Teacher support, preparedness and resilience during times of crises and uncertainty: COVID-19 and education in the Global South

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated existing education inequities, further marginalising those with poor and limited education opportunities, particularly in conflict, fragile, and insecure contexts. In the Global South, the COVID-19 pandemic compounds existing crises, frailties, and inequities as the impoverished suffer food insecurity, physical conflict, and crises of health and water. Existing research suggests that the pandemic has further disadvantaged marginalised communities, weakened learner performance, increased learning losses, and stretched already strained education budgets. However, little is known about the role of teachers in the policymaking process relating to matters that have a direct impact on their work. It is this gap that we address in this paper. Drawing on research, commissioned by the Open Society Foundation and Education International, based on a detailed desk-based review and interviews with purposefully selected Teachers' Union and Government officials in eight African countries, we examine the role of teachers in education policy-making processes and the kinds of support made available to them, or the lack thereof, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the conceptual framing of de Sousa Santos's sociology of absences and cognitive injustice, we demonstrate that teachers have been absent from policymaking processes and have not been adequately provided with the necessary professional development (PD) and psychosocial support to navigate the uncertainties and pedagogical requirements imposed by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Keywords: COVID-19, equity and inequality, teachers, teacher professional development (PD), (teacher) psycho-social support, sub-Saharan Africa

Introduction

Education policy responses to the COVID-19 pandemic reveal a sense of surprise and shock that, while understandable, fail to recognise that crisis and uncertainty have always beset the education system and, as Sayed et al. (2021) have argued, made the experience of the marginalised, disadvantaged, impoverished, displaced, and exploited a reality for all. In many instances, the COVID-19 pandemic has revealed and exacerbated existing education inequities, further marginalising those with poor and limited education opportunities, particularly in conflict, fragile, and insecure contexts (Sayed & Singh, 2020). In this paper, we consider the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education systems, teachers, and students in Africa.

With a specific focus on teachers, we argue that they and their representatives are key to educational reforms. Drawing on de Sousa Santos's (2001, 2014) idea of a sociology of absences and the notion of cognitive injustice, we then develop an empirically grounded account that deconstructs how choices reveal a narrow and reductionist conception of education, on the one hand, while illuminating a silencing about the role, status, support, and wellbeing of teachers, on the other. For de Sousa Santos (2001), the sociology of absences "unveils whatever social and political conditions, experiments, initiatives or conceptions have been suppressed by hegemonic forms of globalisation; or, rather than suppressed, have not been allowed to exist, to become pronounceable as a need or an aspiration" (p. 191). de Sousa Santos (2014) further argued that "there is no global social justice without global cognitive justice" and that acknowledging alternative voices and alternative forms of knowledge is key to realising this imperative (p. 237). We then conclude with a discussion of what an

alternative policy imaginary that mitigates the worst of the shock doctrine of crises and that gives prominence to the centrality of teachers as invisible actors in moments of crisis and disruption might be. In the context of this paper, the views of teachers are reflected through their Representative Associations and Unions affiliated to Education International (EI) and, as noted in the *ILO/UNESCO 1966 Recommendation concerning the status of teachers*, that states, in one of its guiding principles, that "teacher organisations should be recognised as a force which can contribute greatly to educational advancement and which therefore, should be associated with the determination of educational policy" (UNESCO, 1966, p. 30).

Since the onset of the current pandemic, much research has documented the context and effect of COVID-19 on the provision and delivery of education. Some research studies, for instance, have specifically noted the double disadvantage of the pandemic in relation to existing marginalised and vulnerable populations (Sayed & Singh, 2020), others have emphasised the effects of changing teaching and learning modalities from traditional to technological (e-learning) approaches (Murgatrotd, 2020; Subedi et al., 2020), a few have noted the effects on learners' outcome and performance like, for example, Sintema (2020), and some, like Schleicher (2020) have noted the effects of the pandemic on already strained education budgets. Furthermore, some multilateral organisations, such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), have documented the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on school closures, school reopening, and student learning loss, as well as its effects on mobility for international students (OECD, 2020a; Schleicher, 2020). Likewise, much research has been dedicated to discussing the importance of continual professional development (CPD), including psychosocial support, for teachers to ensure that quality teaching and learning continues during the COVID-19 pandemic (Béteille et al., 2020; Cipriano & Brackett, 2020; International Task Force on Teachers for Education, 2020; Reimers et al., 2020; Sokal et al., 2020). Despite this, there is a paucity of research that focuses on the role of teachers in policy-making processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Little is known, for example, about how, as frontline workers, teachers' input into education policy responses and choices during the pandemic have been undermined and about the failure to consult them on key educational issues that directly impact their work. Coupled with the limited PD and psychosocial support teachers receive during times of crisis, the effects of the lack of teachers' voices in policymaking processes during the pandemic have been exacerbated in contexts where existing crises have been interlocked with COVID-19.

We aim to address this gap by presenting a comparative analysis of the role of teachers' voices in education policymaking processes in eight countries in sub-Saharan Africa, as well as an analysis of the nature and type of professional and psychosocial support teachers have received during the COVID-19 pandemic. Based on a research project, commissioned by the Open Society Foundation and Education International, concerning the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on education in eight African countries (see section 2), we consider specifically how education policies and choices were made during COVID-19, how teachers were supported and capacitated to teach during the pandemic, and what curriculum adjustments reveal about what is considered valuable in the work of teachers. We begin with a broad contextualisation of the crisis as we develop the framework of the pandemic as inter-

relational and interlocking with existing crises, particularly in the context of the Global South. We recognise that the pandemic intensified and exacerbated existing fragilities and vulnerabilities in the Global South (Sayed et al., 2021).

Interlocking crises and COVID-19

Impacting all countries and all citizens, the COVID-19 pandemic has been a global crisis. But its effects are diverse and differentiated in reflecting inequities between and within nation-states. Crises, understood as fundamental ruptures in social, political, and economic relations that redefine the relationship between states and citizens, are typically brought about by events or circumstances related to human actions and/or natural conditions (World Health Organization, 2007). As de Sousa Santos (2001) argued, crises are about hegemony, legitimacy, and autonomy. In a sense, the pandemic is a result of human actions and, in particular, of what Mitchell (2020) called "humanity's assault on the natural world" (para. 1) that has enabled zoonotic infection from diseases and viruses. By its effect and response, both human action and government policy including decades of austerity programmes and cuts to public services have aggravated the effect of the crisis on poor and marginalised citizens.

