Equipping School Leaders in the Midst of Crisis:

The Role of School Leaders in Crisis: From the COVID19 Frontline
**Dignitas** is a leading education development organization.

We use an innovative training and coaching approach to empower schools and educators in marginalized communities to transform students’ opportunities.

We imagine a world where schools are a vibrant place for all children to develop the skills and strength of character to thrive and succeed.
• Introduction
• Study Design
• Findings
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In response to COVID19, we needed to equip school leaders to lead their teaching teams in new ways, and for new scenarios, so that every child could have the opportunity to thrive and succeed.
Study Design

• Understand the barriers that school leaders face in supporting learning and well-being during school closures

• Explore competencies, mindsets and tools that will equip school leaders to support learning and well-being during school closures

• Develop a set of training and coaching resources that will strengthen these competencies and mindsets in school leaders
Study Design

• Mixed Methods
  • Household survey
  • School Leader survey
  • Focus Group Discussions
  • Key Informant Interviews
  • Training Session Evaluations
  • Learner Assessments (Literacy and Numeracy)

• Participatory Action Research

• Phase 1 Pilot Sample: 60 School Leaders, Urban informal settlements of Nairobi (Kenya)

• Phase 2 Pilot Sample: 500 School Leaders, Rural Kenya (Machakos, Homa Bay, Kakamega, Malindi, Embu)
Baseline Study Findings

- 70% of School Leaders believe it is their responsibility to support learner well-being during the COVID-19 crisis, yet 68% recognize this as their biggest challenge during school closures.

- Access to digital learning is low and inequitable, with as few as 22% of children benefitting during school closures.

- Only 52% of children had been offered any form of correspondence or support from their schools, and not all of this was focused on learning.

- Only 5% of School Leaders have been able to maintain contact remotely with 75-100% of their learners, whilst 38% of School Leaders are in touch with less than 25% of their learners.
Baseline Study Findings

• Kenya National Bureau of Statistics 2019 census data demonstrates that just 3% of Kenya’s rural population have access to a laptop or tablet, and only 7% have access to internet

• 35% of parents have secondary school as the highest level of education, 21% have primary school as the highest level of education, and only 17% have experienced any form of tertiary education

• Parents stated barriers to supporting learning at home such as ‘know-how’ (39%), time (14%), and access to learning resources (72%)
Exploring Competencies and Mindsets

A series of Focus Group Discussions, Key Informant Interviews, and review of emerging literature informed a Training and Coaching Framework, with the themes listed in this table.

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Intended Outcomes

1. Children have access to quality care that ensures child safety and well-being
2. Children stay engaged in learning whilst at home
3. Parents are empowered to support learning at home
4. School Leaders are equipped to support households and ensure the well-being and safety of children
Leadership Academies

Professional Development Workshops

Coaching

Professional Learning Communities

DIGNITAS
Dignity through education

RELI
Regional Educational Learning Initiative
Exploring Competencies and Mindsets

- I do
  - Content Delivery
- We do
  - Modelling
  - Practice
- You do
  - Support
  - Coaching
Action Research Activities

• Modules and Toolkits delivered via ChatBot
• Online Communities of Practice
• Coaching Phonecalls
• Distribution of Student Learning Packs
• Household visits
The program was data-informed, responsive to the needs of school communities, and agile in its offering, so as to ensure maximum impact for learners.

As a result, Dignitas developed a digital training and coaching toolkit that includes:

- Virtual Engagement Rubrics
- Guiding Principles for Blended Professional Development
- New Strategies for Low-Tech Communities
- Internet Free Project Based Learning Resources (in partnership with Education Above All)
Outcome 1: Children have access to quality care that ensures child safety and well-being

In April 2020, parents who felt unable to support learning at home stated barriers such as ‘know-how’ (39%), time (14%), and access to learning resources (72%).

By August, 99% of households in our Leaders of Learning program benefited from regular support and distribution of learning packets.

COVID-19 Response: Leaders of Learning

Outcome 2: Children stay engaged in learning whilst at home

With support from Dignitas Leaders of Learning, there was a significant increase in the number of households adopting daily routines and schedules to promote learning.

COVID-19 Response: Leaders of Learning

Although anxiety levels are still high as minds turn to school reopening, parents and children reported feeling less anxious as a result of support from Dignitas Leaders of Learning.

With support from Dignitas Leaders of Learning, there was a 10% increase between April and August in the number of children spending 1-2 hours daily learning at home.

COVID-19 Response: Leaders of Learning

DIGNITAS dignity through education

RELI Regional Educational Learning Initiative
Outcome 3: Parents are empowered to support learning at home

COVID-19 Response: Leaders of Learning

With support from Dignitas Leaders of Learning, there was a significant increase in the number of parents supporting learning at home.

97% of parents now supporting learning at home.

Outcome 4: Community Champions are equipped to support households and ensure the well-being and safety of children

COVID-19 Response: Leaders of Learning

Between April and August 2020, educators in Dignitas' Leaders of Learning program benefitted from 8 training sessions, 4 coaching sessions and 11 Community of Practice sessions, all delivered remotely using new digital Professional Development tools.

98% of educators said they gained new competencies, and gave Dignitas a Net Promoter Score of 64%.

COVID-19 Response: Leaders of Learning

Analysis of student learning packets shows that scores in literacy and numeracy have remained steady, indicating that support from Leaders of Learning has prevented learning losses.
Conclusion

As learning is no longer tied to classrooms and school buildings, educational leadership shouldn’t be either.

New training and coaching curriculum, developed in response to COVID-19 school closures has focused on taking leadership out of the classroom and into the community. It embraces parents as key stakeholders, nurtures every learner, develops agile leaders of learning, and focuses on the resources at hand.
Recommendations

• Parental engagement is critical – parents are key stakeholders and actors in their children’s education. Learning systems, schools, school leaders and teachers must be aware of this, and better equip and engage parents for the benefit of their children’s learning.

• Well-being is a pre-cursor to learning – As educators, we need to consider ‘Maslow’ before ‘Blooms’, and what this means for education actors and stakeholders in typically underserved communities.
Recommendations

• Virtual, remote training and coaching requires a new set of evaluation tools – we need to rethink what we measure and how we measure it. We must design for how can we gather useful insight on educator competency, equip educations for reflective practice, and leverage that insight for further growth in the digital world.

• School Leaders have a role as ‘leaders of learning’, whether that learning is taking place in a classroom or elsewhere. There is need to consider new ways of leading learning beyond the school walls as a means of reaching ‘Out of School Children’.
Thank you!

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