

# Survival in a Pandemic: Reflections on Self-Resilience and Sustainability by Teachers of Private For-Profit Schools in a Low Developed Country (LDC)

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## Abstract

This study is a systematic investigation into the impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the economic welfare of private secondary school teachers in a low developed country (LDC). Precisely, the study assesses the opportunities and challenges faced by the teachers in question. Given the fact that the vast majority among the private teaching fraternity went without a pay for a period close to twenty-two months, there is no doubt that many of them experienced financially unbearable long rough period to deal with, and a very big task of forging means of survival. The study thus renders a further inquiry into teachers' newly acquired opportunities; their financial considerations with regard to these opportunities as well as the possibility of having these teachers freely leave their new lucrative opportunities to run back to classrooms. As per its finding, this study revealed that; the long time on the side-lines inevitably necessitated a quick change in (private) teachers' mind-set. With the closure of schools, teachers were left with no further option but to take on alternative duties or else remain redundant all through the lock down period. The pandemic rendered various implications to private teachers' economic welfare; with the most apparent ones being a remarkable decline in their income and savings. As it goes that; desperate moments call for desperate measures, the most flexible among these private secondary teaching fraternity quickly jumped onto carrying out all sorts of hustles at their disposal just to make sure that their financial welfare is not totally derailed. In this, majority teachers found more lucrative alternatives to their teaching profession and as such, many currently find themselves very reluctant to resume teaching, even with the lifting of the school shut down. Ultimately, as face-to-face teaching and learning resumes, the study recommends that teachers need help to adjust to the new normal and lift their spirits once more. They need assistance from the government, along with clarity from policymakers to effectively support them in striking a balance between their profession as well as their economic welfare during and after the current pandemic.

**Keywords:** pandemic, opportunities and threats, survival, entrepreneurship, finance management

## 1. Introduction

In the closing days of the year 2019, the world was suddenly hit by the deadly COVID-19 Pandemic. The unanticipated pandemic broke out in Wuhan-China and immediately cast an enormous global disrupting effect on people's normal lifestyles in the fields of shopping, entertainment, work and education. Notably, the spread of the virus left global education in total tatters and devastation. As various schools and learning institutions closed, many turned to technology in an effort to continue the teaching and learning process. However, it goes without saying that whenever the issue of education interruption during the Pandemic is presented at table, a lot of emphasis is solely paid to scholars within the school going age; but it is worth noting that the teaching fraternity was none the less equally affected.

The novel Corona virus penetrated the African continent and quickly spread all through the various countries therein. The first case on the African continent was recorded in Egypt on February 14, 2020, and since then the continent went on to register 10,018 cases and 484 deaths as of April (UNDP, 2020). Indubitably, the African continent seemed highly vulnerable to the spread of the COVID-19, given the fragile public health systems. Thus, several concerned authorities and bodies quickly, drew measures; many of which included total lock downs and closure of learning institutions.

In Uganda, we experienced the closure of schools during the second week of March 2020, and soon the entire nation was locked down in an effort to curb the likelihood of huge damages that had been observed among the great Powers of the world (Kuensel, 2019, p. 220). Noticeably, the lock down situation had far overreaching implications on the general teaching fraternity as well as education on a whole. The sector among others seemed one of the most noticeable affected segments in the country as school going children had to seek for alternative means of catching up with their learning; teachers had to embrace new means of delivering material, not to mention a big number of students and teachers who could not catch up with the demands of the time and were left with nothing other than moving into hibernation.

On the whole, the outbreak did not only render itself a public health emergency causing large-scale loss of lives and human suffering; but also posed a major threat to the global economy. There is hardly any doubt that economic production was highly hit which adversely affected supply chains across the world and resulted in steep drop in consumption together with a collapse in confidence of the work force (W.H.O, 2020). The pandemic thus, significantly affected economic activities at global, regional and local levels.

It is upon the above background therefore, that this study has been advanced to narrow down the whole matter of the global economic disintegration to the context of Uganda's private secondary school teachers. As a result of the COVID-19 Pandemic, the Ugandan government in conformity with the ministry of Education and Sports unanimously agreed to close schools and educational institutions in an effort to flatten the curve and contain the spread of the Coronavirus. Depending on where students live, education moved to either synchronous or asynchronous remote schooling, or a blend of both. Delivery of content has since then occurred through live lessons, streaming of educational content via devices or televisions, parents have facilitated content and knowledge exchange, or perhaps, depending on access to resources (Achan, 2020). It is, however, crucial to acknowledge that not all pedagogy during a pandemic is delivered equal, as not all students have had access to the technologies that enable remote learning. As a result, teachers and students have lived vastly different educational experiences during the pandemic. The impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic coupled with economic recessions has been a recipe for inequity, marginalisation, attrition, disengagement, economic crisis and stress across the education profession (Emerson, Fox & Sanders, 2020).

