

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions

By

Teresa A. Wasonga (Professor) - Northern Illinois University, USA, twasonga@niu.edu, (phone: 18157621353) – Corresponding author.

Ximena D. Burgin (Assistant Professor) - Northern Illinois University, USA, xrecald1@niu.edu

Miriam B. Mwita (Associate Professor) - University of Eastern Africa, Kenya, bagenim@gmail.com

Abstract

As Covid-19 pandemic and its effects spread, the education sector in Kenya was paralyzed by school closures and countrywide curfews. In this paper, we use theories of change and transformative leadership to explore the rationale for policy reactions and actions of educational leaders during the pandemic. At the time of the pandemic and thereafter, research in the education sector focused on learners and the long-term effects of school closures at the expense of the politics of decisions and policies, resulting in commissions and omissions, singularly or collectively. Findings indicate robust rhetoric from political leaders and government agencies, but lackluster actions for optimization of policy implementations. Marginalization of local leaders, top-down mandates, and limited resources had negative effects on policy outcomes. However, analysis of data affirmed ingenuity among individuals, organizations, and government institutions through interventions, innovations, and inventions. The findings suggests the need for planning and critical consciousness when establishing government systems.

Keywords: Kenya, Covid-19 Pandemic, schooling, Political leadership, innovation, disease

The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions

By

Teresa A. Wasonga, Ximena D. Burgin and Miriam B. Mwita

Introduction

As COVID-19 pandemic and its effects spread across the world, Kenya was no exception. In the immediate, the government closed all learning institutions, and put in place curfews all over the country from dusk to dawn. The combination of abrupt closure of educational institutions and country-wide curfew and lockdowns created an existential crisis, specifically in the over 4,000 boarding secondary schools (Oduor, 2017) that had to enable children, hundreds of miles from home to get to home safely. Educators, parents, students, and the public were thrust into panic as school closures disrupted learning for over 8 million students (Ministry of Education, 2020) with no concrete plans for transportation, continued learning, and plans to get back to school. In times of such crisis, citizens look to their leaders and institutions for guidance and safety (Ansell et al., 2020). Instead, political leaders enacted inordinate timeliness and stringent conditions for travel despite limited means of transportation and resources. The ensuing chaos demonstrated high levels of unpreparedness for crises in the country. Schools would stay closed for an unprecedented period of nine months. According to WHO and UNICEF, decisions that prolonged school closures presented greater risks for children, especially those living in poverty (Mukoya, 2021; MoE, 2020). Schools remained empty as the public waited for government directives on how to serve children outside of the physical boundaries of schools. This phenomenon would repeat itself over time and geographic locations in Kenya and elsewhere in the world.

In this article, we use theories of change and leadership, and information in public domain to explore the rationale for the reactions and actions of educational leaders in Kenya during the COVID-19 pandemic. Borrowing from Bhola and Fullan, we theorized first, that planning for change through intentional decisions and effort among stakeholders transforms organizations, enriches, and deepens democracy (Bhola, 1966). Correspondingly, people develop “the mindset and instincts to take more effective actions” (Fullan, 1999, p. 13) that enhance adaptability to new challenges and opportunities, specifically in times of crises. Second, we theorize that the use of transformative leadership (Shields, 2010; Freire, 1970) that focuses on justice, democracy, and individual and public good holds “the most promise and potential to meet both the academic and the social justice needs of complex, diverse, and beleaguered education systems” (Shields, 2012, p. 563).

Despite the fact that change is complex, dynamic, and involves multiple interrelated factors (Bola, 1966), government agencies focused on school children and the long-term effects of school closures and COVID-19 (Reuge, et. al, 2021) at the expense of policy actors and educational leaders’ commissions and omissions singularly or collectively, and the effects of their actions. The focus on children, although important, created opportunities to overlook the

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

significant body of research that places leaders and their leadership at the center of change and outcomes (Smith & Akstinaite, 2023; Shields, 2010; Wagner, 2008; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Fullan, 1999; Bhola, 1966). Smith and Akstinaite (2023) research indicate that leaders' actions including rhetoric determine impact of crisis management. To make sense of how Kenyan political leaders in education and related sectors functioned in the pandemic, two questions were considered: 1) How did decisions and actions of educational leaders' during the COVID-19 crisis influence management and outcomes? 2) What did we learn from the impacts of COVID-19 crisis in Kenya?

Theoretical Concepts: Planned change and transformative leadership

Progress comes through continuous generation and implementation of new ideas (Wagner, 2008). Bhola (1966) advocated for planned change (conscious, consistent, and continuous creation of organizational systems that facilitate growth, anticipates problems, and generates solution approaches) without which, organizational failure is inevitable. Lack of planning results in: deficits in applying known theories to problems systematically; perpetuating inequality by misappropriating resources; assuming problem-solving stance rather than role of leadership; and failing to plan for change as democracy demands (Bhola, 1966). To this list, Fullan (1999) adds, devaluation of organic and evolutionary processes of “human and organizational change” (p.14), and failure to realize “there can be no cookbooks or silver bullets” (p.14) for how to change. Each situation is both complex and to some degree unique. Managing complexity requires contextual planning that involves systematic thinking about forces of change or problems, strategies, outcomes, and accountability (Wagner, 2008). Leaders initiate such contextual planning.

According to Bhola (1966) and Fullan (1999), change is inevitable, evolutionary, and multifaceted. Since change is a naturalist phenomenon, individuals, specifically leaders, and organizations should continuously engage with on-going forces of change. Those engaging and influencing change in the social systems are said to be in the planned change territory (Bhola, 1966), a place where individuals and organizations challenge themselves to develop new knowledge in anticipation of expected and unexpected occurrences/challenges. Fullan, in proposing lessons for complex change, suggested the idea of “operating on the edge of chaos” (p. 23), or living with some level of uncertainty. This uncertainty stimulates transformation or adaptation. As quoted in Fullan (1999), Brown and Eisenhardt (1998) explain that when “systems of any kind are poised on the edge of chaos between too much structure and too little structure, they ‘self-organize’ to produce complex adaptive behavior” (p. 29; see also Fullan, 1999). Structure without openness causes rigidity, while openness without structure leads to chaos. Both are likely to diminish returns/outcomes. However, on the edge of chaos, there is some structure and some openness, which together create opportunities for flexibility, adaptability, growth, evolution, and/or transformation. Thus, organizations operating on the edge of chaos are constantly reinventing themselves and therefore more likely to successfully manage onset of crises. Such organizations are able to self-correct, and develop cultures that support “(a) intense interaction and communication, (b) knowledge-creation in relation to selected problems, and (c) a value system – moral purpose (Fullan, 1999, p.24)”, often prompted by leaders who are transformative.