The COVID-19 pandemic, particularly in the Global South, does not exist in a vacuum, but intensifies and interlocks with existing environmental, political, social, and health crises. The environmental crisis, for example, manifests in increasing temperatures and extreme weather conditions (World Meteorological Organization, 2019). Also, the pandemic and its effects are intensified in (political) conflict contexts as witnessed during the resurgence of the 2020 conflicts in Mali and in Mozambique's Cabe Delgado region. Similarly, as a global pandemic, COVID-19 is not the first recent health crisis since it follows Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). Existing systems and deep-seated structural vulnerabilities in national and global eco-systems intensify and exacerbate the effect, consequences, and management of the pandemic. In conflict-affected countries, such as Mali, where this research was undertaken, for instance, respondents pointed out how the ability of the health and education system to respond effectively to the pandemic was curtailed and restricted because of political instability; learners in Mali's conflict-affected areas, for example, struggled to access even the Emergency Remote Teaching (ERT) opportunities that were made available.

Managing the egregious effects of the pandemic is severely impacted by existing crises and the lack of access to basic public services particularly in countries in the Global South and in contexts in which public sector provision has faced significant austerity-driven cuts and measures (Chowdhury & Jomo, 2020). UN-Water (2020), for example, noted that 2.2 billion people globally do not have access to clean and safe drinking water that mostly affects developing nations in tropical regions. COVID-19 has reinforced the need for access to reliable water sources since clean water is a key determinant for limiting the spread of the virus as the International Finance Corporation (2020) has reminded us. Furthermore, in sub-Saharan Africa, 602 million people are living without stable access to electricity (International Energy Agency, 2020). Food insecurity has become an increasingly concerning

crisis with more than 690 million people going hungry in 2019 "up by 10 million from 2018, and by nearly 60 million in five years" (World Health Organization, 2020, para. 2). Given all this, it is difficult to respond adequately to the pandemic, particularly in the Global South.

In early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic, interlocking with these existing crises, revealed the weaknesses of public systems in countries. It is in this context that choices about, and education policy responses towards, teacher PD need to be located and understood. For the purpose of this article, we understand education policy to be about questions of text and discourse (Ball, 2015), and authority, power, and values (Rizvi & Lingard, 2010). This study drew on ideas from Ball (1993, 2015) concerning its formulation, from Rizvi and Lingard (2010) about implementation, and from Taylor (1997) regarding the consequences. In particular, we are interested in the policy-making responses towards questions of education governance, and the delivery of education, as well as responses relating to educational curriculum and assessment, and teacher PD in sub-Saharan Africa.

PD, in its broadest sense, refers to activities that increase the knowledge and skills base of teachers. This may involve both externally provided and job-embedded activities as a means of helping them change their teaching practices to support student learning (Darling-Hammond et al., 2017). In this review, the PD of teachers is understood to involve three interrelated moments: initial teacher education (ITE); continual professional development (CPD); and the induction period (Sayed & Bulgrin, 2020). While this definition is helpful, it is important to recognise that the moments are not as distinct as they appear to be here. One way of understanding teacher PD is to see it as a continuum of activities geared to support those who chose a teaching career, but that take on different forms and characteristics depending on the career stage of the teacher concerned (Sayed & Bulgrin, 2020). While most countries have a solid pre-service system, they lack programmes of ongoing support of teachers through in-service training. We argue that the already weak in-service support of teachers is even weaker during a pandemic. This is in stark contrast with the increased need for teachers to be capacitated to provide distance teaching and psychosocial support to students.

Methodology

This paper is based on research, commissioned by Education International in collaboration with the Open Society Foundation, on the effects of crises and disruptions to the provision of education, using COVID-19 as an exemplar. The study drew on data from two main sources. The paper and report (see Sayed et al., forthcoming) draw, first, on a desk-based review of policy documents, academic journals, news media, and reputable COVID-19 online statistical dashboards. Second, they are informed by semi-structured interviews conducted with at least one government and one union official in each of the eight African states. The government officials who were interviewed play an important role in the education policymaking processes in their respective countries. All the necessary and relevant ethical clearance was obtained through affiliated institutions and informed consent was obtained from all respondents involved in this research. It is important to note that, because of COVID

restrictions, access to respondents, particularly government officials, was a challenge and, thus, the empirical data provided limited insights in each country. Instead, the focus in this study is a comparative study of teacher development on the African continent. Where access to respondents was limited, we conducted an extensive desk-based review. Data was collected between August and October 2020 and may therefore not necessarily reflect current policy choices and realities since information, statistics, and other pieces of evidence relating to COVID-19 are constantly changing. At all times, we consulted many different sources and checked facts in order to report on the most accurate and most recent information but we cannot exclude omissions and we acknowledge the risk of reporting imprecise information (see Sayed et al., forthcoming).

The case countries were Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Ethiopia, Ivory Coast, Mali, Mozambique, South Africa, and Uganda, all of which reflect geographical and linguistic diversity and present many interlocking crises intensified by COVID-19.

Burkina Faso is plagued by high levels of inequality, poverty, unemployment, and a high cost of living. The country has suffered attacks linked to al-Qaeda and groups affiliated with the Islamic State since 2015/16, with teachers having been at the forefront of many of these (The Fund for Peace, 2020). Human Rights Watch (2020a) noted that teachers have been victims of conflict. The first case of COVID-19 in Burkina Faso was confirmed in March 2020, followed by the closure of all educational institutions that did not reopen until October 2020 (Gouvernement du Burkina Faso, 2020).

Cape Verde faces freshwater shortages and droughts. Coupled with this, one of the biggest problems facing education institutions and teachers is the high level of gender-based violence (Education International, 2021). Cape Verde confirmed its first case of COVID-19 in March 2020 and immediately halted teaching and learning at all educational institutions in the country. However, education institutions began to reopen a month later, in April 2020 (UN-OCHA, 2020).

Ethiopia is marked by a health crisis that includes high maternal mortality rates, and a high incidence of tuberculosis, HIV and Aids, and malaria. The country is also home to one of the largest refugee populations in Africa and this has implications for teachers teaching in refugee camps (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2020). Gender inequality in the teaching profession, with males far outnumbering females, particularly in primary schools, is also problematic. In Ethiopia, the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the country was recorded in March 2020, and, in the same month, all schools were closed; this affected 26 million students from over 47, 000 schools. Schools reopened slowly in September 2020 (Ethiopia. Ministry of Education, 2020).

Ivory Coast, having survived two civil conflicts, was again characterised by political instability as a consequence of the presidential elections in 2020 (Höije, 2020). Career progression for female teachers remains problematic (International Institute for Educational Planning, 2021). The first confirmed case of COVID-19 was in March 2020, and, by the end

of that month, all educational institutions had been closed and were not reopened until October 2021 (République de Côte d'Ivoire, 2020).

