabilities to access and fully participate in education more so in online learning. Technologies enable inclusion and participation of students with disabilities in education and other services. ICTs also promote independence for learners with disabilities which is key for all persons with disabilities. Despite this important role, some students with disabilities lack personal assistive devices for learning and rely on university facilities which were closed, hence they missed out on learning altogether.

The main barriers to access and participation of learners with disabilities during the pandemic include the following:

- Limited accessibility of online learning environments due to lack of screen reading and captioning software for learners with hearing and visual disabilities
- Staff capacity constraints in inclusive education practices
- Limited digital competences and exposure to online learning constrained students with disabilities from accessing and effective participation in education
- Limited access to infrastructure for remote learning – lack of devices and connectivity costs
- Lack of specialist support services – brailing, sign language interpreters, assistive devices to support learners with disabilities

Overall, online learning was not fully inclusive and accessible to learners with disabilities during the pandemic, which exacerbated existing in pre-covid barriers to access and participation documented by scholars (Sikoyo, etal, 2021). To mitigate the above barriers, students with disabilities at Makerere University were asked to come and reside at the university campus so that they could be assisted by lecturers in person while the rest of the students were learning online.

- Special schools need further affirmative action- in form of a special/hardship allowance to motivate teachers. Teachers need more time and effort to teach deaf learners, therefore some top up/allowance to motivate
- Government – provide for sign language interpreters as specialized staff cadre on the wage bill , currently these are recruited on private basis
- Specially designed classrooms- amphi-theatre design for maximum visibility for all learners - to see teachers using signing/sign language
- Provision of more computers and other ICTs to ease learning
- Psycho social and motivational talks – civil society and private sector
- Increase capitation grant to cater for data costs for eLearning
- Provide gadgets (especially Tablets) to deaf learners to enable mobile learning.
- With all teachers vaccinated, learners could be retained to learn face to face while observing social distancing given the small population of 164 learners in the entire school
- More teachers and professional development opportunities in inclusive education methodologies

University level

- Awareness creation and sensitization for university community to provide a more supportive environment for learners with disabilities
- Enhancement of accessibility of learning environment for inclusive learning for students with disabilities – through improving accessibility features for online systems ,use of screen reading and magnification software and captioning for learners with visual and hearing impairments
- Increase access to specialized devices and assistive technologies in all universities enrolling students with disabilities – Kyambogo Universities is most resourced with assistive technologies and devices relative to other universities
- Staff capacity strengthening in inclusive education practices
- Disability support services enhancement
- Partnerships and collaborations in inclusive education ecosystem actors for holistic and sustainable support for students with disabilities

Considering the accessibility challenges associated with online learning for students with disabilities, a combination of synchronous and asynchronous technologies like Zoom and Learning Management Systems can maximize the affordances of online learning and enhance their inclusion and participation in teaching and learning.

Universal Learning Design

Whereas efforts to adapt learning modes and materials are the main form of accommodation currently implemented in Uganda to support learners with disabilities across the different school levels, Universal learning design has been promoted as a more sustainable way forward within the inclusive education community of scholars and practitioners.

Universal Design Learning (UDL) is an innovative inclusive education framework that has been developed to guide development of curriculum, which is flexible and supportive for all students including students with disability. Research on UDL provides strategies for identifying and removing barriers in pedagogy, curricula and teaching mate rials to enable students with disability participate in inclusive education contexts (Lintangsari & Ive, 2020; Beyene, et al (2020), Moriña, 2017). The UDL model ensures that curriculum and learning design processes provide multiple learning pathways and options for expression, a variety of methods for motivation, and information in different formats. UDL is designed to meet the needs of all students by ensuring that learning methods, materials and assessment are accessible and usable by all learners including those with disabilities by providing multiple, flexible methods of presentation and flexible options for engagement.

Conclusion

COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing systemic and institutional barriers to effective participation of learners with disability in education. Alternative interventions to continue learning remotely, e.g., online learning and learning from home have not adequately addressed the learning needs of learners with disabilities. Lack of disability support services, limited access to the internet, accessible learning materials and assistive technologies deepened the gap for students with disabilities (UN, 2020). Ensuring accessibility of facilities, services and information is fundamental to a disability inclusive COVID-19 response and recovery (UN, 2020).

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Parental/Care-givers' Involvement and Roles during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

Globally, over 1.5 billion students have been affected by the worldwide closure of educational institutions due to the corona virus - 19 pandemic (Ouma, 2021). This closure of schools was one of the emergency plans which aimed at slowing down the virus' transmission (Ribeiro, Cunha, Silva, Carvalho, & Vital, 2021). In Uganda, all schools were closed on 18th March 2021 and this was re-emphasized later under the nationwide lockdown declared on 24th March 2020 (MoH, 2021). Like in many other countries, the president of Uganda directed that the ministry of education works on modalities of studying from home under the distance education mode, as well as rescheduling all other education events like examinations and co-curricular activities (Olum et al., 2020).

The closure of schools has had serious impact on the teachers, students, parents, and all other education stakeholders. For example, there has developed serious need to transform from the traditional educational practices to more sophisticated approaches. The rapid transformation from the conventional education to virtual and distance learning is linked to various challenges and obstacles (Adnan & Anwar, 2020, p. 45). Additionally, Olum et al. (2020) observe that whereas e-learning has been assimilated in most institutions in the western countries, schools in the low developed countries have not fully implemented it. This is due to the inadequate internet infrastructure, lack of enough skilled professionals to implement e-learning, irregular power supply, and many other factors. With the above challenges at hand, parents and caregivers have continuously struggled to ensure their children's involvement in homeschooling.

