



ARC EDUCATION PROJECT

4TH

ARC ThoughtMeet

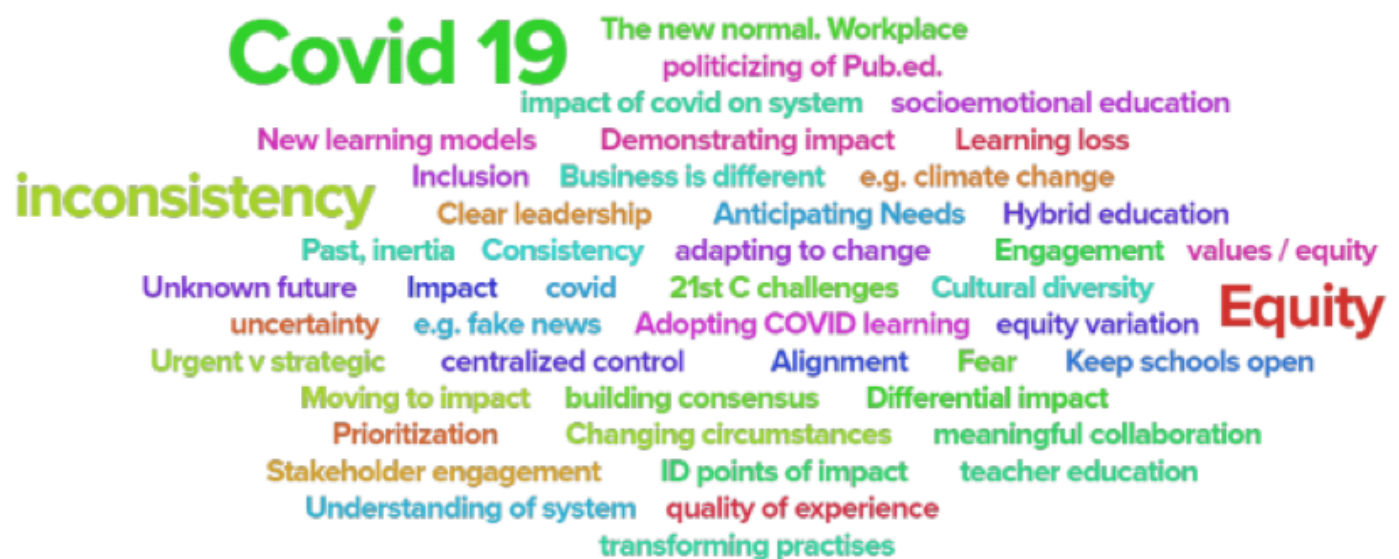
A FOCUS ON POLICY AND
PROFESSIONALLY-RUN SYSTEMS

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In one or two words, what are the main challenges for you in your own education system on future policy development and implementation?

Out of the 51 responses received, participants feel that the greatest challenges are as follows: Covid-19, inconsistencies and equity.



BEATRIZ PONT, PHD






Leading education change in times of Covid: Policy lessons for the future - from crisis to future

The focus of the presentation was on decision-making from a strategic and proactive policy point of view rather than from an urgent and reactive one.

Based on results from a survey done by the OECD and Harvard:

1. Many students and schools were ready to face the challenge, such as the pandemic.
2. Policies on continuing academic learning and student evaluation were the focus for many school systems.
3. The availability of technological structure and addressing social-emotional health were amongst the greatest challenges.
4. Some countries are struggling to decide what to do/implement, such as stopping large-scale evaluations, adapting local evaluations and making additional supports available.
5. Most countries have decided to return to on-site education, or to a blended system. However, it is challenging to lead education as well as deciding how to adapt public policy that has an impact on schools and homes.
6. During Covid the adaptation process was fast. Initially, it was reactive without longer-term vision. Actually, there had been a comeback to national policy making, but not enough yet.

Some systems have implemented some interesting policies. For example :

-  Japan - a human resource bank to support schools that need extra support for students
-  Korea - increased student autonomy in learning within a vocational education environment
-  Belgium - inclusion of a broader network of actors to ensure extra curricular activities
-  Slovenia - creation of individual learning plans for any student with a major learning gap as well as the creation of more flexible learning environments
-  Austria - training courses for teachers via MOOCs

In times of uncertainty what needs to be developed is the structure, in order to be able to adapt for times of uncertainty. What has been happening is more reactive planning as opposed to proactive planning.