Mali experienced a coup d'état on August 18, 2020, following mass protests over corruption, electoral probity, and a jihadist insurgency. A report released by Education Cannot Wait (2021a) noted that "indiscriminate attacks by armed groups against civilians, violence against girls and women, and attacks on state institutions, including schools and health facilities, are common" (para. 11). As with most countries in the region, "[f]emale students and educators are specifically affected by attacks" (Human Rights Watch, 2020b, para. 5). The first case of COVID-19 was confirmed in March 2020, resulting in the immediate closure of schools that reopened in September 2020 (République du Mali, 2020).

Mozambique has experienced much violence and frequent civil wars that have caused a massive loss of life. A combination of natural disasters, ongoing insurgent attacks, and frequent political conflict has made Mozambique the world's sixth-most worsening country over the past decade on the 2020 Fragile States Index. Between 2017 and 2020, 171 schools were affected by school attacks that destroyed 45 schools and affected 75,000 students and 1,500 teachers (Education Cannot Wait, 2021b). Mozambique had its first confirmed COVID-19 case in March 2020 which led to the closure of schools (Relief Web, 2020). Schools in the region reopened gradually in October 2020.

South Africa has been classified as one of the most unequal countries in the world in its experience of health and socio-political challenges such as chronic unemployment. One of the biggest problems facing education is the country's teacher shortage that has reached a "crisis point" (Mthethwa, 2020, para. 1). By September 2020, the country was listed as having one of the highest COVID-19 infection rates in the world, with 644,438 confirmed cases and 15,265 deaths according to Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center (2020). Schools were closed at the onset of the national lockdown in March 2020 and gradually reopened in June 2020. However, following a protracted and contested school closure, education institutions were fully reopened only in January 2021 as noted by Amnesty International (2021).

Uganda is marked by internal conflict, particularly political conflict. The most concerning challenges for teachers in the region are overcrowded classrooms along with the lack of teaching and learning resources, accommodation for teachers working far from schools, and training to help learners cope with trauma from prevailing conflict (Inter-agency Network for Education in Emergencies, 2019). Following the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in the country in March 2020, educational institutions were closed immediately and this affected over 15 million learners, 600,000 refugee children, and 548,000 teachers (Uganda. Ministry of Education and Sports, 2020). Schools in Uganda followed a staggered reopening that favoured students sitting their final exams in April 2020 (Sawahel, 2021).

As previously noted, all eight countries reflect a geographical and linguistic diversity and present multiple and interlocking crises intensified by COVID-19. In all cases, COVID-19 emerged in March 2020 with immediate school closure, but the responses to managing the

education systems in these countries in the context of the pandemic were diverse, as the following discussion will highlight.

Findings and discussion

Here we discuss the findings of education policy responses and choices from these eight African states. We discuss the findings, as reported by Union and Government officials, in relation to three themes: first, the education policy responses in these countries and who was involved or not involved; second, how teachers were supported and capacitated during the pandemic to realise these policy objectives; and third, the kind of support teachers, particularly those with inherent health vulnerabilities, were given to manage their wellbeing during this global pandemic.

We present the data using selected quotes from various Union and Government officials (policymakers). In this paper, Teacher Unions represent teachers as a constituency because teachers form one of the largest professional bodies and thus require representatives to act on their behalf. Teacher Unions are instituted to represent the voices, concerns, and views of teachers and serve as liaisons between the teaching force and governments (Amoako, 2014; Govender, 1996; Mafisa, 2017).

Policymaking during times of crises and disruptions: Teachers' voices as an omitted constituency

Policymaking during times of crisis and disruption requires many different perspectives and a deep understanding of the local context. Moore and MacKenzie (2020, p. 1) have argued that "expert advice should draw on diverse disciplinary specialisms and diverse social perspectives." As they have pointed out, diversity of voice in the policymaking process is important because it can improve the quality of collective judgements, it can legitimise political decisions and therefore encourage public compliance, and it identifies who may become marginalised in the process and mitigates this effectively. Similarly, Sherif et al. (2020) argued that, particularly in crisis contexts, it is important to prioritise, enable, support, and respect teachers and listen to their opinions and their accounts of their experiences. Teachers can provide valuable insights into the financing and development of standards, tools, and support for education in emergency and crisis contexts (Sherif et al., 2020). Carvalho et al. (2020, p. 1) argued that engaging teachers and teacher unions in a meaningful way can "increase the relevance of plans and compliance with government interventions." More specifically, input from teachers in policies relating directly to teaching and learning in times of crisis is critical since they are at the frontline of providing this public good.

Education policies would be more effective during times of crisis if they were based on existing practices and teacher beliefs. Pierce et al. (2003) noted that if this were so, it would foster ownership and ultimately determine the willingness of teachers and school principals to assume responsibilities and risks and make personal sacrifices. In contrast, the non-participation of teachers in policies relating directly to their work undermines their agency

and hinders democratic policymaking; when their opinions are elicited and valued, teachers become drivers of education policy reform.

The initial responses by many states around the globe, exemplified by South Africa, to consult only scientists to determine how best to mitigate the spread of the virus was limiting and revealed a narrow and simplistic understanding of policymaking and the use of scientific evidence. First, this assumes that scientists are infallible and that their findings are what we understand to be truths or facts. However, this neglects to take into account that, as with any research, there are limitations, and that research is always contextualised, and its effects cannot always be generalised. Second, limiting public participation and including input from diverse constituencies are fundamental elements of the democratic policymaking that was essentially disabled during the COVID-19 pandemic (Sayed & Singh, 2020).

Except for two of the eight countries studied (Uganda and Mozambique),[1] the data suggests a lack of meaningful teacher involvement in policymaking during the pandemic that, to a large extent, resonates with the global trend. In five of the eight countries, no teachers or teacher unions participated in the initial education policy responses in their countries according to a selected small pool of interviewee respondents. The responses from Ethiopia, South Africa, Burkina Faso, Mali, and Cape Verde, particularly from the Teacher Unions, demonstrated a lack of participation in policymaking at two levels: teachers were not consulted on how to manage the delivery of education in general in relation to school closures and openings; and teachers were not consulted on matters relating to teaching and learning such as appropriate alternatives to traditional modes and advice on trimming the curriculum during the pandemic.

In South Africa, a Union official reported on how the government invoked emergency legislation to curtail the participation of teachers and teacher unions.

> There is a very limited role that we play[ed in the beginning] because the government was using the Disaster Management Act to close areas of consultation. We had to force to be consulted . . . It is a mandatory issue but the government was not doing that and we had to force the government to ensure that on any other policy we are consulted. (Teachers' Union Official, South Africa, September 2020)

A similar response was received from a Teacher Union official in Mali.