Homeschooling, also known as home education, is an educational reform around the world whereby parents educate their children at home and other various places, but not at school (Cahapay, 2020, p. 5). Cahapay (2020) goes ahead to note that mostly in developed countries, some parents prefer home education due to a number of factors. Some of the parents are not satisfied with the current educational opportunities while others believe children are not gaining an advantage with the traditional school arrangement. Whereas this is the belief and practice in developed countries, homeschooling is relatively a new phenomenon in developing countries (Adnan & Anwar, 2020). Many developing countries have tried to support homeschooling during the era of the COVID-19 pandemic by sponsoring academic programs on radios and televisions (Shahzad, Hassan, Aremu, Hussain, & Lodhi, 2020, p. 807). Some have generated social media networks through which parents can access study materials for their learners.

However, many of the parents and caregivers were not prepared for this As such, this approach has had serious implications for some parents and care givers whose skills in home education need serious improvement (König, Jäger-Biela, & Glutsch, 2020, p. 610).

It was upon this background that we carried out this study to establish the parental/care-givers' involvement and role towards learners' education during the COVID-19 era. As noted above, after schools implementing new approaches to teaching and learning, the parents too needed to adjust to the new normal. They needed to start using the various digital tools and resources to achieve the instructional goals (König et al., 2020).

Purpose

The purpose of this study therefore was to establish parental/caregivers' involvement and roles in their learners' learning during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Questions

The study was guided by the following questions;

1. What are the roles and responsibilities of parents/caregivers in the implementation of home study?
2. How are parents/caregivers fulfilling their responsibilities in implementing home study approach?
3. What recommendations do parents/caregivers have to rescue the situation?
4. How could the above recommendations be effectively implemented?

Design and Methodology

Design

The study was guided by descriptive, cross-sectional survey design, using a qualitative approach to explore parental/-caregivers' involvement and roles in learners' learning during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Sample

The population of the study included parents and caregivers of different categories. These parental/caregivers' categories included; parents/guardians, primary and secondary teachers, school matrons and wardens, instructors from institutions of higher learning, education officers, and, school administrators. It is from this population that a sample was purposely selected from each category, both from town and rural setting. We considered the urban and rural settings to cultivate the rich experiences and recommendations of parents/caregivers of both settings.

Data generation strategies and tools

The study was carried out between October and November, 2021. It used two data generation strategies; online group discussions via zoom and other social media platforms, and face to face interviews. Under the face to face interviews, the researchers ensured that the SOPs were observed. For the group discussions, a discussion guide was administered while the interview guide was used during the face to face interviews. Both instruments were developed basing

on the study questions. Proceedings of the group discussions were audio-recorded and later transcribed for analysis.

Data analysis

We applied the multi-layered inductive thematic approach of data analysis (Patton, 2002, p. 453). This approach includes two layers of data; the first layer involved participants discussing the data they have generated through discussions and interviews. After immersing into the raw data that was collected and discussed by the participants, the researchers engaged into the second layer by organizing the data into themes (Jupp, 2006).

Ethics

For ethical considerations in this study, we obtained authorization and introductory letter from the Dean, Schools of Education, College of Education and External Studies, Makerere University. We purposely identified the participants, introduced ourselves, explained the study to them and discussed their participation. The participants later signed the consent form which clearly stressed that they were free not to participate or drop out at any time of the study.

Key findings

The roles and responsibilities of parents/caregivers in the implementation of home study.

Closure of schools on 18th March 2020 under a presidential directive towards Covid-19 seemed a temporary measure giving parents hope that soon or later schools would be opened. Suddenly, parents became more involved than ever before in their children's learning. To learners, it seemed to be a short holiday. Come to today, the education sector is still at closure and it is upon the parents/caregivers and the children to find ways of survival to fit well in the education dynamics. A number of learning materials were proposed by government through media to learners over televisions, radios, newspapers among others. The availed learning materials and have been backed-up by individual school programs, all aimed at enabling the school child not to lose academically. The parents/caregivers have played a central role in provision of some materials and facilitation of home study as follows;

i) Provision of the basic learning materials
ii) Supporting the learning environment
iii) Supervision of learning
iv) Assessment and evaluation of learners
v) Ensuring security of learners
vi) Outsourcing and facilitating home learning facilitators
vii) Provision of basic needs to learners; food, clothing, shelter
viii) Mentoring learners
ix) Programing and balancing between home schooling, domestic responsibilities and free time
x) Supporting C-19 vaccination of learners, especially those that are 18 years and above
xi) Guidance and counselling of learners
xii) Avoiding child labor
xiii) Adhering to and enforcing curfew regulations
xiv) Home skilling of children

How parents/caregivers are fulfilling their responsibilities in implementing home study approach.