Observing the current state of affairs in the researchers' area, the socio- economic welfare of private teachers was adversely affected by the period of education shut down caused by the pandemic. Uganda, like many African countries, faces major challenges in providing quality and accessible education through government-funded schools. This is why advocates of private schools speak of their ability to help rapid increase to access of quality education where government budgets or infrastructure are inadequate to meet the rising demand. According to the Uganda Schools Guide, there are about 17,858 private schools in 135 districts in Uganda. Among them are the high-end ones which target the well-off and the ones that target middle income-earners (Tumwesigye, 2020).

However, due to the high operational costs in most of these schools, many find themselves paying their teachers' salaries at their own convenience. This could mean going months on end without pay for these teachers. Therefore, in an effort to replenish their depleted finances, many teachers jumped onto all sorts of businesses and activities just to have them occupied and cope with the economic crisis of the time. Though, it is worth noting that due to the piece rate payment system, private school teachers among all the teaching fraternity were more at risk; given the fact that most of them went without a pay all through the period of school shut down.

Now that the situation is gradually getting back into hand; with the full opening of learning institutions, we all await to check on the position of teachers who are definitely the chief figures at the centre of education. Do they still have the vigour to teach? Do they still hold the teaching profession with a high regard as before? Or else will all teachers move back to the classrooms? These among others are the crucial enquiries that this study has been advanced to address.

## **2. Problem Statement**

It goes without saying that; the COVID-19 Pandemic created a lot of tension and obscurity to the academic sector in Uganda. Schools were shut, academic programs came to a halt, students all rested their assignments and teachers' duties utterly came to a standstill. It all started with the pronouncement of a month's break by the president in a wake to curb and control the virus that seemed to be spreading like a wildfire, especially through

the world's superpower countries. Much to the teaching and the students' fraternity dismay, the initial short break protracted to a time ad infinitum. Subsequently, the prolonged stay home without a salary scenario soon stifled the social and economic welfare of all parties involved in the teaching sector with private teachers feeling this heat the most. Government teachers seemed indeed relatively immune to the upheavals caused by the pandemic.

Such obscurity and oblivion in how much longer teachers had to wait for the resumption of schools and salary reception inevitably led them into weighing and considering alternative options. Many quickly turned to doing a bit of private coaching with students; whereas the others totally jumped to very different activities that had not the slightest connection with teaching. A case in point can be noted when the Daily Monitor reported that COVID-19 has sent many teachers into the hawking business (Mwanguzi, 2020).

This, as expected left so many (Private) teachers; for our case: economically shattered and frustrated. In a wake to counter the problem, many teachers retreated to their side hustles whereas others indulged in certain businesses and enterprises for the very first time, wherein many found themselves making a serious fortune.

In fact, many teachers have found themselves comfortable and contented with their new ventures.

Consequently, the greatest problem and question this research intends to address remains, teachers' likely response to the partial or full re-opening of the learning institutions. Amid teachers' new acquired opportunities, we can all out rightly ponder:

- ✓ Do they still consider their profession as the major means of sustaining their economic welfare?
- ✓ Will they freely leave their acquired hustles to run back to classrooms?
- ✓ Are teachers still motivated to do their previous routines after a long time on the side-lines?
- ✓ What is the current stance of teachers as far as their profession is concerned?

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

#### *3.1 General Objectives*

The general purpose of this research is to examine the impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on the economic welfare of private secondary school teachers in Uganda.

#### *3.2 Specific Objectives*

The specific objectives for this research study are:

- a) To establish the economic opportunities and threats brought about by the COVID-19 Pandemic to private Secondary teachers.
- b) To establish whether the teachers in question still consider the teaching profession as the major means of sustaining their economic welfare.
- c) To establish whether private teachers are still motivated towards their profession.

### **4. Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study denotes the confines it covered in terms of content, objectives, significance, as well as the time and geographical coverage. Thus, it primarily dealt with the economic welfare of private secondary school teachers in Uganda, basing on a case study of three selected schools. It sought to understand how teachers were impacted by the lock down situation as well as assessing the motivation and attitudes they held after the experience. Additionally, the study also ventured into the teachers' response as teaching and learning schedules normalised.

Within the time and Geographical scope, the study basically dwelt on the period of *COVID-19, lock down* that occurred from March 2020 to the Schools re-opening period which will generally be taken to be September 2020, when schools and learning institutions were opened for candidates and university science finalists (Katumba, 2021). And finally, the study covers a geographical scope of three private secondary schools in Kyengera Town Council, where a dozen of randomly selected teachers in all were chosen.

### **5. Significance of the Study**

In line with the general objective set, this study helps to manifest how Uganda's private secondary school teachers were affected and responded to the unprecedented experience of education shut down. Thereunder, it examines the state of these teachers since the lock down, the opportunities they have gained, threats incurred and how they have counteracted the whole experience.

By condensing the effects of the global Pandemic to a selected group of private secondary school teachers, this study also aids us in getting a wider picture of how the general teaching fraternity has been affected by the pandemic.