Here are some suggested areas where policy makers can shift towards proactive planning:

- Student learning and well-being
- Inequalities in access
- Educational professionals adaptability
- Adapted accountability systems

Structures are needed to develop a leadership vision during Covid.

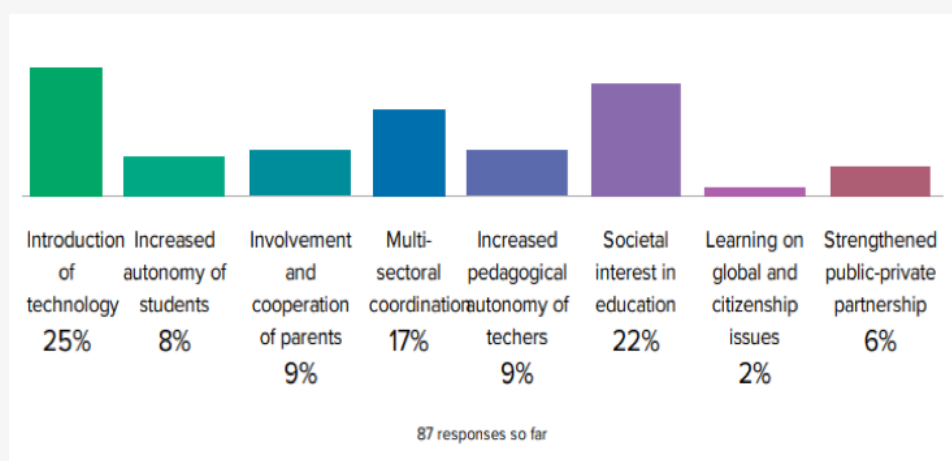
In sum, leaders need to have short, medium and long term goals while also identifying key factors to take into account. They must decide which stakeholders can serve as drivers, which policies can best respond to school needs and how to make strategies actionable.

What are some of the unexpected and unplanned positives from your system?

- A systemic view on leading change, which can help find a balance between urgent and strategic decision making
- It is important to have a plan B in addition to plan A when leading education change in times of uncertainty.
- Participants were invited to think about the long-term vision in their system, consider change as a strategic response vs. an urgent reaction (as they were now forced to do with Covid), identify potential issues that may affect/influence education systems and shape their implementation.

Out of the 87 responses received:

- 25% of participants believe that the introduction of widespread technology into everyday practices is the most positive outcome of Covid;
- 22% of participants perceived that there is also a greater societal interest in education as a whole compared to pre-pandemic days
- 17% of participants think that there is more multisectorial coordination being done to meet students' needs than ever before.
- Interestingly enough, we are not necessarily seeing significantly more pedagogical autonomy for teachers or students, nor are we seeing significantly more parental involvement or cooperation, despite there being a pandemic and greater societal interest in education.





What processes are you putting in place to ensure that you can lead education change in times of uncertainty?

According to Beatriz, trust in education systems is being put to the test with the Covid crisis. There is a lack of clarity when it comes to prioritizing the purposes of each education system. This prioritization is what would help develop/reinforce trust between stakeholders and enable them to build short-term and long-term decisions and actions.

The need for parents to get involved in the education of their children from home has created a revaluing of the teaching profession and of school as centers of wellbeing, not only academic content; and therefore schools will be the last thing to close. How do we build schools as centers that are at the core of society?

- There has not only been a greater emphasis on teacher professionalism, but also the professional development of teachers.
- We have seen more distributed leadership especially at the school principal level that has translated into greater local autonomy to meet students' needs.
- Collaboration has not only become more intentional, but it is also more frequent.
- There is better overall stakeholder engagement which is translating into stronger partnerships between unions, employers and parents who are making decisions alongside the government.

Finally, participants felt that everybody did all that they could in a collaborative manner alongside teachers, and that stakeholder responses to Covid were not only well planned, but well executed.



What have been your most important leadership practices over the past 12 months?