Through our interaction with parents and caregivers, we asked them how they were coping with those long, long periods of overseeing learning at home. Parents and caregivers reported that there was panic at first, wondering how they were going to supervise all school work just from home. Some were too worried of how to balance between their jobs and the new supervisory role. Throughout the upheaval, parents experienced a whole range of emotions. Below are some of the strategies parents have adopted in the implementation of home study

i) Some parents and caregivers have improvised learning classes at their homes

Mostly in urban areas, parents and caregivers have identified specific areas around their homes to work as home study classes. In these areas, some parents and caregivers revealed that they have put the minimum required furniture to facilitate learning. On the other side, the urban poor and most rural parents have not had such an arrangement. This is confirmed by the following comment made by one of the participants in a rural setting;

"Nze abange basomera wonna we baagadde. Sirina kifo kya nkalakkalira wasomerwa"

Loosely translated as;

"My children study from wherever they wish. I don't have a specific area for studying"

The above response could sound like such a parent or caregiver never minded about their children's studying. However, this is not the case. Some actually revealed that they were limited by space. That, they could not assign a portion of the already small home space to only studying. They revealed that when their learners are ready to learn, they identify any free area that could serve the purpose around the home.

ii) Attending community radio study programs

Some parents revealed that they have gained skills of managing their children's learning through the community radios commonly known as 'Ebizindaalo' which air out training programs. Through these programs, parents have gained skills of using materials around the home environment to engage their learners. One participants revealed that;

"...baatuyigiriza engeri y'okuyigirizaamu abaana abato okubala, nga tweyambisa ebintu ebiri awaka."

Loosely translated as;

"...they trained us how to teach our children mathematics while using materials found at home."

We were eager to establish where the community radios obtained the training materials. The participants revealed to us that recorded materials played on the radios were sponsored by different organizations like the Ministry of Education and Sports, NCDC, and UNICEF. These programs supported the parents and caregivers in their new roles under homeschooling.

iii) Some have deigned their own study materials

During our survey, we obtained feedback mostly from participating teachers that they are used to designing their own study materials. However, it should be noted that this was much manifested amongst participants that teach primary level. One participant explained that they have no money to engage in provision of expensive study materials, which is why they make the materials themselves. Another one stated that she is a teacher herself, therefore she could use her personal experience to make those materials.

iv) Hiring home study facilitators.

Some parents and caregivers have hired teachers and invited them to their homes, while others have taken the children to teachers' homes. This was much common with the urban participants than the rural ones. Participants revealed that they reached out to nearby schools and approached teachers that were readily available to teach their children. A few participants, they invited the teachers to their homes but observed that this was seemingly expensive. Other participants from both rural and urban stated that they are used to sending the children to the teachers' homes. They also stated that they paid the teachers weekly.

v) Subscribing to education service providers.

Many of the participants revealed to us that they have subscribed to education service providers. They stated that many well-off government and private schools have come up with study programs via zoom, Google meet, websites, and other ICT methods to provide education to their clients. It was also revealed that some of the providers of these services are private individuals that have registered private companies. They have come up with subscription fees for the services offered. The subscription fees is paid periodically for example hourly, per day, weekly, monthly, or termly.

vi) Provision of internet and other study materials

Participants especially from urban areas revealed that they have tried to look for affordable internet service providers to enable their children attend online classes. Both rural and urban participants stated that they buy newspapers that have printed study materials in them. They also explained to us how they have managed to search for study materials and trial exam papers from social media platforms and neighboring schools.

vii) Managing homeschooling and business.

Some participants revealed that they have re-scheduled their working hours to enable them facilitate the home study. Others told us that they decided to go to work together with their children, so as to monitor them studying. Some parents reasoned that the gadgets that learners use are the same that parents use for communication. Therefore, since they cannot forego the communication, they decide to go with the kids to places of work.

By going with their children to work, many parents were solving the challenge of their children's home study obligations while at the same time meeting work commitments hence addressing worries concerning their household's financial security.

viii) Provision of basic domestic utilities

Parents and caregivers also revealed that they have been ensuring that they provide the necessary domestic utilities that promote home studying. These include electricity, water bills, internet data bundles and television subscription fees. They observed that since learners were studying via television and phones, they was need for ready electricity and internet bundles. Likewise, they said that paying for water bills in time was also essential to enable learners concentrate on their studies than wasting a lot of valuable time looking for free community water sources.

ix) Neighborhood study practice

Some participants revealed to us that they practice what they termed as 'neighborhood study'. Under this practice, neighbors bring together their children and they study together. We asked them about how instruction is managed and they revealed that sometimes they outsource teachers. These teachers are hired periodically according to need. The rest of the time they are the elder brothers and sisters that facilitate learning. They also observed that in most cases, their children are making revision of the already obtained notes or study materials. They emphasized that this kind of arrangement has enabled them to keep their children busy without costing them too much.

As observed above, parents/caregivers are fulfilling their roles in the home study practice by implementing several strategies. At the beginning of the home study practice, parents/caregivers reported that they were too worried and lacked confidence in the implementation of home study. However, we were delighted by the participants' revelation that as the lockdown intensified, they became more aware of what was required of them as regards the home study practice. By the time of this study, it was evident that many parents/caregivers expressed positive views towards their schools' use of technology to engage their learners. However, parents and caregivers have encountered several challenges while fulfilling their roles in the implementation of the home study practice. Below we elaborated on some of these challenges.

1. Lack of focus and continuity. Most of the participants complained about the essence of the home study practice, after realizing that at the end of the lock down, all children will be guided by the government decisions. They asked themselves whether those who have been participating in home study will be promoted to the next

classes or not. Also, they were worried of the fact that each parent/caretaker was following their own study arrangements. So, some concluded that apart from keeping children busy, the home study arrangement had no academic agenda.

