



African Centre
for School Leadership



In partnership with



SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN UGANDA

Key Insights from the School Leadership Country Mapping | FACT SHEET

The African Centre for School Leadership (ACSL)
is a coalition of partners coordinated by
ADEA, ESSA, FAWE and VVOB.



Ushirikika wa Maendeleo ya Elimu Barani Afrika
الرابطة لأجل تطوير التربية في إفريقيا
Association for the Development of Education in Africa
Association pour le développement de l'éducation en Afrique
Associação para o Desenvolvimento da Educação em África



This fact sheet presents key insights from the country mapping of school leadership policy and practice in Uganda conducted by the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) and the African Centre for School Leadership (ACSL) in collaboration with the Mastercard Foundation and the implementing partners of the Leaders in Teaching (LiT) initiative in Uganda, led by the Luigi Guissani Foundation, UNICEF, VVOB – education for development, British Council, the Forum for Education NGOs in Uganda, STIR Education, Teach for Uganda, Brain Wave, Edukans, and Promoting Equality in African School (PEAS).

The mapping examined Uganda's school leadership ecosystem across four areas — policy frameworks, professional development, research and evidence, and sector coordination — to identify emerging trends, key gaps, and opportunities for strengthening school leadership systems. Drawing on a desk-based evidence synthesis, metadata analysis of **53 research publications (2010–2025)**, primary data collection with **36 national and subnational stakeholders**, and a participatory two-day validation workshop with **31 participants**, the study provides both a system-level overview and a grounded picture of the lived realities of school leaders and institutions across Uganda's education sector.

Note for Readers: This fact sheet presents the headline findings. For detailed findings, data tables, stakeholder profiles, and the complete implementation roadmap, please consult the full Uganda School Leadership Mapping Report.

UGANDA EDUCATION CONTEXT

This mapping was conducted at a critical moment for Uganda's education system. The country is implementing a **Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC)** reform across secondary education — a transition that is fundamentally redefining what is required of school leaders. Uganda comprises 145 districts administered under a decentralised governance model, creating wide variation in the quality and reach of school leadership support. The Uganda Vision 2040 and the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2020–2025 both position education as a key driver of national development. At the same time, the country's National Teacher Council (NTC) is still being established, and a formal, standalone school leadership policy does not yet exist. It is in this context — of ambitious reform, structural fragmentation, and uneven capacity — that this mapping was conducted.



KEY SYSTEM SIGNALS FROM THE MAPPING

Policy foundation exists — but now needs a standalone school leadership framework

Uganda has an extensive but fragmented set of policy provisions for school leadership spread across multiple instruments. A dedicated school leadership policy still needs to be created, to improve clarity, enhance alignment and ensure consistent implementation at all levels.

Professional development is expanding — but fragmented and unevenly accessible

A growing range of government, universities, and civil society-led programmes support leadership development. However, there is an opportunity to improve the coordination of these initiatives, properly institute formal induction, and deepen access across all regions, especially in excluded rural areas.

Leadership for learning is constrained by administrative overload

Headteachers are expected to lead learning, manage finances, coordinate staff, and ensure compliance. They need adequate preparation to deliver on these responsibilities. Heavy administrative burdens systematically crowd out instructional leadership functions that directly improve teaching quality and student outcomes.

Leadership for learning is constrained by administrative overload

53 publications over 15 years reflect a growing evidence base. But school leadership research needs to be more consistent and fully established as a priority theme within Uganda's education sector coordination platforms. This could improve investment and system-level accountability including the use of evidence.

Policy Landscape

- School leadership in Uganda is governed by multiple instruments — the Education (Pre-Primary, Primary and Post-Primary) Act (2008), the Continuous Professional Development (CPD) Framework and Costed Implementation Plan (2017), the National Teacher Policy (2018/2019), and the Education Sector Strategic Plan 2020–2025 — but no standalone school leadership policy exists.
- The CPD Framework (2017) defines three progressive leadership levels: Junior/Developing Leader, Proficient Leader, and Exemplary/Transformational Leader — with competency expectations across six areas.
- Policy provisions are fragmented across overlapping documents. Many school leaders lack a clear understanding of the frameworks governing their roles, and many serve in acting positions without meeting formal appointment criteria.
- School leadership is still treated largely as an extension of teaching rather than a distinct profession with its own certification, standards, and career pathways.
- Headteachers of government secondary schools are recruited by the Education Service Commission (ESC) on a merit basis, requiring at minimum a master's degree or postgraduate diploma in educational management and twelve years of teaching experience — yet practical leadership competencies are not consistently assessed.
- Gender equality is recognised in the Education Sector Strategic Plan, but specific provisions to support women's progression into leadership remain limited.
- The proposed National Teacher Council (NTC) — currently in development — offers an important opportunity to formalise school leadership as a distinct professional track with licensing, standards, and career recognition.