CAROL CAMPBELL, PHD

Developing professionally run education systems

“Teacher leadership has come to the fore”

- Policy and professionally run education systems go hand in hand in education, and this particular presentation focuses on the people dimension of change in leadership.
- There is a substantive body of empirical knowledge that points at the importance of strategic government and district leadership in education.
- Key leadership roles are providing guidance and orientation in education. While government leadership focuses on system change, district leadership concentrates on meeting local needs and content. In both cases, this should not be done in a hierarchical manner, but in a collaborative one.
- Government provides enabling conditions to implement democratic education in order for school leaders to create the climate and conditions in a school to support the teaching.
- Teacher leadership also matters.
- Core practises in educational leadership, such as those of Leithwood, Harris and Hopkins (2008, 2020) remain the same despite the challenges associated with Covid. For example, the importance of distributed leadership has been growing since 2008, especially when being strategic about encouraging people to occupy formal leadership roles.
- Self leadership is also more and more important.
- Teacher's informal leadership with colleagues, students, parents and the community should not be discounted. In this sense, teachers should be seen not only as leaders of teaching and learning, but leaders of professional practise amongst their peers. In other words, the “deprivatization of practises” is enacted by teachers sharing their expertise in order to mobilize knowledge.
- It's important to explicitly construct professional teacher identities.

As a co-researcher examining teacher identities, the findings from data collected from 7 education systems (Berlin, Chile, Kenya, Ontario, Scotland, Singapore, and Sweden) revealed how education systems that invested in valuing and developing its professionals were also those systems that were better performing.

- The study's recommendations were the importance of investing in the profession: career paths and supply. This requires explicit policies.
- Respect for teachers as well as work-life balance should not be overlooked: When looking at policy changes for students, it is equally important to look at their impact on teachers.
- There has been a rapid shift to decision-making and action in education in order to respond to emergencies.
- We are now recognizing the importance of everyone who works in the school and education system. When these elements work well together, it functions well. However, not all systems were working well together and now the trust and relationships have broken down further.
- Protecting and supporting the education profession is important to continue, especially since we are seeing deteriorating mental health of educational professionals.
- There is an on-going need for professional learning that has emerged.



Panel Discussion

How can the pandemic translate into greater system understanding of teacher workload, mental health and stress when Covid is over that can better support system change and positive outcomes for students?



Beatriz Pont:

Schools have demonstrated that they know how to respond, and therefore, we need to examine how we can continue to foster local autonomy. There is also a need for clearer guidelines that protect school leaders who make decisions since they are supposed to take care of all societal problems on the ground. For example, governments need to prioritize certain areas of the curriculum and provide clear guidelines on resources, funding and human resources, etc

Carol Campbell:

If teachers are tired, we are working and creating an unhealthy environment. School leader associations need to work more effectively with teacher unions. Governments need to provide clarity and clear direction to schools. We need to remember that it takes capacity for more creativity in order to create more autonomy. Local flexibility is also necessary to meet the needs of students, according to the local context.



Panel Discussion

What is the role of teachers unions in these times?

Beatriz Pont:

How can we better involve and engage with teacher unions in decision making? How can we better plan for the long term in order to contribute to schools so that we can infuse them with positivity? How are we going to measure the progress of students given that teachers still have to cover the same curriculum? Are current assessment methods working?

The importance of schools and hospitals has come back to the forefront of society. However, educators are tired, and task-forces are necessary now to better plan how we are going to reevaluate the status quo in terms of teacher contracts, for example. We should be bringing in unions to discuss labour issues in relation to technology. Can we develop a task force to see what teaching would look like and how to develop it?

Carol Campbell:

Governments should see teacher unions are genuine partners and play an advocacy role for student and staff safety. The unions value and support education. While we need to support students, we need to make sure that education professionals are supported so that they can best support students.

While there has been some genuine collaboration; there is currently a need for advocacy by teacher unions for students and themselves, from a health and safety point of view. Teachers need to be seen as partners. We all need to be talking to each other and engaging with each other, but more importantly, listening to one another.



Panel Discussion

What is the one thing that governments could do to enable and empower school leaders to have a renewed determination to help learners to recover and re-engage in learning?



Beatriz Pont:

Learning how to lead in a world of uncertainty requires practice; now we have had the opportunity to practice. This means that we always need to have a plan B (or at least, think about it) in case the first one doesn't work. All schools in Norway have had to have prepared an emergency plan, so they were ready when Covid came.