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

Leadership as cited by Bhola (1966) is a significant agent for change. According to Remuzzi and Remuzzi (2020), leaders, specifically political leaders shoulder the “greatest responsibility” in planning for change and the future of their followers. The few (leaders) planning for many (followers) is “the very basis of professionalism and specialization in modern societies” (Bhola, 1966, p. 9). Moreover, for greater organizational success as envisioned by Fullan (1999), the few do better when guided by a moral purpose. Such is transformative leadership (Shields, 2010). Weiner (2003) explains transformative leadership as the “exercise of power and authority that begins with questions of justice, democracy, and the dialectic between individual accountability and social responsibility” (p.89). The leader instigates transformation by harnessing political power and collective will to disrupt formations of dominant forces, recognizing that “inequities and struggles experienced in wider society affect one’s ability both to perform and to succeed within an organizational context” (Shields, 2010, p. 568). In this case, transformative leaders link organizational experiences and society’s context, and act in ways that are socially just.

Transformative leadership has roots in the works of Freire (2003), emphasizing critical consciousness, dialectical relationships, individual and collective responsibilities, and liberation. Strategically, these aspects of transformative leadership correlate with operating on the edge of chaos - recognizing material realities and disparities outside the organization that impinge on the success of individuals, groups, and organizations as a whole; critique and promise; deep and equitable change in social conditions; deconstruction and reconstruction of knowledge frameworks that generate inequality, acknowledgement of power and privilege, and dialectic between individual and social; liberation, emancipation, democracy, equity and justice; and the “leader lives with tension and challenge which requires moral courage and activism” (Shields, 2010, p. 563). The embodiment of operating on the edge of chaos, made possible through transformative leadership and planned change, most likely leads to organizational resilience and readiness to face crises.

The Political Structure of Education in Kenya: Dueling Bureaucracies

The government through the Ministry of Education delineates structures and functions in the education system. In Kenya, the management of schools overlaps two bureaucracies – the Ministry of Education (MoE) and the Teacher Service Commission (TSC). While the ministry of education manages and funds schools, the TSC employs and manages teachers and school leaders. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is headed by a Cabinet Secretary (CS) and deputized by principal secretaries. Under the principal secretaries of education are directorates including general education, primary education, secondary and tertiary education, alternative basic and continuing education, university education, and school audits.

The TSC is an independent entity created by act of parliament with the mandate to register trained teachers, employ registered teachers, assign teachers to schools and institutions, promote and transfer teachers, exercise disciplinary control, terminate employment, review standards of education and training, review demand and supply of teachers, and advise the government on matters relating to the profession. The TSC is overseen by a commission, and commission secretary as the chief executive officer (CEO). Under the CEO is the deputy commission secretary (teacher management directorate), and directorates that include staffing

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

division, quality assurance and standards division, and field services division (regional coordinators, county directors, sub-county directors, and curriculum support). Under the county directors are schools, headed by principals working with Boards of Governors (BoG) in secondary schools and School Committees (SC) in primary schools. The lower positioning and social status of school principals in these hierarchies, not only limits their ability to influence decisions, but also their ability to instigate transformation or predict the future they need to plan for. In this scenario, authority and accountability are top down and one-way, creating a culture of compliance (Wagner, 2008), instead of opportunities for engagement and learning among leaders.

The positioning of these two bureaucracies has left them competing for power and status. Managing schools under these two competing bureaucracies places political and school leaders in a bind when there are conflicts between them. While the Basic Education Act gives the CS of MoE powers to disburse and supervise funds to schools, the constitution gives the TSC powers to employ and discipline school personnel. Thus, the CS has to go through TSC to discipline school heads for mismanagement. In the past, the MoE has argued that the independence of TSC complicates the relationship between the MoE and the TSC when it comes to disciplining school heads (Nyamai, 2019). With each claiming higher jurisdiction and independence (Nyaundi, 2021), there is strain in synergy between the MoE and the TSC. For example, when the MoE lowered entry grades to teacher training colleges, the TSC went to court to exert their authority as the body that should determine entry scores, and won (Oduor, 2020a). When the TSC suspended 160 teachers for disrupting teacher training, the Kenya National Union of Teachers could not get reprieve from the CS. The CS does not have power to reinstate teachers suspended by the TSC (Oduor, 2020a; Nyamai, 2019). When principals ignore MoE regulations, the CS can only complain about it (Oduor, 2020a). These contentious issues between the MoE and the TSC have caused friction between the two bureaucracies and impacted service delivery at school level.

This muddle, as explained by Kabatesi (2020), contributed to the lack of “coherent unanimity on everything – whether to open schools, CBL (community-based learning) or not, and how to resume normality in education institutions,” in the middle of Covid-19 pandemic. The MoE, the TSC, the Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT), and other education agencies like the Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) sent conflicting messages to the public. Notwithstanding, as the CS was making claims that children were learning remotely; KNUT was critical of the claims and steps taken to keep children learning and teachers teaching. There was no way of knowing that children were indeed learning. In the milieu, a lawyer, on behalf of parents went to court claiming the CS kept schools closed while churches, restaurants, and bars - spaces where it was more likely to spread Covid-19 were open in contradiction to schools (Muthoni, 2020). In addition, principals, despite overseeing the learning of students, were excluded from decisions and the contents included in the Framework for Covid-19 pandemic.

School leaders waited for information to trickle down from the top (MoE, 2020). These top-down mandates, as suggested by Fullan (2003), resulted in major challenges for the public, especially school leaders’ abilities to oversee the wellbeing of students and staff, abilities to manage learning outside of school, and abilities to protect schools from vandalism. In the Nation

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

Newspaper report (Nyamai, 2020), the head of Kenya Secondary School Heads Association (KESSHA) complained, “Most schools have been neglected. We are now left with a lot of uncut grass and unkempt classrooms and dormitories as the schools do not have funds to maintain them.” Learning institutions that solely depend on the government for funding operated without a budget for ten months. In addition, while conditions for returning to school safely were explicated by the Ministry of Health, funds were not immediately available to prepare for opening of schools safely (Nyamai, 2020). Collectively, messages from leaders created dissonance in the country, adding to uncertainty brought about by unprecedented lock downs, loss of freedom, and economic hardships associated with the pandemic.

Top-down Mandates, Bottom-up Crisis in the Education Sector during Covid-19 Pandemic

The closure of learning institutions at the onset of Covid-19 was an emergency that created urgent need for mandates to immediately translate policies into concrete actions (Marshall & Gerstl-Pepin, 2005). Mandates tend to demand actions regardless of capacity to execute and are likely to cause adversarial relationships between initiators and targets. The MoE (2020), in responding to the crisis, came up with the Covid-19 Emergency Response Plan to guide the course of action across the country. In addition, top government officials attended press conferences and other public fora where they pronounced policies in the form of mandates.