> It should be noted that the unions in the education sector were not involved in any awareness campaign [an example of involvement in policy-making] against the pandemic. The departments closed the schools without consultation. (Teachers' Union Official, Mali, September 2020)

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1   Data originated from a desk-based review and feedback from respondents who participated in the study. The governments of Uganda and Mozambique consulted teachers and teacher unions in their education policy responses process. In Ivory Coast, different views emerged between and among the teacher union and government officials. We acknowledge that the data collected may not be fully representative of the situation in a specific country.

Also, in Burkina Faso, a Union official noted that the lack of participation of teachers and Teacher Unions in the education policy response process brought implementation challenges.

> We could not [resume classes] simply because the government sat alone to take these decisions. Unions have not been involved in shaping the policy for the response plan to the pandemic. Suddenly, they had difficulty moving forward. (Teachers' Union, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

With regard to teacher participation in education policy responses relating to teaching and learning, the verbatim transcript below from a Teacher Union official in Cape Verde suggested that the government made unilateral decisions about moving to online platforms without consulting teachers, Teacher Unions, or other education stakeholders.

> Initially, when the COVID-19 broke out in our country, the government had no communication with teachers' unions and other local partners on how to run education in Cape Verde. The government just announced that they [had] decided to have classes online, on TVs and radios. After this announcement, the unions put together an open letter informing the government that they did not agree with that decision and the way things were moving forward. And they proved that online courses usually don't work for everyone for many reasons. (Teachers' Union Official, Cape Verde, October 2020)

In South Africa, the government's process of curriculum trimming was not welcomed by teachers and their representatives.

> The government started saying look you can also cut the number of subjects okay . . . Then we [the unions] had to come in and say no, no, but that means another debate, because what about the career of this particular learner? . . . So that is not curriculum trimming. It is something else because you are changing the policy altogether so we [the unions] said to be careful, please tread very careful[ly] because it has got unintended consequences for our economy and our social concern. (Union Official, South Africa, September 2020)

The effects of the initial education policy responses to the pandemic reveal a lack of understanding by the government of the daily realities experienced by teachers and learners in these respective countries. As pointed out elsewhere (see Sherif et al., 2020, and Carvalho et al., 2020), the involvement of teachers in policymaking processes is vital since they may have an in-depth understanding of the learners at their schools and of the community context. More importantly, a successful implementation of any policy relies heavily on having robust consultations with key stakeholders at the micro school level such as teachers, teachers' representatives, and parents as Viennet and Pont (2017) have pointed out. In this way, encouraging conditions that not only promote the consultation of teachers and Teacher Unions in the policymaking process but also give frontline educators autonomy and flexibility to act collaboratively (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural

Organization [UNESCO], 2020) is critical in mitigating many of the adverse effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on education.

In contrast, teachers and Teacher Unions in Uganda and Mozambique were consulted as part of the initial education policymaking process and asked for input on initial pandemic response plans. In Mozambique, teacher unions were invited to participate in the plans to reopen schools.

> The National Teachers Union of Mozambique (ONP/SNPM) was invited to participate in meetings led by the Minister of Education and Human Development (MINEDH) in order to outline the strategies for the reopening of schools. ONP/SNPM has also been informed of MINEDH's plans on the matter. (Teachers' Union Official, Mozambique, March 2021)

In Uganda, a government official noted that although teachers were invited to participate in education policymaking, the anxieties relating to contracting COVID-19 limited teacher and teacher union participation.

> We tried to engage a few teachers. Unfortunately, most people were already panicking with COVID-19. Already the social distancing issues of contacts had been discouraged. So, it was difficult to get them on board but for the few that we talked to and those that could come around that time, we involved them in the preparation of this Preparedness and Response Plan. In Uganda, we have a national Teachers Union that has a very strong network. Actually, they reach out to the very last teacher with their networks. So, we also used their networks to distribute the learning material so that was another way through which we included those teachers. Now as we begin preparation for reopening, we have consulted them throughout this development process of the standard operating procedures for reopening of the guidelines for reopening of schools. They have been part and parcel of the process, and they are actively involved now in mobilising the teachers and children to get back to school in about two weeks' time. (Government Official, Uganda, September 2020)

The findings here suggest that in some regions the views of teachers and teacher unions are valued and acknowledged. As Barron et al. (2021) have argued, "In order to build back stronger education systems . . . it is critical to empower teachers" (para. 10).

Of the eight countries, only feedback from the Ivory Coast on teacher participation in the education policymaking process was unclear.

> [On the question of the involvement of teachers' unions], there are unions in the Task Force. They usually call the unions for the reception. They typically call unions—they are teachers. And I must tell you when it is submitted to the central management, e.g. the training direction, all those who supervise the teachers, e.g. the disciplinary officials, they also participated in the development. . . . Yes, for the final elaboration, it is [the Task Force] who was in charge, together with the general management, so

that we can consider them as technicians. (Government Official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

On the issue of policy development [the Education and Training Sector Response Plan against COVID], no, I am not familiar with this plan, no, we [the union] were not associated. (Teachers' Union Official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

The findings from the Government and Teacher Union officials suggest divergent views of what constitutes meaningful collaboration and participation. What was not clear from the interview data was the extent to which teachers were allowed to be involved and the extent to which their suggestions may have been incorporated into response plans. While we did not observe the convergence of policymaking patterns according to linguistic and cultural characteristics, there seem to be variations in terms of emergency decision-making responses across all eight countries because of the different contexts and parameters of stakeholders' engagements in the process.

As noted above, Uganda, Mozambique and, to some extent, Ivory Coast reported some form of teacher engagement and involvement in the policy formulation process, whereas this was not reported for the other countries. Overall, the data suggests that, in most cases, teachers unions were informed but not actively engaged in the development of the programmes (Sayed et al., 2021). However, we acknowledge the methodological limitations of the claims made, since the data is comparative by nature, without being able to provide in-depth knowledge for each country. We acknowledge that some teachers in case study countries may have been consulted in the policy-making process, but that respondents were not aware of this involvement. Absent, as noted through the work of de Sousa Santos (2001), is the voice and presence of teachers in situations where their experience, knowledge, and skills would have been invaluable and would have increased the efficacy of implemented policies. This is echoed by Sayed and Bulgrin (2020, p. 1) who contended that "overall, it can be stated that teacher engagement is marked by an absence of meaningful involvement and lacks appropriate and robust mechanisms for ensuring sustained involvement in policy formation." Findings relating to teacher involvement in education policy responses to the pandemic reveal that teachers need the opportunity to have their voices heard. They are frontline workers who play an equally important role as health workers and thus should be afforded the same value.