This study enables teachers appreciate, analyse and weigh the opportunities vis á vis the threats of the pandemic to their economic value. Thus, proper scrutiny and manipulation of this knowledge will place teachers in a suitable position to make appropriate choices that will better their economy as well as their profession.

Finally, the study will put forth suitable measures and recommendations that teachers can take on with the re-opening of schools; to see that they neither compromise their profession nor the economic welfare.

## 6. Review of Related Literature

In this section, we are going to see the implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic to teachers, how the whole experience affected their roles, welfare as well as their effort they put forth to cope through the period. A gain we shall also tackle the role of the various stakeholders in the education sector in helping teacher through the hard COVID-19 Pandemic.

### 6.1 Implications of the Pandemic to the Teaching Fraternity

The pandemic created unprecedented challenges for schools, staff, and students. But amid the pandemic, we have also saw creativity, innovation, and opportunity. As communities emerge from varying states of isolation, teachers and schools offer a chance for communities to rebuild and create a new normal in which partnerships can form between teachers, families, and communities. Teachers in particular have gone through a lot during this pandemic as can be ascertained in the implications below (Emerson & et al., 2012).

- Teachers had to deal with uncertainty all way through:

This captures the first days after the government's announcement that schools should close to all pupils within the country, along with on-going uncertainty about what was yet to come, teachers shared a powerful sense of not knowing what is going on. Owusu, Fordjour et al., (2020) came up with an analogy that, "It all felt a bit like, you know, you're shown the diagram of how the parachute works and then you're pushed out of the plane." Teachers and educators had to go through a particularly uncertain time in terms of their profession, lives and work. Private teachers in particular had to quickly adjust to surviving with little or no salary reception as well as to a rapid move to online modes of delivery in order to keep students engaged in learning—The whole idea has just led to significant increase in their costs of operation amid the uncertainty in the times.

- Amid great uncertainty, stress and anxiety, teachers still had to cope up

The major teacher stressors are usually workload and behaviour management (Boyle et al., 2019). However, this time round the focus turned from the above stressors to stress about the uncertainty in days of COVID-19. It all began with the uncertainty related to the announcement of school closures by the government in March 2020, navigating immediate demands, and planning for what might happen next...In line with the conceptualization of stress by appraisal and interpretation of the stressors seemed to differ between individuals. While some teachers initially appraised the changes around them as overwhelming, the others appraised them as an exciting novel challenge meant to be solved (Folkman, 1984). Moreover, teachers said their initial stress was significantly eased by finding a way forward. However, the others, particularly those in private Secondary schools remained stressed about at the lack of clarity around the government's short- to medium-term plans (Kalyesubula, 2020).

- Government relief aid only served to further teachers' confusion and woes

As days of school lock down advanced, the government was impelled to take an action in view of aiding private teachers who had gone without a salary for months. However, as soon as the money was pronounced to be released, there arose growing uncertainty and confusion among private school teachers about the proposed teacher's Relief Fund. Many teachers up to now are still green about the whereabouts of the two billion Ugandan shillings President Museveni gave them as relief during the COVID-19 lockdown.

In one of his National addresses on COVID-19, President Yoweri Museveni promised to inject two billion shillings in Private Teacher's Savings and Credit Cooperative Society-SACCO. He directed the Finance Ministry preferably through the Microfinance Support Center to appropriately allocate Shillings 20 billion to the same SACCO to allow teachers access loans, which they were to service once schools resumed. Private schools' teachers who are estimated to be around 350,000 welcomed the move since they had been struggling to survive. Although, many of them were desperate and hoped to benefit from the arrangement, they failed to access the right information and soon gave up. Surely everything about the relief fund remained unclear as Katumba (2020) presented some of the respondents' voices:

*"We are greatly frustrated. Schools had been closed for some time and we didn't know where to start from. We are not sure whether even the money is available. We have given up. We know this money was a hoax. And if it was ever there, those government big shots are enjoying it."* (Katumba, 2020).

In response to the above complaints the Education Permanent Secretary, was a bit cagey in explaining the whereabouts of the money, insisting they were still formulating the modalities to distribute it:

*“We are still working out modalities with Ministry of Finance. When we are ready, we will definitely call you.”* he said. With all this confusion in place, private teachers had to only seek for alternative means of survival. Considering a personal critique on this, it can be argued that beside the money promised being mythical; the total amount projected could still not be enough for the 350,000 teachers, as this amount was way below what was allocated to other things, such as the 70 billion which was allocated for the purchase of face masks.

#### ▪ Forging a way forward

This highlights the ways in which teachers tried to cope with the adversity in the time. They adjusted their thinking and behaviour to provide remote education that would meet the needs of their communities, while preserving their own well-being and that of their pupils. One common catalyst for teachers relaxing into the situation was seeing evidence that pupils were engaged with the learning they had set for them and (Samta Jain, Marie Lall, Avinti Sing, 20). After ensuring that students were having and doing what is necessary, the next step was to take on their wellbeing by doing all that could earn them a fortune. Despite the overwhelming consequences of the pandemic, this global crisis has also been an extraordinary time for learning. We are learning how adaptable and resilient educational systems, policy makers, teachers, students, and families can be.