Immediately after school closures and lockdowns, the CS MoE announced that learning would continue remotely for every child without acknowledging existing deficits in technology infrastructure, equipment, resources for supervision, and logistics to reach children in remote areas. At the time, remote learning for all children was as novel as the corona virus itself. Principals and teachers who had not worked with students outside of school boundaries were in a conundrum not having prior experience with remote learning or the capacity for it. Failure was imminent, as emerging policies required increased capacity for the novel ideas (Fullan, 1999).

Political leaders had expectations of principals and teachers to continue educating students even though government officials had limited interaction with principals, no plan, and limited time to prepare stakeholders for the foreseeable changes. In addition, teachers had inadequate knowledge about online instruction and dissemination of information; public schools lacked resources to support a pivot to online teaching and learning immediately; and there were no plans for online assessment and evaluation of learning (Gathuru & Mwayeri, 2020; Jelimo, 2020). School leaders did not receive clear and timely guidelines on how to successfully meet the heightened needs of their students and staff; neither were they given resources to reach out to families (Education Commission, 2020; Nyamai, 2020). At the same time, the public was waiting to know what would happen with examinations scheduled for the end of the year 2020.

Parents wanted, at least, a plan for school re-opening so their children could prepare for exams. Despite clear frustration on the part of the public and parents, the CS MoE response indicated the government would not bow to pressure from parents to open schools (Junior, 2020). Instead, parents waited for directives from the government: “Wait until I talk” the CS said (Ibid). These orders, sometimes condescending and inconsistent, created discord among the public but more so for school personnel who were the targets of the mandates - keeping all of their students engaged in preparation for the upcoming national examinations. Naturally, learning loss was on

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

the rise, especially among children of parents with low literacy levels, low income, and limited education (Parsitau & Jepkemei, 2020).

Due to lack of clarity regarding online learning, the Chair of Kenya National Union of Teachers (KNUT) and the public were skeptical of the claim that most children had access to online learning. In May of 2020, MoE Cabinet Secretary and Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development (KICD) announced that digital learning through radio and TV as well as online content was reaching a vast majority of students because of the country's high mobile network penetration (Dahie, 2020; Njeri, 2020a). Research found otherwise; students from marginalized areas, low-income families, rural communities, and urban slums that housed most students, lacked the means or equipment to access such learning (Zaman, 2021; MoE, 2020; OECD, 2020; UNESCO, 2020). Further, while the Ministry of Education maintained that national examinations would not be postponed and would only cover subject areas covered before the Covid-19 pandemic outbreak; the chair of the teachers' union advised that national examinations be postponed to 2021 (Njeri, 2020c). Speaking during government daily briefings on the status of corona virus in the country, the education CS' attempts to clarify the next steps were confusing.

The Cabinet Secretary (CS) stated that schools would not open in June, but that the national examinations would proceed as planned (November/December 2020). At the same time, he advised that children should enjoy their holiday as schools would be closed until 4th of June, 2020 (Njeri, 2020b). In a BBC report (2020) of July 2020, the CS MoE indicated that the ministry would explore how to make online learning accessible to all. Soon after, the CS announced that the 2020 academic year would be considered lost and that children would repeat the year, even though, according to the MoE, learning was supposedly going on (Omondi, 2020; East African, 2020). A month later, according to Omondi (2020), the CS would claim that stakeholders had agreed to shelve plans that were underway to open schools in phases beginning September 2020 because parents had reservations over the safety of children. The CS added that national examinations for the 2020 class be scrubbed, as students would not be able to cover the curriculum for the academic year. Kenya is the only country in the world that deleted a school year from the calendar (Dahir, 2020). This unusual solution was not only intended to protect students from the virus as the government claimed, but it was also intended to address the now obvious inequality occasioned by the fact that unlike students from indigence, students from high-cost private schools had the technology to continue learning, presenting an unfair advantage in preparation for the examinations (Ibid). Instead of investing in practical solutions and favorable conditions for all students to learn remotely, the government made the decision to scrub the academic year for all.

Low-cost private schools were devastated by the pandemic. Pre-pandemic, private schools in Kenya educated over 1.67 million students, employing 300,000 staff, and 107,000 teachers without taxpayer money (Igadwa, 2021; Asala, 2020; Wangui, 2020a). During the pandemic, private schools lost over 200,000 students and 400 schools were forced to close due to deteriorating cash flow (Igadwa, 2021; Mulinya, 2021). Most employees in low-cost private schools were on unpaid leave, and their students left without teachers. These teachers had to find other sources of income or work (Asala, 2020). Concurrently, high-cost private and international schools that had developed capacity for online learning (planned change), pivoted to remote learning immediately, and continued to collect tuition fees. The government and parents' efforts

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

to stop or force high-cost private schools to reduce fees was rejected by the courts (Wangui, 2020b).

Meanwhile, the Kenya Private School Association unsuccessfully appealed to the government to bail out low-cost private schools so they could keep teachers and other personnel to help children during the pandemic. Seeming to bow to pressure, the government promised to avail \$64 million to support private schools, but it was never implemented (Igadwa, 2021). Subsequently, some of the private schools repurposed to shops, storage facilities, businesses, or residences, while students missed learning. Closure of private schools forced students to seek admission into public schools, further exacerbating challenges of social distancing and crowding in public schools (Xinhua, 2021). Speaking to the National Assembly Education Committee, the CS MoE acknowledged these challenges explaining that the proposed January 2021 opening of schools would likely be pushed further not just because of Covid-19, but also due to the lack of funds to support the expansion of infrastructure in public schools (Ongechi, 2020). In the meantime, facilities in private schools remained unused, and later the government would deploy 500,000 desks to already crowded public schools.

In failing to support private schools and fund public schools in the pandemic, government leaders abdicated responsibility for education and the well-being of children. The premise that school leaders are professionals responsible for the wellbeing of their students and staff and for facilitating learning, even beyond school premises was ignored (Nannyonjo, et al., 2020). In a survey of 1,800 leaders during the pandemic, 70% indicated that their priority was the wellbeing of their students (Ibid), and in a sense, they were the bridge between the children and the government. Outside of school, children were deprived of safe “physical learning opportunities, social and emotional support available in schools and extra services such as school meals” (OECD, 2021, p. 2). Many did not have a quiet place to study. Although school leaders understood the students’ reality, there was detachment from children’s reality on the part of political leaders in Government.

The insensitivity of governments led to the rejection of government–initiated policies by both the public and the courts. For example, in September 2020, the MoE and TSC proposed community-based learning (CBL) that was intended to bring students together with teachers to learn in institutions within proximity to their homes (Kabatesi, 2020; Owiti, 2020; Wangui, 2020b). The public rejected this plan and sued. The court agreed with the public and rejected this plan. Issues raised against this program included: stakeholder doubts on its viability amid a pandemic; the program was rushed; school leaders and teachers were excluded from decision-making but expected to implement the mandates; no prior planning; contradiction with students learning digitally; lacked public participation as required by constitution; there were no modalities for safety; and the government did not provide a curriculum. In other words, this was a top-down mandates without bottom-up energies for execution.