2. Most parents/caretakers do not have enough technical knowledge and skills about the process of teaching and learning. This has led to poor supervision and monitoring of children during the teaching learning process.

3. Lack of time to implement the home learning approach. Some parents/caregivers are working in the formal sector while others are working from far. This has hindered them from creating the needed time to effectively implement home learning.

4. Homeschooling is costly to most of the parents/-caregivers. Most of the participants revealed that they spend a lot of money on facilitation of this kind of study. That, some schools charge as much as 200,000/- shillings weekly. This is too expensive to most of the parents whose income is already constrained by the pandemic.

5. Expensive study equipment. For successful implementation of the home study strategy, the parents have to ensure that the required equipment is provided. This includes gadgets like the TV sets, telephones, laptops, desktops, audio recorders, and others. All these gadgets are too expensive to be provided by a parent/caregiver more so to one having more than one learner.

6. Inability to store some materials for future attendance and revision. Parents/caregivers observed that when learners miss a lesson on television for example due to lack of electricity, it is not possible for them to gain such lessons afterwards. Likewise, when they want to review a lesson that they have attended on television, it is not possible because there is not such arrangement. This causes lack of continuity in their study process.

7. Misuse of the study equipment by learners. Most of the participants acknowledged that their children have misused the study equipment in several ways. One parent revealed that her son used her phone to search for pornographic materials. This disturbed the parent and decided to buy a computer and employed a technician to set some parental controls in it. Such learners have ended up acquiring unbecoming behavior and practices.

8. Lack of privacy on the side of parents. As observed earlier, most participants admitted that they give their phones to children to use them in the home study. As such, some learners start navigating through the messages, pictures, and any other files on the phone. That way. The parents'/caregivers' privacy is at risk.

9. Lack of assessment and evaluation skills on the side of parents/caregivers. As stated under the coping section, parents/caregivers buy materials to assess their learners. Such materials are obtained from newspapers, assessment associations, and schools. The challenges rise after learners attending these exams and the parents failing to assess/mark the papers. The parents' failure to assess the learners makes the home learning cycle incomplete.

10. As reported earlier, some parents bring neighborhood children together for the purpose of home study. Under such arrangement, the participants revealed that there is lack of clear learning objectives. This is due to the fact that most times, the learners are of different learning levels. Hence, there is no focus in the whole arrangement.

11. Unstable internet network and electricity

12. Unfavorable home environment especially with those with limited space.

13. Redundancy on the side of children which has led to drug abuse and teenage pregnancies.

14. Some businesses are at closure and income levels among parents have gone so low because much time is put into home study and provision fundamental basic needs to children.

Recommendations that parents/caregivers have to rescue the situation

After parents/caregivers narrating the challenges they face while implementing the home learning approach, we asked them how their children's schooling could be improved and they suggested the following;

i) Training parents/caregivers in the basic technological competences by government
ii) Government drafting and enforcing a uniform compulsory, temporary home learning curriculum.
iii) Implementing the temporary curriculum via different media platforms
iv) Planning and implementing the assessment, evaluation and promotion of learners that have actively engaged in homeschooling.
v) Government supporting and facilitating rural community radios to enable them broadcast home study lessons.
vi) Government subsidizing electricity and internet costs
vii) Providing psychosocial support to all teachers before schools open up. This will prepare teachers to handle unpredictable social behaviors that may crop up in learners.
viii) Set up parent/caregiver support groups to engage parents on how they can get involved in their

children's learning

ix) Provision of enough meaningful reading materials as well as making follow-up ensure fair distribution of the same.

x) Encouraging child mothers (and fathers) to get back to school even when they feel too big for the respective classes

xi) Engage local and opinion leaders and civil societies to offer support to parents and learners

xii) Provision of practical skills training to learners with parents as supervisors

How the above recommendations could effectively be implemented.

When we asked participants about their views on how best the above recommendations could be effectively implemented, below is the summary of their responses;

a) Government regulating the charges of homeschooling materials and fees.

b) Government putting up formal monitoring structures for homeschooling, from the village to national level.

c) Government assigning zonal teachers to facilitate and monitor the approach.

d) Periodic reporting by the zonal teachers about the progress of the approach

e) Parents, children and schools each fulfilling their obligations.

Discussion

Findings from our study indicate that most parents and caregivers that participated in the study reported mostly **negative experiences about this approach.** Some actually revealed that they developed domestic conflict. This conflict was partially due to the increased demands against reduced or no income at all. As reported by most participants, the homeschooling approach was not adopted by all parents/caregivers. As such, it is likely that those that have not participated may fall behind academically if not given appropriate support thereby increasing the disparities in education progress.

We also observed that the participants never reported any assistance that was provided to special needs learners. This is also true with the few materials have been circulated by either the government departments or private organizations. Little or no attention therefore was given to this group of learners. Their receiving of insufficient or no homeschooling materials has made these learners more worried and stressed about the future of their education.

As observed earlier that digital platforms were common in urban areas and with the well-off parents/caregivers, many parents and their children in rural areas did not have a chance to participate in such platforms. We do believe that the responsible authorities could look for a better system that favors both urban and rural learners equally, for equal homeschooling achievement.