### 6.2 How the Pandemic Changed Teachers' Roles

Two crucial factors have shifted due to the pandemic. First, pedagogical adaptations have proven to be pivotal as the traditional lecturing in-person models do not translate to a remote learning environment. No matter the type of channel used (radio, TV, mobile, online platforms, etc.) teachers need to adapt their practices and be creative to keep students engaged as every household has become a classroom - more often than not - without an environment that supports learning.

Secondly, the pandemic recalibrated how teachers divide their time between teaching, engaging with students, and administrative tasks. In Brazil according to a survey conducted by Instituto Peninsula, 83% of teachers did not consider being prepared to teach remotely, 67% were anxious, 38% felt tired, and less than 10% were happy or satisfied. The pandemic highlighted the need for flexibility and more time for student-teacher interactions. For example, in Estonia teachers were given autonomy to adjust the curriculum, lesson plans, and their time allocation.

### 6.3 How Policymakers Can Support Teachers During the Reopening of Schools

In order to build back stronger education systems, countries will need to apply those teaching initiatives that have proved to be effective during the remote learning phase and integrate them into the regular education system. It is critical to empower teachers, investing in the necessary skills development and capacity building to exploit the full potential of remote and blended learning.

Equally important is to free teachers' time 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 well-being and avoid burnout.

## 7. Methodology/Research Tools

The study was investigated using a qualitative approach. Specifically, a phenomenological design was adopted. We collected data using in depth face-to-face interviews with twelve participants selected from three schools in Kyengera Town Council. The face-to-face interviews enabled the researchers to hear about real-lived experiences from affected teachers which highly enriched the data required for this enquiry. Respondents were required to offer their views basing on their highs, lows, and turning points during the period. In addition, we used phone interviews at the time of data analysis to seek for clarity from respondents on issues that they raised during face-to-face interviews but seemed not be clear.

Lastly, we conducted review of related literature before, during and after data collection. Content analyses were done to generate themes on each of the objectives of the study.

### 7.1 Participants

The participants of this study were 12 Private teachers (males and females) from 3 different private schools within Kyengera Town Council. On approaching the selected schools, the teachers themselves decided whether to participate in the study or not, so all those whose views appear in this research deliberately willed to give in their submissions. Table 1 provides demographic information about the participants in the study:

Table 1. Participants' demographic information

Teachers	School A	School B	School C
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<b>Males:</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Females:</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

Table 2. Profile of the 3 School Samples taken

<b>School</b>	<b>Operational Status</b>	<b>Payment Details</b>	<b>Payment During the Lockdown</b>
A	High Income	Piece Rate & Allowances	50% of the contractual salary
B	Middle Income	Piece Rate & Allowances	Only allowances
C	Low Income	Piece Rate & no allowances	No salary at all

Source: Field Data

It is worth noting that, all ethical guidelines pertaining to the anonymity and confidentiality of respondents, their schools and responses were duly followed. Respondents were given initials R1, R2, R3 up to R12 whereas their schools were categorised as Sch. A., Sch. B., and Sch. C.

Table 3. Profile of Respondents

<b>Initial</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Marital Status</b>	<b>School</b>
<b>R1</b>	M	42	Married	A
<b>R2</b>	M	28	Single	A
<b>R3</b>	M	31	Married	B
<b>R4</b>	F	37	Single Mother	A
<b>R5</b>	F	—	—	A
<b>R6</b>	F	30	Married	C
<b>R7</b>	F	—	—	B
<b>R8</b>	M	46	Married	B
<b>R9</b>	F	—	Married	C
<b>R10</b>	M	30	Married	C
<b>R11</b>	M	—	—	C
<b>R12</b>	F	26	Single	B

## 8. Limitations and Future Directions to the Study

Despite a thorough effort to bridge all the necessary gaps, the findings of this study should nonetheless be seen in light of some limitations. Below are some of the limitations upon which the researcher wishes to draw to the readers' attention as they analyse the various findings and conclusions of this study:

To begin with, there were issues with the sample selection. There is a slight case of selection bias or insufficient sample size for statistical measurement. Particularly, the study took a sample of only 3 secondary schools within a small section of Kyengera town Council; a sample which may not be a perfect reflection of the general or appropriate population of the affected teachers.

Secondly, one must note the source of the researcher's data exclusively gathered data based on teachers' experiences which may have limited the scope of the study. So, the researcher projects that future studies may benefit from triangulating teachers' experiences with those of their pupils. And finally, the research focused solely on private teachers in secondary schools, but because experiences during the pandemic were varied and relative, future studies could highly benefit from focusing on a variety of teacher groups i.e., public school teachers, those offering elementary, primary and tertiary education.