Policy Landscape

- School leadership professional development in Uganda is delivered by a wide range of actors: the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES), the Uganda National Institute for Teacher Education (UNITE), universities including Makerere University, Kyambogo University, the Uganda Management Institute (UMI), and Aga Khan University's Institute for Educational Development, East Africa — alongside NGOs and development partners.
- Key programmes include the Certificate in Education Leadership, Management, and Administration (CELMA) and the Diploma in Educational Leadership and Management (DELM); the Uganda Secondary Education Expansion Project (USEEP)-UMI training, which reached approximately 6,600 school leaders; the Leadership for Education for Sustainable Development (LEAD-ESD) programme; the PEAS School Leadership Development Programme; and the new Effective School Leadership for the Competence-Based Curriculum (ESL4CBC) CPD course supported by VVOB under the LIT initiative.
- Blended learning models combining face-to-face sessions, digital tools, mentorship, peer learning, and Communities of Practice (CoPs) are increasingly used.
- Formal induction for newly appointed school leaders remains limited and inconsistently applied — many leaders assume roles without structured preparation or mentoring.

- Programmes remain largely project-based and are not consistently linked to national standards, career progression, or formal certification.
- Access is unevenly distributed — rural, underserved, and remote regions face the largest gaps, despite targeted interventions in Northern Uganda and West Nile.
- Gender-responsive leadership training is emerging — notably within DELM and LEAD-ESD — but is not yet consistently integrated across all programmes.

"School leadership development has not been seen as an important theme to be discussed by the Education Development Partners."

— Development partner stakeholder, Uganda Mapping Validation Workshop, 2026

RESEARCH AND EVIDENCE LANDSCAPE

53

research publications identified (2010–2025)

98%

of the reviewed publications are journal articles. Books and reports nearly absent

77%

of first authors are male — persistent gender imbalance

60%

of collaborations within Uganda — intra-African collaboration low (17%)

Research Trends and Emerging Themes

- Publication output is low and inconsistent — with brief peaks in 2016 and 2019 but no sustained growth over the 15-year period.
- Research is concentrated at Makerere University (just over a third of all publications). Government and practitioner contributions are minimal.
- Gender: Only 3 out of 53 studies centrally address gender — rarely exploring gendered leadership styles, barriers for rural women leaders, or intersectional challenges.
- Disability and inclusive education: Virtually absent — none of the 53 publications address disability or inclusive education in relation to school leadership.

Emerging Themes and Evidence Gap

- Instructional leadership and its impact on teacher effectiveness and student outcomes is the most researched area, particularly in secondary schools.
- Transformational leadership behaviours are consistently associated with better academic performance at the Uganda Certificate of Education (UCE) and Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE) levels.
- Democratic and participatory leadership approaches are linked to improved student discipline and teacher engagement.
- Under-researched: distributed leadership, digital leadership, crisis and emergency leadership, community engagement, and system-level dynamics.

Emerging Themes and Evidence Gap

- Five national research agenda priorities validated by stakeholders: (1) Digital skills and ICT integration; (2) Instructional leadership; (3) Accountability and transparency; (4) Effective leadership models; (5) Gender as a cross-cutting theme.
- The validation workshop produced Uganda's first co-created, stakeholder-endorsed school leadership research agenda.

SCHOOL LEADERSHIP ADVOCACY, COMMUNICATION AND SECTOR COORDINATION

- Uganda's school leadership ecosystem involves a wide range of stakeholders: the MoES and its directorates, the ESC, UNITE, the Uganda National Teachers' Union (UNATU), the National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), universities, development partners including UNESCO and the World Bank, and professional associations including the Association of Secondary School Headteachers of Uganda (ASSHU).
- Coordination platforms exist — including Education Sector Annual Reviews, the Education Development Partners Group, secondary education Technical Working Groups (TWGs), and the National Teachers' Symposium — but school leadership has not yet been established as a priority agenda item within any of these forums.
- A School Leadership coordination mechanism has been proposed under the LiT (Leaders in Teaching) programme — to be led by the Ministry of Education and Sport and supported by implemented by VVOB and PEAS — to improve coordination and alignment. Constituting and operationalising this taskforce is the most important near-term coordination action identified by stakeholders.
- Data systems remain incomplete, particularly regarding private schools, limiting the evidence base for coordinated planning and accountability.
- Priority areas for greater national advocacy attention: ICT integration in education leadership, leadership responses to climate change, stronger governance and accountability frameworks, and improved succession planning.
- Uganda's findings connect to and reinforce the continental picture documented in the ACSL Continental Mapping Report on School Leadership Initiatives in Africa (2026) — which similarly identifies fragmented coordination, weak policy operationalisation, and an under-utilised evidence base as the defining system challenges across the continent.

KEY RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1

Develop a standalone national school leadership policy

Consolidate existing provisions into a dedicated, coherent framework with clear leadership standards, competency levels, certification requirements, and transparent career pathways for headteachers at all levels — aligned to the CBC reform agenda.