In the pandemic, the ambiguities around educational policies and strategies, the failure to recognize opportunities presented by private schools to educate children, and the inability of political leaders to harness resources to educate all students remotely, were indicative of a government system devoid of - transformative leadership, continuous and consistent planning for change, and engagement with professionals. Decisions made at top levels of government undermined the independence of other institutions and the skills and knowledge of their leaders.

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

There were omissions in terms of inclusivity, democracy, equity, and social justice in the actions of top government leaders. School personnel, individuals closest to students and their families were recipients rather than contributors to the making of policies.

Crisis in the Education Sector during the Pandemic

The crisis occasioned by Covid-19 was not the only predicament facing educational leaders in Kenya in 2020. The country was, and still is in the process of changing school structure from 8-4-4 (primary-secondary-university) to 2-6-6-3 (pre-primary-primary-junior and senior secondary-college/university) structure of education. Concurrently, they are changing from the traditional exam oriented academic curricula to competency-based curricula (CBC). Kenya has changed its education structure twice post-independence, an indication of some functioning on the edge of chaos. These changes, partly explain why Kenya fared better than other East African countries in pivoting to various forms of remote learning for some students. In a report (Rodriguez et.al., 2020), the governments of Zambia, Sierra Leone, and Kenya were cited as having adapted relatively quickly to some form of remote learning via radio and TV because they leveraged learning solutions developed pre-pandemic. The Kenyan government had previous experience with remote learning delivered by the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation (KBC) through radio and TV beginning 1963 and 2010, respectively.

However, the intricacies of simultaneous complex ongoing changes overstretched the functioning of school leaders, especially those in primary schools where principals were attending training on the new curriculum and the new structure of education, while also focusing on teacher preparation for the new curriculum, sourcing curriculum materials, and responding to the mandates related to Covid-19. Fear of the unknown created stress among school personnel (Houlden & Veletsianos, 2020) and complete dismay among students and their families. Fears were exacerbated by the fact that Kenyan authorities failed to “institute preventive measures and effectively protect women and girls, even as they instituted a lockdown and nightly curfew” (HRW, 2021, p. 1). In July 2020, the president of Kenya and government officials acknowledged an 87.7% increase in violence against women without providing actionable steps to curb it (HRW, 2021). Away from school, students faced challenges ranging from hunger, child labor, socio-emotional issues, sexual abuse, to learning poverty (HRW, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2021; MoE, 2020). Without planning for oversight, the Ministry of Education (2020) mandates required learners to continue learning remotely through technology mediated avenues like TV, radio, apps, and smart mobile phones (see also Parsitau & Jepkemei, 2020).

Traditional interactions between teachers and students were limited. Teachers were transitioning to remote instruction with limited knowledge or preparation (Harris et al., 2020), absence of technology equipment, and locked up in their homes. Although expected, transitioning to remote learning for all students without prior planning and equipment was a delusion. Limited pedagogical skills and sheer lack of resources for enabling the use of technology that were already a challenge before the pandemic, got worse. Simply put, the pandemic exposed not only the inadequacies and disparities among school systems; it also exposed shortfalls in planning, collaborating, and anticipating and responding to emergencies by various governmental institutions including schools (HRW, 2021). Prior to the pandemic, the government had attempted to introduce computers in primary schools through the Digital

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

Literacy Program (DLT), in which government was to give free laptops to every child in 2013 (Mbogo, 2020; Oduor, 2020); this failed. The failure was not only attributed to lack of resources as critics predicted; teachers were not trained, most schools in rural areas lacked electricity, and the securities of the laptops and students were at stake (Graham, 2013).

Whether the success of the DLT program would have made a difference in the pandemic is debatable considering the other challenges (MoE, 2020). However, lackluster actions, including non-representative ad-hoc committees to develop policies for dealing with educating children outside of school during the pandemic, confirmed the lack of preparedness for emergencies among government institutions. It is now clear that the unprecedented closing of schools, specifically boarding schools, without an agenda guiding the next steps, moved children from the direct supervision by teachers and school leaders into the ills of society (MoE, 2020).

According to Parsita and Jepkemei (2020) and HRW (2021), the decreased mobility caused by curfews restricted girls and women from accessing essential protective services, treatment, support networks (available in schools), and justice. The negative consequences of school closures brought into focus the implicit services provided by schools, teachers, principals, and the urgency for digital literacy. It is also apparent that delimiting education to borders of schools over the years has relegated parents, homes, and communities to the margins of the educational process. Similarly, restricting school leadership to school boundaries has undermined school leaders' abilities to engage communities, and for communities to embrace learning outside of school. In addition, making decisions about teaching and learning at central government levels without engaging school personnel who are implementers of policies, predisposed policies to failure. The combination of these factors in the period of the pandemic risked the education and welfare of Kenyan children. Specifically, unchallenged and unquestioned top government leadership, silenced voices and creativity, giving way to compliance and subordination. Nevertheless, not all was lost. Amid the chaos associated with bureaucratic mandates, new initiatives, innovations, and new programs emerged from non-governmental organizations, school leaders, teachers, individuals, and communities (Education Commission, 2020).

Educational Leadership in the Pandemic

Although Covid-19 pandemic affected government and private sector operations in significant ways, the educational sector in Kenya experienced significant negative impacts. Pre-pandemic, the school calendar ran from January to December with three, one-month long breaks in April, August, and December. Disruption to the calendar continued until February 2023 (MoE, 2020). The Ministry of Education (MoE) took charge of the overall coordination and monitoring of the education sector response and recovery efforts during the pandemic. As soon as the pandemic was declared, the MoE, through an ad-hoc committee, developed the Kenya Basic Education Covid-19 Emergency Response Plan to be implemented over one and a half years. The response plan had seven objectives: prevent the spread of Covid-9 and provide access to quality education; facilitate production of remote learning programs; provide opportunities to address loss of learning; build resilience of broadcasting of education content; provide for the health, safety, and well-being of learners, teachers and staff; develop intervention programs; and strengthen the capacity of human resources. The instantaneous development of the emergency response did not

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

come as surprise considering the existence of well-established policy frameworks in the Kenyan education sector. However, as documented in previous research (Wasonga, 2013; Amutabi, 2003), predictably, gaps in policy decisions, intentions, and outcomes were evident (Human Rights Watch (HRW), 2021, p. 5). For example, the HRW found that,

Kenyan authorities failed to anticipate and properly plan for the risk of increased sexual and gender-based violence (GBV) during the Covid-19 pandemic, and therefore did not prioritize and include critical early warning, detection, data collection, and protection measures in national and county-level contingency plans and budgets for containing the Covid-19 pandemic. This lapse contributed to a delayed response to GBV and a later rush to implement response measures that were largely insufficient and ineffective.