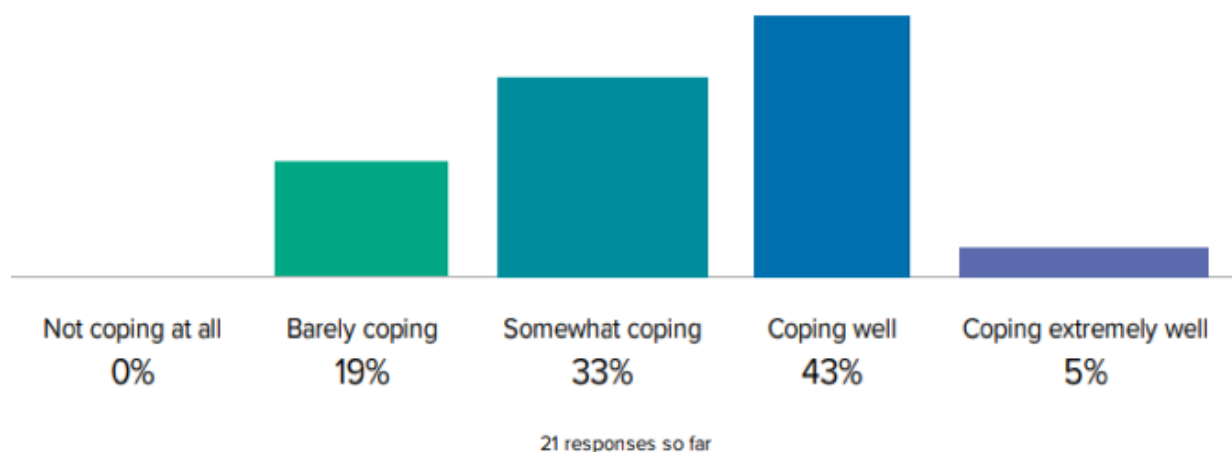
Carol Campbell:

Effective leadership at all levels matters (ARC, public servants, etc). Opportunities for collaboration, joint decision making need to be multiplied. We need to draw on other people and instill more humanity in education, such as empathy and trust. Systems that have been successful invest in the leadership development, and in the profession. The value of schools has been recognized. Finally, it is important to have next generation be the one that leads the way forward.



How well are your teachers coping with the daily stresses of teaching right now?

Of the 21 responses received, 76% of participants believed that teachers are coping fairly well with the daily stressors related to the pandemic. However, while respondents noted that teachers are not coping at all, 19% of respondents believed that teachers are having difficulty coping in the current conditions.



Of note, some respondents indicated in the chat that these results may not reflect the sentiment of those on the frontline. Future Thoughtmeets will explore teacher and student perspectives.



What is one leadership priority for developing a professionally-run education system in the 2021-22 school year?

The single most important common priority among participants is the need to depoliticize education by steering discussion, policies and planning towards the greater common good of education in society.

While prioritizing education as a common good for society, it is important to address the inequitable impact of COVID measures on education.

One way to do so is to develop better conditions that support more collaborative professionalism. For example, ensuring principals feel that they are part of the decision making process.

Also, co-constructing long-term plans are a must in order to meet all the above noted priorities.

Steve Munby's Summary of the Panel

- Focus on being strategic vs only the urgent
- Build trust in order to improve engagement
- Listen and value: Involve people in shaping and co-constructing at all levels
- Autonomy requires capacity building, development and support

Final Thoughts

ARC President, Andy Hargreaves

“Be visionary and be inspiring”

- We need more collaboration and leading through the middle as well as educators responding together.
- Policymakers need to know their portfolios and how to communicate this effectively, while also listening to the stakeholders on the ground.

Three key points to consider:

1. Never forget that things look very different depending on our vantage point; so what may seem slow to some is fast for others, and vice versa.
2. Technology usage should be put aside in favour of physical health; while we will continue to use some digital after the pandemic, we should also favour the use of crayons, soccer balls, pens and paper and nature.
3. We need to ensure that we have universally designed learning environments that work in regular times as well as during emergencies, especially since the World Health Organization indicates more disasters and pandemics are to come.

Finally, two perspectives have come out of both presentations, and beg the following question: What is the role of the teaching profession and that of other stakeholders during the pandemic and well beyond it?