Recommendation 2

Institutionalise professional development linked to career progression

Embed structured induction, mentorship, Communities of Practice (CoPs), and aligned in-service training within the national education system — explicitly linked to career progression and accountability rather than project cycles.

Recommendation 3

Invest in applied, policy-relevant research

Prioritise school leadership as a distinct national research focus. Expand research on equity, disability, digital leadership, and crisis contexts. Establish open-access repositories and sustained dissemination platforms to strengthen the evidence-to-policy link.

Recommendation 5

Advance gender equality and inclusive leadership

Address structural barriers limiting women's progression into school leadership. Integrate gender-responsive and inclusive leadership training across all professional development programmes. Expand research on disability, rural women leaders, and intersectional equity.

Recommendation 4

Constitute a national coordination platform

Establish a National School Leadership Coordination Committee, formalise the LIT School Leadership Taskforce, and embed school leadership as a standing agenda item in the Education Sector Development Committee (ESDC) and Education Development Partners Group.

Recommendation 6

Leverage ICT for leadership support and monitoring

Adopt digital tools to strengthen supervision, monitoring, and data-informed decision-making. Integrate digital leadership content into CPD programmes and ensure technology solutions are designed for rural and under-resourced school contexts.

IMPLEMENTATION ROADMAP — KEY MILESTONES

1–6 Months

Map existing policies; conduct stakeholder consultations; define headteacher selection criteria; set up the School Leadership Taskforce; commission needs assessments for professional development and induction.

12–24 Months

Develop and pilot the standalone policy; validate and pilot revised leadership qualification frameworks; implement blended leadership professional development programmes; operationalise coordination structures and monitoring tools; roll out digital supervision tools.

6–12 Months

Organise technical seminars to draft a standalone school leadership policy; validate revised qualification frameworks; establish the National School Leadership Coordination Committee; develop mentorship and induction programme structures.

2–5 Years

Roll out the national school leadership policy; implement harmonised professional development training programmes at scale; consolidate decentralised accountability systems; sustain coordination platforms; monitor and report on leadership improvement outcomes across Uganda's 145 districts.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ACTION

Uganda has the foundations. What it needs now is deliberate and coordinated action. The findings of this mapping point to six specific windows where political will and targeted investment can produce system-level change.

Pass a standalone school leadership policy

Uganda is implementing a major curriculum reform without a coherent policy framework for the leaders who must deliver it. A standalone national school leadership policy would give MoES, the ESC, and the NTC the mandate and architecture to act.

Make school leadership a sector coordination priority

The Education Development Partners Group and secondary education TWGs currently treat school leadership as peripheral. The School Leadership coordination mechanism proposed under LIT provides a ready-made vehicle to change that — a decision that can be made now.

Fund structured induction for every new headteacher

Leaders are currently appointed and left to learn on the job. Institutionalising a structured induction programme for newly appointed headteachers — delivered through UNITE and district offices — is one of the highest-return investments available to MoES.

Relieve administrative overload to free instructional leadership

Headteachers spend the majority of their time on compliance and reporting. Redistributing administrative tasks, clarifying delegation structures, and investing in school-level administrative support are practical steps that immediately improve leadership quality.

Invest in gender-responsive and inclusive leadership systems

Women remain underrepresented in school leadership across Uganda. Targeted mentorship programmes, transparent promotion criteria, and affirmative action measures — particularly in rural areas — are evidence-based interventions with documented impact.

Operationalise the National Research Agenda

The validation workshop produced Uganda's first co-created, stakeholder-endorsed school leadership research agenda. Funding its implementation — through the ACSL research grants programme and national research bodies — would directly address the evidence gaps limiting policy improvement.

Uganda has made meaningful progress in establishing the foundations of a school leadership system. The policy architecture exists, professional development provision is expanding, and a committed research community is gradually building. However, fragmentation across policy, professional development, research, and coordination continues to limit the system's impact. What this mapping makes clear is that the challenge is not a knowledge problem — it is a prioritisation and coordination problem. The roadmap co-created with Ugandan stakeholders provides a concrete pathway. What is required now is the institutional will, sustained investment, and cross-sector alignment to walk it.

ABOUT ACSL

The African Centre for School Leadership (ACSL) is a pan-African coalition of partners committed to strengthening school leadership systems that improve teaching, learning outcomes, and the well-being of learners across the continent. The Centre works with governments, researchers, and professional development providers to connect, support, and scale school leadership policy, practice, and evidence — from the country level to the continental level. ACSL is coordinated by four pan-African organisations: **ADEA (Association for the Development of Education in Africa)** leads policy development and advocacy; **ESSA** (Education Sub-Saharan Africa) leads research and evidence; **FAWE (Forum for African Women Educationalists)** leads gender equality and social inclusion; and **VVOB – education for development** leads professional development.

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