This phenomenon of gaps in policy was replicated in the areas of health, food, transportation, and work leading to catastrophic outcome. In the education sector, gaps in policy left students who rely on schools, specifically boarding schools, without food and security when schools closed. Boarding schools in Kenya provide food and safety for many children; they are also isolated institutions with limited interactions with local communities. School activities, educational or otherwise, rarely extend beyond the boundaries of the school. Although this may keep children from ills of society, during crises like Covid-19, the schools needed the community, but could not engage due to lack of a framework for engagement. While school leaders waited for directives, national leaders' discourses carried "legacies of patriarchy, 'governmentality', hierarchical administrative practices, and domination" (Weiner, 2003, p. 89). In the middle of the pandemic, on November 6, 2020, the CS (MoE) while on routine inspection of schools, the CS was caught on video publicly insulting, humiliating, and making demands that a county education officer leave the meeting because the school was littered with debris (Muchunguh & Oruko, 2020). This kind of authoritarianism from political leaders diminishes capacity for engaging, problem solving, and innovating with professionals and those on the ground (Wagner, 2008). The preponderance of these behaviors among political leaders were evident in the pandemic, and as suggested by Wagner (2008) caused collective restraint among local educational leaders for fear of retribution.

Transformational Change and Transformative Leadership: Lessons from the Pandemic

We now focus on the opportunities presented by the pandemic for leaders and organizations to transform themselves, to establish their roles as stewards of education beyond school borders, and to innovate. According to Teran (2020), "when humanity faces a new hardship, innovation prevails" (para. 6). According to Wagner (2008), the capacity to learn continually determines the collective tolerance for change. Teran (2020), Wagner (2008), and Bhola (1966) agree that active and continuous improvement creates opportunities for professional development, personal enrichment, and organizational resilience. In addition, Wagner indicates that excelling in innovation depends on the "openness of our political system that encourages the free exchange of ideas" (p. 75). People should be free to ask questions and demand accountability from their leaders to enhance capacities of employees and institutions. If leaders keep telling their followers

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

how to do things, this leads to transactions and compliance rather than complex interactions for better understanding of needs and improvement (Ibid). In Kenya, the Covid-19 pandemic crisis revealed both strengths and weaknesses in the abilities of political leadership to work in tandem with local leaders, and the systems they have created.

Nannyonjo et al. (2020) indicated that during crises like the Covid-19, educational leaders should focus on student well-being and community engagement. First, attend to students' basic needs, including food, health, and emotional wellbeing. Second, prioritize resources for the most marginalized and at-risk students. Third, engage community, including digitally with effective communication and collaboration that strengthen the role of school in community, and fourth, embrace new opportunities that focus on learning. These actions fall into the purview of planned change and transformative leadership. Previous research indicates that effective leadership, specifically transformative leadership, has significant effects on organizational improvement and justice (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2006; Shields, 2010; Weiner, 2003).

Case in point, the actions of a teacher to mitigate the plight of girls. The closure of schools created another pandemic of pregnancies among teenagers in Kenya. Kenya does not have alternative schools for girls dropping out of school because of pregnancies. With high numbers of teenage mothers looking to go back to school, a teacher who was a teen mother herself saw an opportunity for transformation. She opened a school for teen mothers and their babies. Lizz Muriuki, the founder, explained that the school is filling a gap that society has neglected for a long time (Mulinya, 2021a). Mulinya noted that teen pregnancies increased by 40% during the pandemic and that the girls have come out in hundreds to attend school with their children, an opportunity that did not exist pre-pandemic.

Despite missteps, the government responded to the existential needs of students through agencies and officers. The Kenya Institute of Curriculum development (KICD) leveraged existing infrastructure to provide programs via radio and television and developed content for online delivery (BBC, 2020; MoE, 2020). The Teachers Service Commission kept teachers and school administrators on the payroll enabling them to continue serving students through phones and visits. When schools re-opened, the government's health department distributed masks, sanitizers, and other supplies that public schools could not provide to keep children and teachers safe in school.

Our literature search found a preponderance of political leaders formulating policies relating to Covid-19 throughout the pandemic. The ubiquitous public presence of Cabinet Secretaries from ministries of education, health, and internal security bolstered authority of government, and a sense of urgency in responding to Covid-19 induced crisis. The Covid-19 Emergency Response Plan expressed government intentions, and directed actions among mid-level leaders, school leaders, law enforcement, and the public (Zaman, 2021; MoE, 2020;). Although top-down in formulation, government policy focus on the most vulnerable instigated attention and action by non-governmental and government agencies (HRW, 2021). However, these policies came with minimal resources (Nyamai, 2020). This provided opportunities for schools and community leaders, government and non-government agencies to invent, react, act, and pivot to creating things and conditions that reduced the spread of the virus, enabled some children to learn, and enhanced security and safety of children albeit increase in violence against children and women.

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

Innovations during the pandemic

We sample activities initiated by organizations, leaders, communities, and government that demonstrated transformational change and transformative leadership. Based on a report, The Education Commission (2020) found increased access to education among the most marginalized communities during the pandemic that surpassed pre-pandemic. The commission documented activities of an organization called Dignitas explaining, “during COVID-19, Dignitas has leveraged digital tools and remote support to equip school leaders as community-based ‘Leaders of Learning’ to keep children safe and learning in the most marginalized communities during school closures” (p. 4). In their research, the program evaluation found the following positive effects of the Leaders of Learning Program on school leaders, parents, and children during school closures:

- (i) 98% of school leaders said they gained new competencies as a result of training, coaching, and community of practice sessions;
- (ii) In April 2020, parents who felt unable to support learning at home stated barriers such as “know-how” (39%), and access to learning resources (72%);
- (iii) By August, 99% of households in the Leaders of Learning Program benefited from regular support and distribution of learning packets;
- (iv) 94% of households adopted a daily routine that promotes learning (up from 56% at baseline) and 97% of parents are now supporting learning at home;
- (v) Analysis of student learning packets shows that scores in literacy and numeracy have remained steady, indication that support from Leaders of Learning has prevented learning losses (p.5).

Partnerships between government and private entities and among private entities emerged, and even though these did not alleviate problems of access to remote learning for all vulnerable children, they improved learning conditions in some areas (Faturoti, 2022, pp 16). For example, in ensuring internet access and continued learning, “the Kenya Civil Aviation Authority (KCAA) entered into partnership with Alphabet Inc. and Telkom Kenya to float Google’s Loon Balloons carrying 4G base stations over Kenya airspace.” These enhanced internet access in rural areas. In another partnership, “Safaricom, a private mobile network operator, and Eneza Education, Longhorn Publishers and Viusasa teamed up to support primary and secondary school students with free access to educational e-content.”

Teachers transformed conditions for their students. Human Rights Watch (Wabwire, 2020) explained the actions of a teacher that was repeated across the country.