Supporting teachers through teacher PD during COVID-19: Teacher requests for relevant and meaningful PD

While continual CPD, also referred to as teacher professional development (TPD), is an important mechanism for maintaining the quality of teaching and learning engagements generally (Buckler, 2011; Sayed & Badroodien 2018) CPD during a time of crisis and disruption is important. The World Bank (2020) noted that, during a pandemic such as COVID-19, teachers need to be supported instructionally, technologically, and affectively to build resilience. Yet, research undertaken during the initial stages of the COVID-19 pandemic showed that globally about 6 in 10 teachers felt unprepared for emergency online remote teaching because they lacked sufficient training and support (UNESCO, 2020).

From the declaration of COVID-19 as a pandemic, teachers had to adapt their practices and ready themselves for added responsibilities. As Reimers et al. (2020, p. 2) astutely noted, the pandemic presented teachers with a "quintessential adaptive and transformative challenge, one for which there is no preconfigured playbook that can guide appropriate responses." Teachers needed to adapt their teaching to incorporate social distancing and other COVID-19 regulations while maintaining the delivery of quality teaching and learning. A joint survey conducted by UNESCO, UNICEF, and the World Bank (2020) noted that, regardless of the context, teachers had to adapt to alternative communication modes of teaching and learning, as noted in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1

Alternative modalities requiring teacher adaptation during the pandemic
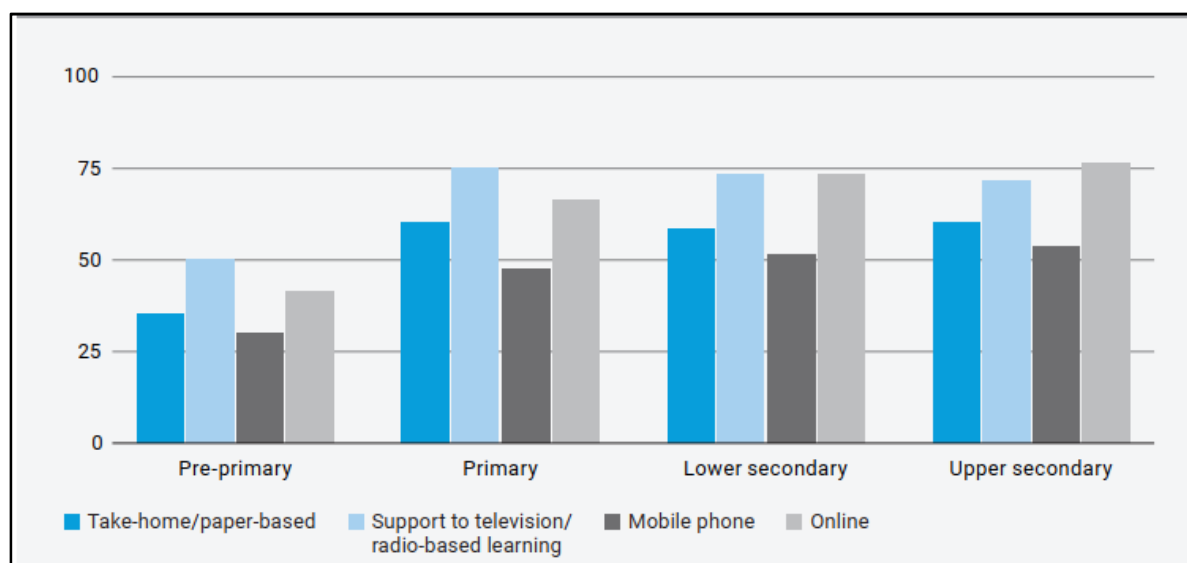
Teachers had to make these and other adaptations in the context of insufficient skills to navigate these different modalities effectively. The 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (OECD, 2020b) noted that globally, even before COVID-19, teachers did not receive sufficient PD to improve their existing pedagogies and practices (see, also, Sayed & Bulgrin, 2020). The pandemic has further highlighted teachers' pedagogical limitations, particularly with ICTs, because even in more stable contexts of the West with adequate infrastructure and connectivity, many teachers lacked even the most basic ICT skills for facilitating quality distance learning (UNESCO, 2020). This absence of PD support is even more critical in sub-Saharan Africa, where "just 64% of primary and 50% of secondary teachers have received minimum training, and this frequently does not include ICT skills" (UNESCO, 2020, para. 6). In these regions, where access to ICT infrastructure and data remains problematic, the request to switch to these modalities added extra pressure on education systems, with implications for quality and equitable education.

The data presented in this section illuminates the kinds of PD that was made available to teachers across the eight selected countries during the COVID-19 pandemic or that was

lacking. The data suggests[2] that, in some countries, attempts were made to provide PD support to teachers often supported by international organisations and dependent on external funds and, in other regions, no PD was provided at all. However, in most cases, the CPD was ineffective (Burkina Faso, South Africa, Ivory Coast, Mali, and Mozambique), inappropriate (South Africa) or lacked proper implementation (Ethiopia and Cape Verde). Only one country, Uganda, was identified as providing no CPD for teachers at all; no attempts were made to assist teachers in developing competencies to deal with the requirements of implementing COVID-19 teaching and learning protocols.

The issue of providing PD to teachers during the pandemic remains controversial, with inconsistencies emerging between and among responses from government officials and from Teacher Union officials. For example, the extracts below from two government officials in South Africa suggest that teachers were trained and given professional support.

> I think first of all the department kind of provided clear sources of the information for teachers to engage with so that they have the facts. They know what the Standard Operating Procedures are; they know the procedures they need to take when they want to apply for concessions around co-morbidities. . . . The department has really stepped up in developing those kinds of guidelines, to put it on our websites so that it can be accessible to teachers so that they know the facts, the routines, and we know that if you are empowered by knowledge and you know what is the routine, that that brings a sense of security and it works against some of the psychosocial impacts that a pandemic like this will have. (Government Official 1, South Africa, September 2020)

> [There was] that guideline, and we distributed it. And we were working with our provincial counterparts; we did not really have physical online training on how to use the manual. But the manual was distributed and made available. (Government Official 2, South Africa, September 2020)

However, responses from Teacher Unions contradict these responses from government officials.