## 9. Presentation of Key Findings

### 9.1 Economic Opportunities and Threats Presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic to Private Secondary Teachers

The following section presents data collected from the interviews on the economic opportunities and threats presented by the COVID-19 Pandemic to private secondary teachers. In all their responses, all teachers

unanimously agreed that the pandemic brought them both challenges and benefits as presented in the thematic discussion below:

#### 9.1.1 Economic Opportunities Presented

##### ✓ Teachers have learnt to align their life priorities:

The COVID-19 Pandemic and its resultant lockdown posed a new financially challenging experience to private teachers who consequently reassessed their life priorities especially with regards to their expenditures. R1 who happened to be the director of studies in school A, held that the harsh reality posted by the lockdown situation was a moment of retreat and rethinking about life and as such, he and many other teachers learnt to survive while spending their cash exclusively on necessities so as to adequately sustain their lives in the period whose length seemed totally obscure.

##### ✓ Thinking outside the classroom:

Furthermore, teachers learnt to think outside the classroom, the lockdown opened up their minds to think of other possible sources of income besides their salaries. Consequently, many began some small side hustles and businesses like hawking, laying bricks, dry cleaning, vending and private coaching of students among others. On the other hand, those who had some good capital came up with relatively big wholesale, retail, farm establishments among others. In a further interview with the same Director of Studies, he added to his voice above by saying, “When we approached the second month of the lock down, I chose to fight against desperation by setting up my land that had gone idle for over three years, to have a season of cabbages and melons. This I did and indeed the harvest after a short time was abundant. Although I ventured into this project amid great uncertainty, I found out that school had long compromised much of my time and opportunities. Despite the resume of school, I hope to give the venture another serious go. If all teachers embrace the idea of having side hustles in addition to their teaching duties, the profession will definitely have a great immunity against moments like we have had as well as moments of no income in the face of job loss, maternity or sick leaves among others,” R1.

##### ✓ An opportunity to experiment the art of investment

In line with the above (Private) teachers appreciated and had enough time to learn and experiment the art of investment above anything else that can boost their financial welfare.

Respondent R2 noted that a big number of teachers feared the aspect of devoting their salary to investment. He recounted that many among the private teaching fraternity were simply locked in the teach-in several-school and earn-more mentality. However, with the closure of the schools from which they earned their pay, the whole idea was altered to invest-and-earn more mentality.

Prior to the outbreak of the pandemic, private teachers only believed that working in several schools and saving in Saccos was the only way to go, however, the pandemic has pushed us to a further challenge of devoting our money into wise investments: in order to have it multiplied. Undoubtedly, for some teachers who had little savings left on their accounts, there was no other way to go in a period whose length we knew not. All they had was to seek for investment opportunities in profitable and quick income return projects. Positively, many of my colleagues have appreciated and switched to this mentality and in a long run, I see their financial positions in a better place and in fact, I reckon the investment mentality acquisition as the major financial benefit that teachers have earned from the COVID-19 Pandemic, R2.

##### ✓ Break from tenacious and pressing expenditures

Still on a very positive front, some colleagues among the private teaching fraternity had a break from tenacious and pressing expenditures. Just like any other person in any of the other professions, teachers are also parents and public servants. They incur close to daily transport or fuel costs for their day-to-day operations among other expenditures. Despite spending the lock down period with little or no salary, many teachers: notably, those who did not have major calamities like sicknesses or deaths had a break from school fees, tuition and major transport demands among others. Indeed, many of them chose to concentrate on their home duties which afforded them the opportunity to cut several expenses and allocate their priory saved money to other purposes such as opening up projects or buying their long-coveted assets. Respondent R3 qualified this as he noted that:

“I admit our income as private teachers was cut short with the stop of salary reception from our schools of employment; however, the period rendered itself a blessing in disguise for me in particular. Without any school fees or transport obligations for a period close to a year, I was only left to concentrate on providing for family needs. This gave me a chance to use the biggest chunk of my prior savings to buy myself a plot of land and subsequently started my house construction,” R3.

##### ✓ Teachers reawakened about the need for a saving culture

The period of the pandemic and subsequent lockdown reminded many teachers about the need to appreciate and practice the saving culture, not only as a way of propelling their development but also as a means of preparing for the uncertain times. Regardless of the incomes or needs at their disposal, majority among the private secondary teaching fraternity learnt and appreciated the value of having some money set aside for times of adversity.

Teacher R4, a single mother and S.I teacher, intimated in an oral interview that the period found her with no savings at all given that she had opted to send her two sons to senior one and five: ahead of anything else.

“Given the high costs of enrolling students to form one and five, I paid in all my income to the last penny to have my sons in good schools for their respective levels. Hardly had I completed this hurdle when the pandemic struck... of course my sons returned home a few weeks after reporting to school. To make matters worse, I was only to have a quarter of my contractual salary all through the period as such was the policy to which we were subject by the school where I work. Survival has indeed been terrible given my inability to start up anything without capital; I have simply used my little salary allowance to cater for our domestic needs and rent.