Vicky worried that her students would face violence at home and maybe become pregnant, turning them into statistics, even headlines, making it hard for them to return to school when it reopened, whenever that would be. She kept in touch with the girls, sometimes calling their parents to check in. She negotiated with parents to make sure they didn’t pile housework on their daughters – giving them no space to rest or be children.

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

OECD (2021) reported that teachers helped students remain connected during school closures by providing hotspots for students, hosting video chats, sharing videos, providing learning materials, and engaging with students' families. Some teachers and school leaders purchased phones for students living in poverty to enable them to continue learning, while some teachers who could not connect with students digitally made physical visits to students' homes.

As predicted by Teran (2020), the pandemic crisis stimulated innovations. According to the Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research and Analysis (KIPPRA), the pandemic spurred innovations, specifically in technology-based activities like digitalization of services. According to KPPRA,

COVID-19 pandemic triggered innovation of equipment that were formerly imported by Kenya from international manufacturers and led to the development of digital applications to address challenges within the health sector. The opportunity to use local resources and technologies was necessitated by the inward-looking trade strategies that countries had adopted to ensure limited supply met their increased local market demand in response to the pandemic (Kinyua & Otindo, 2021, pp 7).

Inventions continued to emerge, some from unexpected places.

Stephen Wamukota, a 9-year-old boy from Kenya developed a handwashing machine that has become a complete game-changer in his community. Standing as one of the simplest yet innovative African inventions, this basic machine utilizes foot pedals to dispense water and soap so that people do not have to touch any surfaces with their hands during the handwashing process. This process significantly reduces the risk of infection and provides a community with the opportunity to safeguard their health during the COVID-19 pandemic (Teran, 2022, pp 3).

Kenyan student Daniel Kabugi and a team of 15 others developed the Tiba Vent in 2020, a portable, low-cost “mechanical ventilator” that aids the respiration of patients who have contracted COVID-19 and “other acute respiratory illnesses.” With the Tiba Vent, Kenya is expected to increase its resources from 500 ventilator units to more than 30,000. This low-cost machine comprises of 90% locally sourced materials and was in the process of clinical trials in July 2020. The Tiba Vent has the potential to save millions of lives in Kenya and beyond (Teran, 2022, pp. 1; Saludeen, 2020).

Kenyan mobile money agent Danson Wanjohi has built a wooden device that sanitizes cash notes that are passed through a slot in the machine. Wanjohi constructed the mechanism (that cleaned money) using a motor, a rubber band and gears which enable notes to pass through the machine. As the notes pass through the device, they are cleaned with a sanitizing solution (BBC, 2020a. pp 8).

Other inventions cited by Kinyua and Otindo (2021) included the Pulse Oximeter – an instrument used by clinical officers to monitor oxygen levels during home visits; Inexpensive intensive care unit medical beds to cater to the increasing number of people needing isolation,

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

the idea, motivated by presidential directive to increase bed capacity without ability to import; and Mobile applications (Flare and AfyaRekod) developed to digitize services. The flare was used to coordinate rapid access and monitoring of ambulances at the peak of the pandemic, while AyaRekod allowed patients to run Covid-19 tests, track symptoms and record digitally to share with doctors while at home.

No doubt, this is not a complete list of innovations during the pandemic, but it is a demonstration of the capacity that is untapped, capacity that could be exploited even in normal times of evolutionary change to prepare for unexpected conditions. These innovations, if instituted and done in collaboration with learning institutions, would motivate the young population in African countries to transform their futures instead of the future transforming them.

Concluding thoughts

The onset of Covid-19 was as shocking as it was devastating to education, health, and economic sectors all over the world. Although African countries fared unexpectedly better in death rates compared to western countries (Nolens, 2022), the opposite occurred in the education sector. The pandemic revealed inadequacies of government and the education system that has served the country for over five decades. Specifically, reactions and actions of leaders revealed the complacencies, tolerance for status quo, lack of system and systematic thinking, and inadequate capacities to implement mandates. The power of those in government to command and control, forcing institutions and individuals to conform rather than transform was evident. Findings in the literature indicate that political leaders dominated the discourse and restricted abilities of others to contribute to discussions. Politicians often framed and reframed narratives to appeal to public interest without solving problems. That was the case when the public demanded for a plan to re-open schools. The Cabinet Secretary reframed the discourse to distract, shifting from mobilizing resources to ensure safety in schools, to the need for children to enjoy their holiday, stay home rather than die if they returned to school.

The top-down strategies used by political leaders during Covid-19 pandemic, not only affirmed their authority, it facilitated unusual disempowerment of lower cadre leaders through manipulation of facts and unearned moral authority. Top government officials shared information without sharing power and resources to enable other actors at other levels of government to engage, grow, and transform local conditions. If authority demonstrated during the pandemic is the culture in Kenyan political leaders, this culture is likely to diminish the ability of followers to engage with leaders in continuous conversation that would improve government products and services, or/and create entirely new products that would help cope with emergencies like the Covid-19 crisis. As suggested by Fullan (1999), there is a need for government to embrace collaboration and the concept of functioning on the edge of chaos, both of which would enable experimentation and interrogation of status quo, collaboration with local agencies to exchange ideas and stimulation of innovation, and to develop complex adaptive behaviors in anticipation of and preparation for emergencies.

The findings in literature indicate the need for transformative leadership that looks at issues from the perspective of social justice and mitigating negative effects rather than compliance to traditional bureaucratic authority. For children's sake, school leaders are front and center in their education and well-being and should have been front and center in decision

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

making and development of policies related to schooling and the welfare of all children. These changes should not wait for crises; instead, change as Bhola (1966) and Fullan (1999) suggest, should be the culture of any organization/country, and transformative leadership, as Shield (2010) suggests, should be the engine that drives just change. These two (planned change and transformative leadership), would generate organizational resiliency to cope with unexpected crises like Covid-19 pandemic. The inadequacies emerging during Covid-19 pandemic, specifically in implementing policies, suggests that Kenya's governmental structures are not set up to harness the minds of professionals in ways that can withstand emergencies. This corresponds to Wagner's (2008) finding that the quality of outcomes is commensurate with the utilization of quality of the workforce (p. 152). In the case of Kenya, the poor quality of outcomes during the pandemic and thereafter, reflects low levels of engagement of the professional workforce in government institutions and elsewhere, and authoritarianism among political leaders.

Recommendations

Transformative leadership and planning enable systems to consistently support growth, anticipate problems, and focus on solution approaches. Therefore, organizations need to apply critical consciousness when establishing government systems and leaders are encouraged to collaborate across hierarchies to meet society needs effectively. Considering that change is a constant, society should always anticipate, embrace, and learn from change in order to survive and be ready for the next change. Without such, communities are likely to suffer deleterious consequences occasioned by situations like COVID-19 pandemic.