> Not at all. That's the short answer. By the Department of Education. Not at all . . . the DBE, they cannot provide professional development as an employer should. There has been no professional development support for teachers during the pandemic. I'm stating it emphatically. (Teacher Union Official 1, South Africa, September 2020)

The statements by the South African officials quoted above suggest that teachers were not provided with the support that they find useful or meaningful. Further, it suggests that the government is not aware of the PD that teachers need. Sayed and Bulgrin (2020) argued that successful delivery of the curriculum requires teachers who are committed, motivated, and supported and that teacher PD should form part of a continual development programme that

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2   Data originated from a desk-based review and feedback from respondents who participated in the study. The data suggests that overall provision was limited (in Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Mozambique, for example), or planned but not executed (in Cape Verde, for example). We acknowledge that the data collected may not be fully representative of the situation in a specific country.

carries on after the initial teacher education phase, thereby ensuring that teachers receive relevant PD as the basis for the provision of quality education. Also, understanding the contextual realities in which teachers operate is vital for identifying the kinds of PD teachers most need. As Maistry (2008) noted, understanding the historical context of education in South Africa is crucial if education reform, including the CPD of teachers, is to be effective. A study by Central Sindical Independiente y de Funcionarios (CSIF, 2021) in Spain during the initial stages of the pandemic, that surveyed 10,000 teachers, found that a lack of teacher training and the lack of information on how to shift to teaching online were major contributors to stress and burnout. This further suggests that the lack of targeted, relevant, and meaningful CPD is not confined to the Global South.

The responses from other countries, such as Burkina Faso, also suggested that the lack of teacher PD was not confined to the COVID-19 pandemic. Instead, the lack of support predates the current crisis.

> Even before the pandemic, continuing education was not at all sufficient. We are having this debate with the government. We are currently considering what format to give to this continuing training because, you know, teachers are almost half of the officials in our public service. So, for more efficiency, we are in the process of finding ways for continuing training to be effective. (Teachers' Union 1, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

As with South Africa, Ivory Coast, Ethiopia, Mozambique, and Cape Verde, teachers in Burkina Faso received very limited access to CPD before and during the pandemic. The data does not reveal the reasons why CPD for teachers seemed even more limited during the pandemic. According to Sayed and Bulgrin (2020), however, the neglect of CPD may be related to financial and time-resource constraints. Moreover, the COVID-19 pandemic emerged when many countries were unprepared to confront new changes since it disrupted all educational activities, including initial teacher education and professional teacher development. According to UNESCO (2020), COVID-19 has highlighted the fact that both initial and ongoing teacher education require significant reform to allow teachers to develop more knowledge and skills related to digital literacy and to using ICTs for pedagogy during pandemic times. Espino-Díaz et al. (2020, p. 4) astutely noted,

> Faced with such exceptional circumstances caused by the pandemic as a result of COVID-19, in a context in which schools have closed their doors in 185 countries and government administrations have ordered the transition to the tele-training of students, it has manifested the need to train teaching staff in the use of different technological tools, in order to adapt the different elements of the curriculum to the new context of a pandemic. We are facing a change in the educational paradigm in which online training through ICT has ceased to be an option in the teaching methodology and has become a necessity in these times of pandemic in order to continue with the student learning process.

In Uganda, a Teacher Union Official noted that teachers urgently require CPD to get back to the business of teaching and learning.

> Teachers need that capacity building to handle the new normal. You know, the time they have spent at home has affected them in many ways. I need to see a deliberate effort to prepare the teachers for the teaching [and] learning process. Heads of educational institutions should be given capacity building on how to handle the new normal. Even with the learners who are coming after all this time, the approach cannot be normal. There is a need for sensitisation and capacity building so that we start to get back to the real teaching [and] learning process. (Teachers' Union Official, Uganda, September 2020)

In Ivory Coast, the government provided limited development to some volunteer teachers on how to teach in front of a camera, with no focus on how to deliver content more effectively using a different platform.

> Regarding the [digital] courses, the state has signalled to volunteer teachers to offer modules, to run lessons. The teachers played a role in facilitating the classes . . . I think the teachers were trained, especially the ones, the government called, were trained to use social media, to speak in front of the cameras—they were more or less prepared . . . Their training was to teach in front of the camera; it does not concern the content of the course. (Teachers' Union Official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

Aside from the selective approach of the Ivorian government, benefitting only a few teachers, the responses from the Teacher Union officials in Uganda and Ivory Coast suggested that teachers require CPD that is relevant to their contexts. Practical skills related to content design for online spaces, COVID-19 health protocols, new delivery digital tools, and online pedagogies for managing the provision of education during the pandemic would be beneficial.

What the transcripts above illuminate is that, despite COVID-19 protocols for teachers and learners that compelled teachers to adapt their teaching practices, there was an absence of relevant and PD support to guide teachers through the transition. The transcripts further suggest that the CPD provided to teachers was inefficient, decontextualised, or absent. A study by Jeram (2017) in South Africa on teachers receiving PD found that even though teachers understood the context of the programme, "they expressed little hope that these theory-laden and decontextualised programmes would improve their efficacy in a classroom setting" (p. 117).

While the patterns of teacher development diverge across regions, it can be stated that no specific policies nor adequate preparation for supporting the PD of teachers existed in Lusophone countries, whereas limited training for teachers in managing distance-based teaching in times of crisis was available in Anglophone ones. For Francophone countries, government officials and teachers' union representatives agreed to revise the curriculum and to integrate ICT into ITE and continual PD programmes as a response to disasters (see Sayed

et al., 2021). Even though CPD had already been neglected before the pandemic, the need for contextualised, meaningful, and relevant CPD in the context of crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, is vital to ensure that teaching practice remains equitable for all learners and that teachers are resilient and prepared to manage their workload effectively.

Psychosocial support for teachers during COVID-19: The silenced need of teachers

Not only did teachers lack PD support during the pandemic in terms of the cognitive aspects of teaching, but they were also not provided with sufficient psychosocial support to manage their own pandemic-related anxieties. Teachers are a vulnerable population requiring support mechanisms to support both the cognitive and non-cognitive elements of their work. Barron et al. (2021) argued, as noted elsewhere in this article, that it is essential during the pandemic that teachers should be freed from

> administrative tasks (as Brazil, Peru and Uruguay did), focus on what is pedagogically effective, and provide socio-emotional support for teachers . . . the pandemic and the extended school closures have changed the role of teachers and most of them were not prepared for such change; a comprehensive strategy is required for socio-emotional monitoring and psychosocial support to ensure teacher wellbeing and avoid burnout. (para. 11)

The importance of psychosocial support for learners, parents, and teachers cannot be overstated. However, the responses (including the desk-based synthesis) reveal that psychosocial support for learners and parents are prioritised over the psychosocial needs of teachers if this is even existent.