Additionally, as reported by the participants, some families have broken up due to failure by parents/caregivers to meet the basic homeschooling needs. This is common mostly with families that have a low socioeconomic background. Unless such families are empowered socioeconomically, their children's well-being is much compromised and this finally affects their homeschooling achievement.

During our discussions with the participants, it was clear that there was no uniform content to a particular group of learners in a particular grade. This lack of homogeneity automatically leads to low quality of home schooling. The

Conclusions and Recommendations

low quality was partially due to low levels of school support. Therefore, there is need to clearly specify the entry point of schools into the homeschooling approach and specifically elaborate the roles that they can play.

Our study revealed that homeschooling had more adverse effects on both parents and their children. However, it has given parents, schools and institutions an opportunity to rethink and consider not only the challenges but also opportunities related to digital teaching. It is equally important to note that homeschooling, if not well handled, can lead to increased academic disparity between the rural and urban children.

Lastly, it is important to note that we relied on the parents'/caregivers' judgement of the homeschooling approach during the pandemic period. We feel that there is need to carry out a longitudinal study to establish the parents'/caregivers' experiences of their children's education before and during the pandemic. This will lead to clear understanding of the parents'/caregivers' homeschooling practices during the pandemic era.

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Child care, Welfare and Psychosocial Issues during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Introduction

A new corona virus strain, Severe Acute Respiratory Corona Virus 2 (SARS-CoV2 or COVID-19), was discovered in Wuhan, China, in December 2019 and has since spread globally (Shereen et al., 2020). The World Health Organisation (WHO) labelled the COVID-19 outbreak a global pandemic in March, 2020 (World Health Organisation, 2020a). In Uganda, the first case of COVID-19 was discovered in March, 2020 and since then started implementing several measures to curb the virus. These included regular hand-washing, social distancing, school, religious institutions, office and shop closure (only essential services continued), a ban on all private and public transport, and night curfew from 07.00 pm till 06.30am. In June 2020 private and public transport resumed, and most offices and face masks, practised social distancing and had access to hand washing facilities (Government of Uganda, 2020). The curfew starting time was changed to 09.00 pm. Schools, sport facilities, arcades, and places of entertainment remained closed (Government of Uganda, 2020). Schools were momentarily re-opened on 15th October, 2020 on a phased manner and latter closed on 7th June, 2021 due to an increase in COVID-19 cases and have since then remained closed. The government is preparing to reopen schools in January, 2022 (Government of Uganda, 2021). As the country prepares to re-open schools, there is need for better understanding of the care, welfare and psychosocial issues that learners have faced during the COVID-19 lockdown for pave way for schools and various stakeholders to prepare for proper re-opening of schools. A survey involving 33 different stakeholders was carried out using an open-ended questionnaire. The objectives of the survey were to

1. Identify challenges/problems schoolgirls and boys are facing during the COVID-19 closure of school
2. Identify responsible persons and driving forces to the problems schoolgirls and boys are facing during the COVID-19 closure of schools
3. Propose solutions to the challenges school girls and boys are facing during the COVID-19 closure of schools
4. Propose preparatory activities schools need to engage in as they prepare for re-opening

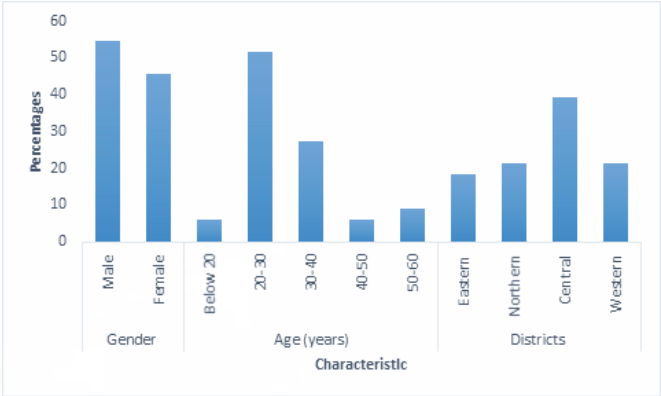
Methodology

Data was collected using a mailed questionnaire/ Google document given the travel restrictions and other standard operation procedures for control of COVID 19. The researchers utilized contacts in the several WhatsApp groups they belong. Altogether 33 people responded to the study. Data were analysed using SPSS software for descriptive statistics.

Results

Social demographic characteristics of the participants

Almost an equal number of male and female respondents participated in the study. Though the majority of the participants were below 30 years, this could be due to the demographic distribution of age in the country (UBOS, 2017). By the fact that we used the internet and technology to collect the data, it is the age below 30 that easily access the internet and the gadgets. The same table shows that participants for this study were picked across the country and hence the data presented is fair representation of views from across the country.