However, the whole idea has taught me the indispensability of the saving culture with regards to financial wellbeing and survival. As I resume work, I will always have to save a tenth of all my income and allowances just to safeguard myself against moments like this,” R4.

#### ✓ The Economic Value of the teaching Profession

Quite a good number of teachers have learnt to value their profession after realizing that it is a much less tiring way of earning a living. The teaching has manifested the fact that, the teaching profession, though tiring and demanding as it could be, it is quite palatable as compared to the hard new life that teachers experienced in the hustle outside the school campus. Many teachers have after experiencing the financial hardships during the lockdown; learned to sympathize with the parents in their duty of paying school dues. This is due to the fact that they have undergone through the toil and labour that such parents endure as well as the corresponding scarcity of money. “The period has indeed shed off (Private) teachers’ and administrators’ indifference with regards to handling of financial issues” R5.

#### ✓ Teachers learnt to embrace manual over office Work

Last but not least, following the COVID-19 Pandemic, teachers begun indulging in manual work, thanks to the lock down that came along with the disease. A good number of private secondary teachers who got idle after the closure of schools resorted to manual work as a way of earning a living. In fact, many of those who had the opportunity simply decided to retreat back to their villages in order to find the chunks of land which priority lay idle. With this bit of involved manual work, several secondary teachers are now realising a much-improved income at the end of the month as opposed to the sole and meagre monthly salary that they always waited for in the comfort of the staff room seats. R6 recounted that:

“My husband quickly retreated to the village as soon as schools were shut; he got serious and busy than never before, indeed his efforts and decision paid off dividends. Seasons were very good for him thus his harvest were abundant. As a family we received a constant supply of food at home during the lock down and from the surplus that my husband sold, we duly covered all school fees demands. In fact, all our 3 candidates returned to school with all our dues fully settled at the time of partial reopening of their respective classes,” R6.

### 9.1.2 Threats Incurred by Private Teachers

#### ✓ Poverty

The worst effect of the COVID-19 Pandemic to the teachers that participated in the study was poverty that resulted from their unemployment during the Pandemic. The announcement of all schools’ shutdown in Uganda back in March 2020 and the subsequent total Country shut down, almost hurled everything to a standstill; schools were abruptly closed and thus teachers were rendered jobless since then. Given that many of these teachers solely or greatly depended on salaries, allowances and tips they received from their respective schools, parents and students; a period of scarcity and poverty was inevitable for them with the shutdown of their income sources as the Daily Monitor reported,

Just like any other businesses or sectors, COVID-19 caught private schools off guard and many were wondering how to sustain their operational costs. Additionally, since most private schools rely on funding from school fees to meet their operational costs, they faced a real period of desperation since the school shut down appeared at a time when most schools had only collected between 50 to 70% of the school fees and other dues. This means that the rest was unpaid and uncollected. And to make matters worse, most parents have a tendency of only paying off their balance when it is time for the end of term exams (Katumba, 2020).

The above experience made it almost impossible to pay March and April salaries since the term had been anticipated to end in April 2020. Thus, most private school employees were left unpaid from either March. Such



a condition left many teachers languishing in dire poverty to the point of using up all their previous saving and consequently failing to meet their basic requirements of life. Indeed, this extreme condition of anxiety and frustration lured a few individuals into seeking solace in taking their own lives as was reported in (Daily Monitor 5, August 2020) where, Noah Buyinza-a veteran private Geography teacher in Iganga district set himself ablaze for allegedly failing to address the financial hardships brought about by the COVID-19 Lockdown.

✓ Income losses due to failed businesses

The unpleasant state of private secondary teacher's poverty was worsened by income loss due to rushed and inexperienced investments. After enduring long periods with little or no pay at all, some teachers took to setting up small businesses or projects that could have them occupied and replenish their incomes. However, some investments were simply undertaken in haste without proper pilot study of how they could operate. Indeed, due to lack of enough outside-staff-room experience, some teachers lost their long-time savings to failed businesses. In one of our sharing, R7 confessed that:

He took on poultry farming but of course without prior knowledge of how it could turn out. Fortunately, the rearing bit was all good for him but owing to the fact that he overlooked the market stance, selling off his birds was tricky utterly hard. He recounted that, "My birds overstayed at the farm which necessitated more expenditure and thus I realised nothing but losses from the venture." He added that the matter was worse for those who ventured into agri-business as the commodities involved therein are pretty perishable.

Despite the bumper harvests from the gardens, market conditions were harder than never before: the buyers either did not have enough money to buy off the harvests or many were reluctant to spend much due to the uncertainty of how long and what the COVID-19 period had them in store. Worse still, schools that had offered market for various farm products like maize were no more and yet individuals on the on the domestic scale had also retreated to the gardens to do their own farming. This heavily compromised the capital of those teachers who took to wholesale agri-business, thus leaving many of them further economically devastated, R7.