The data suggests[3] that in Ethiopia, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Mali, teachers were not provided with any kind of psychosocial support to assist them in mitigating their own anxieties about teaching and learning during the pandemic. In South Africa, Cape Verde, and Mozambique, teachers received limited and, in some cases such as South Africa, ineffective support, as illuminated in the transcripts below.

Despite teachers' requests for affective support, this has not been provided by the government, as noted by Teacher Union officials in Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Mali.

> Indeed, we are fighting for it [psychosocial support]; otherwise, it doesn't exist. Today we called on the government for these teachers traumatised by the insecurity to have a follow-up. (Teachers' Union Official, Burkina Faso, October 2020)

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3   Data originated from a desk-based review and feedback from respondents who participated in the study. We acknowledge that the data collected may not be fully representative of the situation in a specific country.

[To the question of psychosocial support], I don't think so, I don't think so. There was no psychosocial support . . . neither for the teachers nor for the pupils. (Teachers' Union Official, Ivory Coast, September 2020)

We are not aware of any psychological support. Although I was tested positive myself, unfortunately, I had no psychosocial support. I nearly lost my life and my hospitalisation made me realise that the health system in place was very inadequate. (Teachers' Union Official, Mali, October 2020)

The lack of provision suggests a particular framing by the government that tends to ignore the affective dimension of teachers' work. The education policy responses globally, including the eight countries discussed here, privilege education (or more specifically "schooling") as the relaying of content thus conveying a narrow understanding of what happens in the school environment. Teachers, as demonstrated in the transcripts above, are asking for support that will enable them to be more effective in their role as educators. However, their needs and requests have gone largely unheard. The CSIF Survey found that 92.8% of the 10,000 teachers surveyed suffered emotional exhaustion, stress, anguish, or anxiety because of confinement and having to provide distance education. Even in this context, policy responses to education during the pandemic did not mirror the needs of teachers and this was yet another silencing of teachers' voices.

Where psychosocial support was provided, as in South Africa, it was thin and limited with the allocation of resources being the main obstacle, as noted by a local Teacher Union official.

Well, that is where the biggest problem lies. There has been very, very little done. And it will go to resourcing, and you may be shocked to learn that, for example, the Free State when we questioned about the psychosocial support, the Free State said, 'Yes, we are ready.' We said, 'What does that mean?' So no, no, we have one school psychologist appointed in the province—one—and we have two social workers. That is the Free State; that is what they have in the Department only. So how do they service the almost 3,000 schools in the Free State—that's near impossible. Okay, subtract from that the schools that have councillors which are the smallest minority. Then they agree that they will contract people from Social Development—that I can tell you was a disaster—it never happened. (Teachers' Union Official, South Africa, September 2020)

The responses from the Teacher Union in South Africa demonstrate that a lack of resources (financial and human) to provide teachers with the relevant psychosocial support may be a fundamental reason why the service has not been provided. A lack of financial support is also noted as the biggest hindrance to the sufficient provision of support for teachers (OECD, 2017). But this also suggests that education budgets are too rigid and inflexible and require a reassessment, particularly during times of crisis and disruption. While crises bring financial challenges to education systems generally, including the eight countries discussed here, they also generate opportunities to restructure, redesign education programmes, and reassess the

allocation of funding to improve the quality of the education system for teachers and learners, both during the present pandemic and in the period of recovery. It has to be noted that, as with Burkina Faso and Ivory Coast, United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) worked with the South African Department of Basic Education, the Department of Social Development, and the National Education Collaboration Trust (NECT) to support back-to-school initiatives for learners, teachers, and parents in South Africa. However, these initiatives were mainly targeted at ensuring that the cognitive aspects of schooling, such as distance learning programmes, were supported (UNICEF, 2020a).

As with the responses from Teacher Unions regarding the lack of teacher PD during the pandemic, the responses from these eight countries demonstrate that psychosocial support is either completely lacking or insufficient. In five countries (Ethiopia, Uganda, Burkina Faso, Ivory Coast, and Mali) there was no indication (at the time the research was conducted) that the government intended to provide this kind of support to teachers, despite the prevalence and exacerbation of interlocking crises. Moreover, psychosocial support in the Francophone region is provided mainly by multilateral agencies to students and, in these regions, is understood as medical rather than psychological support (see Sayed et al., 2021).

Discussion

The research on which this paper is based suggests limited involvement of key role players in the education policy responses and choices made in the pandemic in eight African states. In particular, we highlight the limited involvement of teachers and their representatives who are frontline implementers and key agents of education quality in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic specifically and more generally. The data does not provide insights into why these patterns of silencing the voices of teachers prevail `but the possible explanation for this may be attributed to` time, resources, and capacity constraints. According to Gouëdard et al. (2020), in times of emergency, evidence of what may work is limited, and constraints on resources and capacity are binding with short consultation processes not informed by evidence on the educational impact. Despite this, we believe that teachers' non-participation in policymaking processes cannot be subverted under the rubric of emergency regulations nor displaced in favour of the scientist experts. Instead, teachers' right to social dialogue, as an inherent condition of democratic policymaking (International Labour Organization [ILO], 1996), is vital to give effect to their agency, and contribute meaningfully to education provision. This is mainly because teachers' pedagogic expertise and contextual understanding affords them deep knowledge that should be centre stage in education policymaking and implementation strategies at the micro (school) level.

We suggest that there are several blind spots and absences in the move toward an emergency teaching mode. It is of concern that the major shift toward such an approach to teaching has ignored or discounted teacher preparedness for it. The data across all eight countries shows a lack of attention to capacitating teachers with the necessary knowledge, skills, and dispositions to teach and support learning during times of crisis. The absence of a robust system of PD to equip teachers to be resilient, prepared, and adaptive is striking. This silence

speaks volumes about the (in)capacity of education systems to prepare and continually support teachers for flexible and adaptable teaching modalities. Again, the data does not reveal why teachers are repeatedly in need of intervention for activating self-directed professional growth in targeted PD. However, their need to be continually supported during the pandemic and thereafter remains an uncontested claim across teacher respondents in all eight countries. UNESCO (2020) further reiterated the importance of teachers' access to relevant and quality PD to enable them to continue teaching in crisis contexts while being comfortable with the technology used in online education.

The lack of attention to teachers' PD needs for teaching during the pandemic is coupled with, as the data reveals, an absence of support for teachers to deal with the trauma learners have experienced. This is all the more surprising since learners in the countries involved in this study are, as noted earlier, affected by existing crises and fragilities. The surprise and the level of system under-preparedness for this pandemic cast a long shadow on why education systems in crisis contexts were not more resilient and more prepared; while this crisis might have been unexpected, crises are not unknown phenomena.