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

References

- Ansell, C., Sorensen, E., & Torfing, J. (2020). The Covid-19 pandemic as a game changer for public administration and leadership: The need for robust governance response to turbulent problems. *Public Management Review* 23(7), 949-960. DOI: 10.1080/14719037.2020.1820272
- Amutabi, M. N. (2003). Political interference in the running of education in post-independent Kenya: A critical retrospection. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 23(2), 127-144. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593\(01\)00055-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0738-0593(01)00055-4).
- Asala, K. (2020, November 9). Covid-19 pandemic sees Kenyan school staff struggle. *Africanews*. <https://www.africanews.com/2020/09/11/Covid-19-pandemic-sees-kenyan-school-staff-struggle/>
- BBC (2020, July 7). Corona virus: Kenyan schools to remain closed until 2021. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53325741>
- BBC (2020a, August 16). Coronavirus: Ten African innovations to help tackle Covid-19. <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-53776027>
- Bhola, H. S. (1966). The need for planned change in education. *Theory into Practice*, 5(1), 5-10. DOI: 10.1080/00405846609541985
- Dahir, A. L. (2020, August 5). Kenya's unusual solution to the school problem: Cancel the year and start over. *New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/08/05/world/africa/Kenya-cancels-school-year-coronavirus.html>.
- East African (2020, July 07). CS Magoha cancels national exams in Kenya as Covid-19 bites. *The East African*. <https://www.theeastafrican.co.ke/tea/news/east-africa/cs-magoha-cancels-national-exams-in-kenya-as-Covid-19-bites-1446898>
- Education Commission (2020). Transforming the education workforce and COVID-19: Leadership. *EWI Brief*. <https://educationcommission.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/EWI-Leadership.pdf>
- Faturoti, B. (2022). Online learning during COVID-19 and beyond: A human right based approach to internet access in Africa. *International Review of Law, Computers & Technology*, 36(1), 68-90, DOI: [10.1080/13600869.2022.2030027](https://doi.org/10.1080/13600869.2022.2030027).
- Freire, P. (2003). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. Continuum.
- Fullan, M. G. (1999). *Change forces: The sequel* (1st ed). Routledge.
- Gathuru, G. & Mwayeri, M. (2021, September 27). The impact of Covid-19 on education in Kenya. Institute of Economic Affairs. <https://ieakenya.or.ke/blog/the-impact-of-Covid-19-on-education-in-kenya/>
- Global School Leaders (n.d). Global school leaders' response to COVID-19. <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/58af429103596eb1eb5acace/t/5e9f5c1a8e038953d9d502b9/1587502111355/GSL+COVID+Response+0421.pdf>.
- Graham, M. (2013, June 27). Kenya's laptops for schools dream fails to address reality. *The Guardian*. <https://www.theguardian.com/global-development/poverty-matters/2013/jun/27/kenya-laptops-schools>.

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

- Human Rights Watch (2020, May 28). Kenya: Quarantine conditions undermine human rights. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/05/28/kenya-quarantine-conditions-undermine-rights>
- Human Rights Watch (2021, September). “I had nowhere to go”: Violence against women and girls during the Covid-19 pandemic in Kenya. https://www.hrw.org/sites/default/files/media_2021/12/kenya0921_web.pdf
- Jelimo, C. (2020, September 1). Impact of Covid-19 on the right to education in Kenya. Right to Education. <https://www.right-to-education.org/blog/impact-Covid-19-right-education-kenya>
- Junior, M (2020, April 13). CS Magoha: We’ll not risk children lives, dead people don’t sit examination. *Standard*. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/education/article/2001367914/cs-magoha-we-ll-not-risk-children-lives-dead-people-don-t-sit-examinations>
- Igadwa, L. (2021, September 10). Private schools lose out in student enrolment. *Business Daily*. <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/economy/private-schools-lose-out-in-student-enrolment-3544794>
- Kabatesi, K. (2020, August 29). Uhuru offered Magoha saving grace by creating conference. *The Star*. <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2020-08-29-uhuru-offered-magoha-saving-grace-by-creating-conference/>
- Kinyua, B., & Otindo, C. (2021, July 20). COVID-19 pandemic: A catalyst for local innovations and change in the telecommunication sub-sector. *IPPRA*. <https://kippra.or.ke/Covid-19-pandemic-a-catalyst-for-local-innovations-and-change-in-the-telecommunication-sub-sector/>
- Leithwood, K. & Jantzi, D. (2006). Linking leadership to student learning: The contribution of leader efficacy. *Education Administration Quarterly*, 44(4), 496-528. DOI: 10.1177/0013161X08321501
- Marshall, C., & Gerstl-Pepin, C. (2005). *Re-framing educational politics for social justice*. Pearson.
- Ministry of Education. (2020). Kenya basic education COVID-19 emergency response plan. https://www.education.go.ke/images/Kenya_basic_Education_COVID-19_Emergency_Response_Plan-compressed.pdf
- Muchungu, D. & Oruko, I. (2020, November 11). Kenya: Video of Mgoha ‘bullying’ senior education official sparks outrage. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202011120095.html>
- Mulinya, B. (2021, January 16). Pandemic closes, repurposes Kenya’s private schools. *Africa*. https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_pandemic-closes-repurposes-kenyas-private-schools/6200787.html
- Mulinya, B. (2021a, January, 20). Kenyan private school opens for teen mothers, babies. *VOA*. https://www.voanews.com/a/africa_kenyan-private-school-opens-teen-mothers-babies/6200940.html
- Muthoni, K. (2020, August 16) Looming court battle over closed schools, parent demands immediate re-opening. *The Standard*. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/education/article/2001382666/ministry-faces-suit-if-school-reopening-delays>