✓ Increased expenditures on household necessities and health insurance

With all anxiety following the deadly disease and with all activities and individuals settled at home, teachers as; parents, benefactors and stake holders in ensuring their families' health welfare did not have an easy time to cope up with. Despite the adversity in the time, teachers' homes none the less had to move on however, without a steady income, it was never a case of a smooth ride. In his response, R8 recounted that, "despite preparing ahead of time by doing the necessary shopping and supplies for her home, it was never easy to sustain the daily additional home expenses without a consistent or assured income." She says that this situation affected many teachers of her calibre a great deal and left them behind in most of the things they planned to accomplish.

✓ Teachers ran into unplanned debts

The COVID-19 Pandemic and its subsequent lockdown also forced many teachers to take loans in a bid to raise funds that could aid them to meet their basic requirements of survival. While some teachers took big sums of money for banks and lending institutions, the others took relatively small sums but from multiple lenders and as such the teachers in question will have to take a considerable time frame to get them covered up and stabilize their financial statuses. Indeed, after a whole year of struggle, some teachers are poised to further have more time of economic instability as their whole effort after the lock down has been devoted to making up for loans and debts. The independent magazine 3, August (2020) highlighted that these inevitable debts hampered greatly with the economic strategies and set goals of many (private) teachers. Many, who had laid their-to-be-achieved goals for the year or so, found their realization close to impossible as realisation of such economic goals, were heavily reliant on anticipated salaries. Resultantly, all these goals remain nothing but future tales and myths.

✓ Prolonged unemployment or permanent job loss

Even in what seems to be a post lockdown period, or the new normal, not all classes in secondary were allowed to resume studies at once not until after the end of the second total lockdown. Towards the end of 2020, schools were given government directives to open up for students in phased manner. Consequently, a good number of teachers who were only teaching the further locked classes still laid unemployed on the side-lines till January 2022. The continued unemployment of such teachers suggests a continued spell of redundancy, poverty, recurrence of debts, and wastage of human resource. To worsen the matter, some teachers stood great chances of losing their jobs as many private schools sought to lay off some staff to balance up their operation costs. The whole atmosphere of job uncertainty seemed like nothing but a dagger in the hearts of the affected teachers which does not serve any good to their motivation and commitment to the teaching cause.

✓ Sale of already acquired property

Ultimately, private secondary school teachers' economic woes and well-being was worsened when some of them resorted to selling their already acquired assets during the lockdown so as to pay off debts or raise funds to meet

their necessities for survival.

The COVID-19 Pandemic was not an easy go for teachers without anything to guarantee them a salary.

i. Do private secondary teachers still consider the teaching profession as the major means of sustaining their economic welfare?

Pertaining to this objective, the views of all the twelve participants were taken and summarised in the table below:

Table 4. Summary of respondents' views and arguments on whether they still consider their profession as the major means of sustaining their economic welfare or not.

Feed Back	Frequency	(%)	General Attitude and Argument (Why and How)
<b>Yes:</b>	6	50	It is a lifelong calling and Profession, Guarantees a relatively stable and assured income Lack of capital to start up other ventures
<b>No:</b>	4	33	Realised more lucrative ventures Being one's own boss renders much more freedom.
<b>Not Sure:</b>	2	17	Everything remains a case of uncertainty Still waiting to see how everything turns out

#### Discussions

From the table above, it was noted that even after the COVID-19 experience, a relatively bigger percentage (50%) of the teachers, still counted on the teaching profession as the major means of sustaining their financial welfare. They supported their views as follows:

##### 9.1.3 Why (50%) of the Teachers Still Consider Teaching as the Way to go:

###### ✓ Teaching remains a lifelong calling and Profession

Two of the respondents in this school of thought, i.e., R3 and R8 asserted that teaching is a long life calling to serve the community beyond the self. Financial considerations definitely come second to the noble duty of educating the future generation thus commitment is key:

As teachers, it has not been easy, because stepping in class as an everyday routine definitely becomes part of the teacher's natural rhythm of life and care. Now that it is getting close to a month while we are seated home, we are in great pain to see that even learners who need a constant follow up cannot have it. Regardless of the financial hardships I have endured, I can only give most of my time to teaching and so it will always remain the major means by which I have to financially manoeuvre through life...R8.

###### ✓ Teaching Guarantees a relatively stable and assured income

Unlike all the several hustles that private teachers have seen themselves venture into, teaching somewhat offers a much stable and reliable income. R9 said that she had never experienced any bottle neck in the reception of her salary. She added that in teaching, one will not face major risks such as losses, fluctuation of markets prices, increasing taxes or major losses due to poor investment returns as it is in other businesses. She therefore suggested that a teacher is free to indulge in other side businesses but only as side hustles to supplement the surer income that comes from teaching.

###### ✓ Lack of capital to start up other ventures

Again, the teachers who supported the view that teaching is all that they need to survive financially argued that there is hardly enough capital at their disposal to start-up ventures that can replace their profession. R10 argued that:

"Everyone would wish to be one's own boss, however, with our financial capacity as secondary teachers, it takes few years of patience and savings to realise the figures needed. Therefore, despite the damage that the COVID-19 Pandemic has posed to our wallets as private teachers, I suppose that the vast majority shall still have to prioritise our profession ahead of anything else; at least for now."