Building system resilience for the pandemic and future crises requires paying particular attention to teachers' psychosocial and wellbeing needs. The data across all eight countries points to the patchy and partial provision of such support for teachers. It is not surprising that some teacher representative bodies have argued for teachers to be regarded as essential workers but not all, as in, for example, the Philippines, where being deemed as essential workers denies teachers the right to strike. Notwithstanding this, it is important that teachers are valued since they are at the front line of education delivery and directly and indirectly impacted by the pandemic and other crises. It is of great concern that, in total, 54 countries do not prioritise teachers in their vaccine rollout plans or that plans are still in development. This amounts to about one in four teachers globally. This is the case of a large number of low-income countries in sub-Saharan Africa, such as Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Madagascar, Mali, Niger, and Sierra Leone (UNESCO, 2021). As the pandemic and its management unfold, teachers carry on invisibly in the policy choices of governments, particularly teachers in the Global South.

A narrow focus on curriculum content and pressure on teachers to make up for the loss of learning content during the pandemic (UNICEF, 2020b) betrays an instrumentalised notion of learning in which the affective dimension is delegitimated and subjugated in favour of basic and more highly valued cognitive learning. The research reported in this paper shines a spotlight on how teachers need to be enabled and provided with the agential space to promote a holistic notion of learning which simultaneously privileges wellbeing and resilience.

The research reported in this paper points forcefully to teachers' experiential knowledge of how the pandemic exacerbates inequities in education, whether this is in terms of their own or their learners' access to resources. While it is evident that states have put forth efforts to mitigate such inequities, the pandemic and other crises reveal how the marginalised and impoverished are disproportionately impacted by such events and show how teachers struggle to promote meaningful learning when faced with such realities.

Concluding remarks

The pandemic has undoubtedly challenged the capacities and capabilities of most states to develop equitable and quality education for all, particularly in contexts layered with existing crises and fragilities. Based on a purposively selected sample of interviews, we have highlighted the silences about teachers and their work and have shown that the pandemic has revealed an absence that a post-COVID education system needs to address. Drawing on de Sousa Santos's (2001) sociology of absences, we have revealed how teachers, as articulated by teacher representatives, have been absent in the policymaking processes during the COVID-19 pandemic. This "monoculture of knowledge" (de Sousa Santos, 2003, p. 238) that occurs through the privileging of scientific voices, delegitimises the value that teachers can bring to policymaking and shows how teachers could improve the quality of policy formulation and implementation. These absences, as noted in this research, have manifested in two ways. The first of these is the absence of the voice of teachers as those with the deep contextual and experiential knowledge and understanding of how crises, such as COVID-19, impact the school, learners, and communities. Education policy choices that are insensitive to diverse local contexts and are implemented without the knowledge and input of teachers are not likely to be successfully realised. The second is that the views of teacher representatives speak powerfully to the invisibilisation of teachers as active agents and their ontological reduction to the status of resource inputs. Their well-being and PD needs, in time of crises, are marginalised and peripheralised. The education system is presented in a reified way, standing outside teachers as active agents. De Sousa Santos's (2001) argument of the sociology of absences narrates powerfully how pandemics and crises such as these tend to re- and de-centre teachers in ways that render them less significant, undermining them as professionals, while disregarding the work they do, and their contribution to society that impacts directly on teaching and learning. Furthermore, de Sousa Santos (2014) argued that the notion of "cognitive injustice" or "epistemicide" cannot be remedied unless these hidden voices are recognised, and through this recognition, legitimised (p. 237).

The research for this paper suggests, albeit in opaque and fleeting ways, the possibility of an alternative education imaginary beyond the somewhat global and rhetorical claims made about the future of education being online and virtual, and heralding the promise of the Fourth Industrial Revolution. There are three particular ideas which, while inchoate in such crises, warrant further reflection and deliberative dialogue.

First, it is necessary to rethink what an emergency teaching mode entails and what pedagogies are desirable in such contexts and in the future. The pandemic has thrown into sharp relief a distant, online, and hybrid/blended learning approach with advocates and critiques supporting and opposing it (Espino-Diaz et al., 2020). While such modalities speak to the medium through which learning takes place, they remain silent about the pedagogic encounter and the sociality of teacher-learner knowledge engagement. A future education approach that is responsive to such crises needs to engage with what a multi-modal pedagogy entails and how teachers are prepared for such an approach. Not least, this requires attention to ensuring that blended learning is not just an attempt to continue teaching in ways of the

past by simply leveraging technology. The pedagogic forms used in such modalities tend to confuse form for substance and remove the relationality of the teaching and learning encounter.

Second, the vibrancy of democratic education policymaking and the robustness of policy choice require meaningful teacher involvement. The involvement of teachers is not only an affirmation of their right to social dialogue, but their connection with, and experiences of, the daily school realities that will inform the efficacy of choices made. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the attempt to determine centrally which curriculum content should be trimmed or regarded as essential. Teachers in the local context know best what learning is occurring and are thus in the best space to inform such choices.

Third, the research reveals an urgent need to rethink the form, content, and modality of teacher PD. The fact that most systems were underprepared, even in contexts where crises are imminent and perpetual, suggests that support for teachers in such situations is not only lacking but must be integrated into initial and continual PD in future. The pandemic calls attention to the need for resilient PD systems that not only prepare teachers for such events but also provide them with support for their wellbeing as part of a holistic notion of education quality in which the affective dimension of learning is key.

Crises reveal the fault line of education inequality. In this specific case, the pandemic has exacerbated inequities. The post-pandemic education system, whatever shape it takes, must foreground the SDG-4 goal of equitable and quality learning for all. Reshaping education systems to be resilient and responsive requires foregrounding equity and empowering and capacitating teachers as transformative agents. However, education matters cannot be only about pedagogy and curriculum engagement but must also be about how we produce our humanity in schooling contexts. As UNESCO (2020) has shown, a human-centred approach to the COVID-19 response is essential to ensuring that the relationship between teachers and learners is maintained as physical distancing related to lockdown made it more difficult for the former to maintain close relationships with the latter. This resonates with Sayed and Singh's (2020) argument that the reviewed education choices suggest a narrow focus on learning and content, resulting in a glaring failure to pay attention to affective learning.

Amplifying teacher PD needs, teacher wellbeing, and teacher involvement in education policymaking is a critical and necessary condition for building back better. Teachers are the first responders and frontline staff engaging directly with learners, their parents, and the community in both crisis and post-crisis contexts. Thus, we end this paper by highlighting the need for further research and policy dialogue about how teachers can be better prepared for such crises in the future and how their voices can and should be heard in policy discussions about the vision and direction of a future resilient education system.

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