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

- Nannyonjo, H., Fernando, C. A., Oommen, A., & Sampat, S. (2020). School leadership in uncertain times. *Education for Global Development*.
<https://blogs.worldbank.org/education/school-leadership-uncertain-times>.
- Njeri, S. (2020a, April 27) New directive on schools re-opening amid COVID-19 has been issued by CS Magoha. *University of Nairobi*. <https://studentlife.uonbi.ac.ke/latest-news/new-directive-schools-re-opening-amid-Covid-19-has-been-issued-cs-magoha>.
- Njeri, S. (2020b, May 6). CS Magoha rules out school re-opening under the current COVID-19 situation. *University of Nairobi*. <https://studentlife.uonbi.ac.ke/latest-news/cs-magoha-rules-out-school-reopening-under-current-Covid-19-situation>.
- Njeri, S. (2020c, May 28). Wilson Sossion on one side, Ministry of Education on the other side. *University of Nairobi*. <https://studentlife.uonbi.ac.ke/latest-news/wilson-sossion-one-side-ministry-education-other-side>.
- Nolen, S. (2022, March 23). Trying to solve a Covid mystery: Africa's low death rates. *New York Times*. https://www.nytimes.com/2022/03/23/health/Covid-africa-deaths.html?unlocked_.
- Nyamai, F. (2020, August 29). Covid-19: Head teachers say released cash too little for reopening plans. *Nation*. <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/education/Covid-19-head-teachers-say-released-cash-too-little-for-reopening-plans-1927926?view=htmlamp>
- Nyamai, F (2019, May 13). Magoha: I have no powers to reinstate suspended teachers. *Nation*. <https://nation.africa/kenya/news/education/magoha-i-have-no-power-to-reinstate-suspended-teachers-167388>
- Nyaundi, L. (2021, August 28). Why Magoha is a lameduck in curbing illegal fees in schools. *The Star*. <https://www.the-star.co.ke/news/2021-08-28-why-magoha-is-a-lameduck-in-curbing-illegal-fees-in-schools/>.
- Oduor, A. (2020, April 28). Jubilee laptops project that failed Kenyan child. *The Standard*. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/the-standard-insider/article/2001369323/jubilee-laptops-project-that-failed-kenyan-child>.
- Oduor, A. (2020a, March 12). Why KNUT, KUPPET, Ministry are missing point on TSC. *The Standard*. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/education/article/2001363875/why-knut-kuppet-ministry-are-missing-point-on-tsc>
- Oduor, A. (2017, May 29). Boarding schools to be audited and why many may be closed. *The Standard*. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/education/article/2001241457/boarding-schools-to-be-audited-and-why-many-may-be-closed>.
- OECD (2020, November 19). The impact of COVID-19 on student equity and inclusion: Supporting vulnerable students during school closures and school re-openings. *OECD Policy Responses to Coronavirus (COVID-19)*.
<https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-impact-of-Covid-19-on-student-equity-and-inclusion-supporting-vulnerable-students-during-school-closures-and-school-re-openings-d593b5c8/>
- Ogila, J. (2020, August 24). Re-opening schools: The good and the bad Kenya can expect. *The Standard*. <https://www.standardmedia.co.ke/education/article/2001383724/reopening-schools-the-good-and-the-bad-kenya-can-expect>

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

- Omondi, I. (2020, July 07). Schools to reopen in January 2021 as CS Magoha declares ‘2020 academic year lost’. *Citizen Digital*. <https://www.citizen.digital/news/schools-to-reopen-in-january-2021-as-cs-magoha-declares-2020-academic-year-lost-337978/>.
- Ongechi, M. (2020, August 07). ‘Schools may not reopen in January after all’. Education CS Magoha now says. *Citizen Digital*. <https://www.citizen.digital/news/schools-may-not-reopen-in-january-after-all-education-cs-magoha-now-says-341172/>.
- Owiti, N (2020). Fate of community-based learning hangs in the balance. *People Daily Digital*. <https://www.pd.co.ke/news/education/fate-of-community-based-learning-hangs-in-balance-49131/>.
- Parsitau, D. S., & Jepkemei, E. (2020). How school closure during COVID- 19 further marginalize vulnerable children in Kenya. <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/education-plus-development/2020/05/06/how-school-closures-during-Covid-19-further-marginalize-vulnerable-children-in-kenya/>
- Remuzzi, A. & Remuzzi, G. (2020). Covid-19 and Italy: What next? *Lancet* 395, 1225-1228. DOI:[https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(20\)30627-9](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(20)30627-9)
- Reuge, N., Jenkins, R., Brossard, M., Soobrayan, B., Mizunoya, S., Ackers, J., Jones, L., & Tauro, W. G. (2021). Education response to COVID-19 pandemic. A special issue proposed by UNICEF: Educational review. *International Journal of Education Development*, 87, 1-4. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijedudev.2021.102485
- Rodrigues, M. B., Cobo, C., Munoz-Najar, A., Ciarrusta, I. S. (2020). Remote learning during the global school lockdown: Multi-Country lessons. *World Bank Group*. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/36141>
- Salaudeen, A. (2020, June 5). 9-year-old Kenyan wins presidential award for building wooden handwashing machine. *CNN*. <https://www.cnn.com/2020/06/05/africa/kenyan-boy-presidential-award/index.html>
- Shields, C. M. (2010). Transformative leadership: Working for equity in diverse contexts. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 46(4), 558-589. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013161X103756>
- Smith, E. S. & Akstinaite, V. (2023). Dis destructive leadership help create the conditions for the spread of Covid-19, and what are the early warning signs? *Leadership*, 19(1), 7-26. <https://doi.org/10.1177/17427150221104890>
- Teran, K. (2022, March 6). The COVID-19 pandemic sparks 5 African inventions. *The Borgen Project*. <https://borgenproject.org/african-inventions/>
- UNESCO (2020) Education: From disruption to recovery. <https://en.unesco.org/Covid19/educationresponse>
- Wabwire, A. W. (2020, October 10). My sister, a teacher and a hero for girls: On human rights day, celebrating people who make the world better. *HRW*. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2020/12/10/my-sister-teacher-and-hero-girls>
- Wagner, T. (2008). *The global achievement gap: Why even out best schools do not teach the new survival skills our children need – and what we can do about it*. Basic Books.
- Wangui, J. (2020a, September 3). High court rejects bid to cap private school fees. *Business Daily*. <https://www.businessdailyafrica.com/bd/economy/high-court-rejects-bid-to-cap-private-school-fees-2300342>.

Journal of Popular Education in Africa: ISSN 2523-2800 (online)

April, May & June 2023, Volume 7, Number 4, 5 & 6

Citation: Wasonga, T. A; Burgin, X. D & Mwita, M. B. (2023). The Politics of Educational Leadership during Covid-19 Pandemic in Kenya: Conflicts, Commissions, and Omissions. *Journal of Popular Education in Africa*. 7(5), 48 – 68.

Wangui, J. (2020b, September 10). Kenya: Court extends order stopping community learning. *Daily Nation*. <https://allafrica.com/stories/202009110055.html>.

Wasonga, T. A. (2013). Towards understanding ambivalence in educational policy outcomes in Kenya. *Journal of East African Studies*, 7(1), 21-39. DOI: 10.1080/17531055.2012.755313

Wasonga, T. A., Burgin, X. D. & Daniel, M. C. (2021). Understanding and improving outcomes for students in an underserved secondary school: A school-university-community partnership. *Kenya Studies Review*, 9(2), 1-16.

Weiner, E. J. (2003). Secretary Paulo Freire and the democratization of power: Toward a theory of transformative leadership. *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 35(1), 89-106. <http://doi.org/10.1111/1469-5812.00007>

Xinhua (2021, January 5). Feature: Kenya private schools facing uncertain future as in-person learning resumes. *Xinhua Net News*. www.xinhuanet.com/english/2021-01/06/c_139644157.htm.

Zaman, M. (2021). After COVID-19, let's reimagine education in Kenya: Digital learning should be part of a basic package of essential services for every child. *UNICEF*. <https://www.unicef.org/kenya/stories/after-Covid-19-lets-reimagine-education-kenya>.