Social demographic characteristics of the participants

Challenges/problems schoolgirls are facing during the COVID-19 school closure

The majority of the respondents mentioned childhood pregnancies as the major challenge the girls are facing, followed by child labour, sexual harassment, loitering, watching pornography, financial distress, anxiety and depression. All these reasons seem to feed into each other. Details of these challenges are shown in table 2 below

Category	Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Sexual related challenges	Childhood pregnancy	33	100
	Sexual harassment and hanging out with boys/men	6	18.2
	Watching pornography	4	12.1
Psychosocial related challenges	Anxiety and depression	4	12.1
	Drug abuse	2	6.1
	Loitering	6	18.2
	Exposure to adult social life (fancy clothes, beautiful hair styles)	2	6.1
	Financial distress	4	12.1
	Exposure to business opportunities and how to make money	2	6.1
Child care and welfare challenges	Limited access to learning materials	8	24.2
	Child labour (on farm, cooking, fetching water, selling items door to door)	10	30.3
	Domestic violence at home (between parents and Quarrels and beatings from their parents due to misconduct)	3	9.1
	Lack of school fees between lifted lockdowns	2	6.1
	Lack of attention, care and support which parents are not giving	5	15.2
	Lack of sanitary pads	2	6.1

Responsible persons and driving forces to the problems schoolgirls are facing during the COVID-19 closure of schools

The majority of the respondents cited girls' lack of necessities and desire to get money from men as a major cause of early pregnancies and sexual harassment as well as rape and offers given by Boda-boda men, male relatives and other males in societies. Lack of sanitary pads has been blamed on inability by support organizations to access these girls as the case would have been if they were in schools. Furthermore, the domestic violence has been linked to economic distress in households and drug abuse majorly due to influence of peers, parental negligence and too much time to idle.

Responsible persons and entities for the challenges girls are facing during lockdown

Category	Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Sexual related challenges	Inevitable due to changing times that expose girls to sexual acts	1	3
	Boda-boda men, other men in society and close family members who rape these girls or lure them through pretence to help	3	9.1
	Girls' lack of necessities and their desire to get money from men	4	12.1
	Parental negligence	2	6
	Too much time to idle	2	6
	Parents continual to work all day leaving the children at home unsupervised	3	9.1
	Parents marrying off their girls for material things	1	3
	Students less engaged in academic work due to limited access to radios and TVs where lessons are conducted	2	6
Lack of sanitary pads	Harder to reach by support organisations	2	6
Domestic violence	Economic distress in households	3	9.1
	Children's misconduct	2	6
Drug abuse	Peers	12	36.4
	Parental negligence	8	24.2
	Too much idle time	8	24.2
	Parents continual to work all day leaving the children at home unsupervised	5	15.2
	Students less engaged in academic work due to limited access to radios and TVs where lessons are conducted	2	6

Challenges/problems schoolboys are facing during the COVID-19 school closure

The majority of the participants reported that boys majorly faced a challenge of defiling girls, arrests, forced marriages and financial fines. Also, they majorly faced other challenges like child labour, limited access to learning materials and engagement in money generating activities.

Challenges/problems schoolboys are facing during the COVID-19 school closure

Category	Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Sexual related challenges	Defiling people's daughters	16	48.5
	Forced marriages as a result of impregnating girls	15	45.5
	Financial fines as a result of defiling people's daughters	10	30.3
	Arrests	8	24.2
	Falling in love with older women	1	3.0
	Watching pornography	4	12.1
Psychosocial challenges	Theft to satisfy their social needs	3	9.1
	Engagement in business and other money generating activities which reduces their zeal to study	7	21.2
	Engagement in gambling	6	18.2
	Anxiety and depression	5	15.2
	Drug abuse and addictions	2	6.1
	Loitering	6	18.2
	Financial distress	4	12.1
	Fights at water sources	1	3.0
Child care and welfare challenges	Limited access to learning materials	8	24.2
	Child labour (on farm, selling items door to door)	10	30.3
	Domestic violence at home (between parents and Quarrels and beatings from their parents due to misconduct)	3	9.1
	Lack of school fees between lifted lockdowns	2	6.1
	Lack of attention, care and support from parents	5	15.2

Responsible persons and entities for the challenges boys are facing during lockdown

The majority of sexual related challenges are due to parental negligence; theft due to the need of boys to satisfy their social needs; domestic violence due to financial distress and children's misconduct while drug abuse due to peer influence, parental negligence and too much time to idle.

Responsible persons and entities for the challenges boys are facing during lockdown

Category	Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Sexual related challenges	Parental negligence	20	60.1
	Too much time to idle	2	6
	Parents continual to work all day leaving the children at home unsupervised	3	9.1
	Students less engaged in academic work due to limited access to radios and TVs where lessons are conducted	2	6
Theft	Need to satisfy their social needs, prevent arrests and pay financial fines	2	6
Domestic violence	Economic distress in households	3	9.1
	Children's misconduct	2	6
Drug abuse	Peers	14	42.4
	Parental negligence	8	24.2
	Lack of law enforcement	3	9.1
	Too much time to idle	8	24.2
	Parents continual to work all day leaving the children at home unsupervised	5	15.2
	Students less engaged in academic work due to limited access to radios and TVs where lessons are conducted	2	6

Suggested solutions to the above challenges

The majority of the participants recommended opening of schools are a solution to the challenges faced by boys and girls. Other solutions standing out include psychosocially preparing learners for the opening of schools, empowering teachers to handle learners with such psychosocial challenges, creation and /or utilization of community-based youth club activities that can keep the youth formally engaged, sensitization of patents, strict law enforcement among others.

Challenge	Party responsible	Frequency	Percent
Opening schools as soon as possible	Government	15	45.5
Fees waivers, scholarships and free educational materials and other incentives when schools resume	Government, NGOs and schools	8	24.2
Immediate empowering of teachers on how to handle children affected by the COVID-19 closure of schools	Government, NGOs and schools	10	30.3
Immediate psychosocial support to the boys and girls	teachers, village leadership, parents, church and cultural leaders, VHTs and NGOs NGOs, government and schools	10	30.3
Immediate sensitization of parents and community leaders	NGOs, government and schools	7	21.2
Utilization of students in school club activities e.g YCS, Youth alive, debating, etc	NGOs and schools	6	18.2
Law enforcement officers should strictly enforce laws on children's rights	Police and community leadership	8	24.2
Prioritising economic support to vulnerable groups and house holds	Government and NGOs	5	15.2
Employing trained councillors or empower teachers more to offer the guidance and counselling	Government and schools	2	6.1
Create/utilize community-based areas/co-curricular and education centres where boys and girls can gather for games and community-based education	Community leadership	10	30.3
Immediate strengthening of e-learning	Government and schools	4	12.1
Support students' income generating projects in school through competence-based learning when schools resume	Schools and parents	2	6.1
Improve teachers' welfare as schools resume to motivate them to work	Schools and government	4	12.1
Immediate creation and utilization of community-based youth clubs such as football, prayer clubs, music, dance and drama clubs.	Community leadership	6	18.2
When schools resume, students may need to first study for half a day to allow transition	Government	4	12.1

What schools need to do as they prepare to handle covid-19 lockdown affected learners

As schools prepare for opening, they need to utilization of students' clubs to offer psychosocial support, guidance and counselling for learners, teachers and parents; infrastructure and mechanisms to enforce SOPS and vaccination as well as increased play activities.

What schools need to do as they prepare to handle covid-19 lockdown affected learners

Category	Challenge	Frequency	Percent
Rehabilitation and mental health	Create/utilize club activities	15	45.5
	Schedule guidance sessions on timetables across the country for psychosocial support	8	24.2
	Teachers ought to be calm, welcoming, honest and caring	8	24.2
	Pre- counselling sessions for pregnant students and boys who have become parents before returning to school; those engaged in business	5	15.2
	Have increased play and sports activities on the time table to promote students' interaction and improve on their mental health and body health	5	15.2
	Schedule psycho social support sessions for teachers and parents	10	30.3
	Hire trained councillors or empower teachers more to do the guidance and counselling	4	12.1
	Schools adjust on some of their rules and regulations as this time learners will be even more wild; girls might come with pregnancy to school.	2	6.1
Safety	Double shifts and increased teachers' facilitation in schools of high population but limited resources to follow SOPs	3	9.1
	Put in place covid task force to enforce SOPs.	8	24.2
	Ensure infrastructure/hardware to enforce SOPs	10	30.3
	School should put all the required SOPs to allow for uninterrupted opening up of schools	4	12.1
	A mechanism to ensure everyone in who gets in school is vaccinated.	4	12.1

Conclusion

In conclusion, school going children have faced a variety of challenges that are both own made and others have been resulting from the lockdown. These need to be addressed immediately as they are still in the communities and even continuously as they get back to school to allow them smoothly transition back to a learning mentality. All recommended parties should be involved.

Recommendations

1. All technical people (teachers, medical workers, police etc.) and politicians in communities should be immediately involved in mobilizing and talking to school children in their communities as schools prepare to open
2. Schools need to immediately start preparing for re-opening by putting in place infrastructure and mechanisms for enforcing SOPs, a favourable learning environment, counselling and re-tooling of teachers on guidance and counselling
3. Schools are advised to lobby for support or improvise where necessary as they plan to get these learners back in school
4. Parents and guardians should be trained on how to make re-usable sanitary pads
5. The government should zero rate internet for e-learning in all schools and institutions whether private or public
6. Government should put a ban on young children (below 16 years) carrying out vending
7. Those who have finished senior 4; have their businesses running and are not willing to get back to school, they could be advised to do relevant short courses.
8. Communities should be encouraged to report any kind of child abuse to relevant authorities. Community needs to be sensitized about prevention, identification, reporting and referral system for handling crime
9. Homeless children and on streets should be collected and taken to rehabilitation centres
10. Guidance and counselling programs should be carried out in the communities and schools

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School Resources, Funding and Financial Support during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Background

Due to the danger posed by the COVID-19 pandemic to the country, the closure of schools remains in place (March, 20th 2020 until January 2022).
The closure has impacted more than 67,516 schools affecting more than 14,000,000 students and over 400,000 teachers. The impact on education resources, funding, and financial support is not fully understood.

Status, of resources, funding & financial support for schools and institutions before and after the covid-19 outbreak

We consider the status at two levels:

Government/National level;

Education Institution & Household level

Status at Government level

The outlook is uncertain, Government's spending on education will suffer because of the pandemic. This implies additional pressure on the already low level Government's expenditure on education (2.5%-GDP). Hence, any cuts in spending will further worsen the quality of education.
Government's spending on education is likely to stagnate or fall in as it attempts to contain Covid-19 induced budget deficits.

Key challenges faced by Gov't in trying to fund education during school closures and re-openings include:

Inadequate resources to support the continuity of learning during school closures, and prepare schools for reopening;
Over-reliance on external funding for emergency responses;
Budget reallocations to public health that have led to cuts in education spending;
Debt repayment and other competing national priorities that impede financing of education;
Pre-existing challenges that have hampered the allocation of resources to the education sector.

The freeze in salaries at a time when the cost of living is rising provokes;
More strikes if safety/health and cost of living adjustment concerns are not addressed.

Experts predict the education financing gap expanding by 1/3 compared to the pre-pandemic trajectory.
This reflects lower government's revenue amidst rising education costs to improve:
School health and safety infrastructure,
Implement social distancing measures, deliver learning remediation programs; and
Support student re-enrolment.

So, without massive external support, especially from development partners, Uganda's pre-pandemic learning crisis could transform into a learning catastrophe with severe long-term economic and development consequences.

Status at Educational Institutions & Household level

COVID-19 outbreak and the subsequent closure of EIs exerts unprecedented strain;
On EI resources, funding & financial support in ways that are yet to be fully understood.
Prolonged EI closure has had a wide range of impact on students, teachers and households.
Households face increasing economic difficulties with raising unemployment and income losses.

This impacts the likelihood of children staying in school and transitioning to the next level of education when schools reopen, increasing the number of out-of-school children.
Parents' ability to contribute to educational resources is now more limited, which may impact the quality of schooling.

Decline in parents' income places EIs in a difficult position regarding the collection of school fees. Thus, fees-dependent EIs will suffer revenue loss, due to parents' financial challenges.
Falling resourcing for EIs in this crisis has causes significant disruption in school operations risking long-term damage including;
The permanent closure of fee-dependent private schools that serve low-income families. This leads to learner displacement and loss of jobs for teaching & non-teaching staff. So, the pandemic is hitting vulnerable, low-income communities the hardest. But even parents in middle-income group will struggle to maintain the considerable resources they devote to their children's education. This will have a ripple effect in EIs patronized by middle-income families as parents find it hard to pay school fees, which will affect the school budgets.
External financing of EI in form of assistance from NGOs, private/business sector is likely to decline too.

Since Covid-19 is hitting the economies of major donors, they will find it challenging to maintain high levels of assistance and support to individual EI and their programs. For EIs relying on such support, if these donations diminish, incomes of these schools will the equally diminish.
Amidst all these financial challenges, EIs will not only need to make up for the dramatic gaps in government spending and school fees collection, they will also need extra money to pay for the additional things they are asked to do to observe the covid-19 SOPs. Besides, EIs will have to service bank loans or pay rent, pay utility bills etc.
Ensure that their environments are safe and stay safe when learners finally return to school.

EI have to cope with unconventional learners such as pregnant and/or breast-feeding teenagers, and a highly disenchanted staff expecting prompt salary and allowances payment
It is understandable that EIs may resort to trimming spending on certain items such as; buildings, supplies and equipment, which is much needed by schools in vulnerable areas.

While we do not yet know for sure what the full impact of Covid-19 on education will be, we know that the economic

hardship, plus the grief and trauma that ensues from Covid-19 is unprecedented for today's EI, learners, households and government.

In keeping with the foregoing situation highlight;

What damage has Covid-19 inflicted on the education system?
What kind of resources are needed to resuscitate the education system?
What are the sources of these badly needed resources?
What are your suggestions/recommendations?
Any other issues than we need to bring forward?

Effective Pedagogical Practices for Online Teaching and Learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Effective practices

Online learning – Learning takes place using the internet as the medium (Layton, 2017).

Pedagogy - Methods, approaches and practices of teaching (Tes, 2018; Murphy, 2008).

Paradigm Shifts (some philosophies & concepts)

Instructivism (Less) Vs Constructivism (More)
Social constructivism
Transformative Pedagogy
Imaginal Education
Competence Based Learning
Student centered Learning
Activity based learning
The flipped classroom

Practices

1. Good module design – Sub-Saharan Onlinisation Pedagogy (Muyinda and Kajumbula, 2019).
2. Contextually train facilitators- Approaches recommended (Muyinda and Kajumbula, 2019).
3. Give learners chance to reflect on their learning by incorporating end of unit/topic quizzes.
4. Make learning Learner-centered and communicate this to the learners from the beginning.
5. Inform learners that they are in charge of their learning.
6. Encourage learners to work together i.e collaborate and cooperate to solve problems.
7. Scaffold Learners into online learning.
8. Allow learners to comment on the quality of the online course through evaluation ie feedback.
9. Have both asynchronous and synchronous sessions.
10. Use the teaching voice when presenting material online.
11. Learners learn through doing. Give them authentic tasks and activities.- Do not just upload documents (PDFs, MsWord) and PPT slides. That is not online facilitation/ teaching.
12. Give clear instructions for E-tivities e.g. what to do, why, where to do it from, how to submit the artefact, where to submit the artefact.
13. Keep your online presence balanced.
14. Give learners feedback on their tasks.
15. Follow good constructive alignment i.e. Intended
16. Learning Outcomes (ILOs) related activities that you give and ensure that the assessment relates to the activities and ILOs.
17. Enhance good learner experience through attractive and relevant course presentation.
18. Look at learners as partners in knowledge co-creation. They also research and they know. For Inclusivity, Blend approaches and technologies. Some may not access the online material while one method alone may not be effective for others e.g. learners with disabilities. Use UDI model

Capacity building and training needs

1. Soft/People Needs
2. Mindset change/motivation to adopt transformative pedagogies
3. Teaching and learning technology proficiency
4. Online facilitation pedagogy
5. Online instructional design and content development
6. Learner scaffolding for online learning

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