##### 9.1.4 Why (33%) of the Teachers Disregard Teaching as the Way to go:

###### ✓ Realised more lucrative ventures

Following the closure of schools, teachers kept faith and waited for the initial two weeks that had been announced by the president to elapse that they could resume their teaching. When the waiting got protracted to more than the two weeks and then to months, some teachers started trying out several alternative ventures in view of keeping their earnings assail. To their dismay, such ventures turned out to be very viable. Most of the teachers who got lucky realised a lot of profits within a space of no time.

“The moment I realised that teaching may not be resuming as soon as expected, I bought a small carrier vehicle and started trading Matooke from place to place. Given that many people were locked into their homes, I thought of delivering the supplies from door to door. However, the profits I realised were tremendous. I really found that I had for long wasted a lot of time sitting in the staff room. Undoubtedly from my experience of the pandemic hence forth, trading will be my major means of earning, although I cannot write off my precious profession of teaching. In all honest, I will continue teaching though, on a part time basis this time round,” R11.

✓ Being one’s own boss renders much more freedom

Again, the study noted that many private teachers realised better means of survival with freedom. They noted that, they had a lot of freedom in their ventures than that which they had in the presences of their bosses at school. These teachers enjoyed a great deal freedom and time to work at their pace, associate with their families as well as to determine the most convenient schedules of work and the amount of pay to take home after work. Thus, most of the teachers who held this view recommend that, all their fellows should take on person ventures and look at the teaching profession as a mere supplement to their finances.

Lastly, there was a case of 13% of the respondents who seemed unsure of what was happening or what seemed to be done. One of the respondents recounted that she does not know what her next step in life was. According to her response, she pointed out that she neither expected her school to replenish her dwindled financial welfare nor would her hustles outside school. According to her, teachers only have to be patient, observe the occurrence of affairs and then consider their options thereafter.

ii. Are private teachers still motivated towards their profession?

Upon close scrutiny and analysis of all the data fetched, the study observed that; majority teachers among the private secondary teaching fraternity are still motivated to take on their profession.

Amid all the upheavals they faced, all 12 respondents unanimously expressed a positive attitude and professed their willingness to return to teaching. Surprisingly, none of them; including those who acquired better sources of income expressed an intention of quitting the noble profession. In fact, their voices only expressed a feeling of anticipation and readiness to get things moving normally once again. R12, who happened to be the final respondent in the study, substantiated this as she said:

“We have not for once rested in trying to keep students up to the task. We sent them back home with packages of work and indeed, many of us tried to make a follow up of their progress through private coaching, online learning engagement among others. Now as schools reopen to students, we are highly motivated and ready to help students catch up with the lost time. We intend to occupy them more often than never before. We shall use all extra days, weekends at our disposal as well as try to seek for a little term extension; just to make sure that we get students up to the demands of the syllabi...We are more than ready to make up for whatever the pandemic disrupted in our schedules,” R12.

On the whole, the words above from R12 and the general attitude of teachers clearly outlines the professionalism that those in the teaching fraternity render towards the development of the country. The adversity in the time hit them greatly and left a lot at stake in their lives and their day today welfare. However, it is highly encouraging to see that they are still up to the task of offering quality education to the nation. The government, parents, students and all the various stake holders are therefore heavily indebted to this great caste of a professional team.

## 10. Conclusion

Private school teachers offer a very strong social fabric that hold the educational system together and it is therefore important to protect their ability and capacity to fulfil their role. Findings highlight the challenges that these teachers have faced and lessons that have been learned at this stage of the pandemic. The future, which remains somewhat unclear at the time when this study was conducted, will inevitably require great flexibility, resilience, and collaboration from teachers, the government, policy makers and all the stakeholders involved in the education sector. Clear communication from the government regarding future plans and joined-up thinking around supporting the most affected teachers will be key to protecting their welfare. By listening to teachers’ self-stories at this seminal point in time, we can gain new insights into what it means to be a teacher and how teachers can be supported to work in ways that make their job fulfilling and benefit their students as well as the communities they serve.

## 11. Recommendation

There is a need for special Acknowledgment and Benefits for all teachers. Unarguably, the COVID-19 Pandemic is likely to impact on schooling for so long. Teachers thus need help as they continue their work of supporting students, and as we emerge from lockdown, it is important to recognise and learn from what teachers have done under the most difficult of scenarios. Educators must be part of a broader conversation on how schools, teachers, and parents can emerge from the current crisis stronger, together. Teachers have always been very important, even long before COVID-19, but perhaps it will take a pandemic to finally recognise the contributions.

Again, there is dire need to extend Individual and Collective Support to private teachers. Although educators face enormous challenges in their roles; especially with regard to their means of survival, responding to teacher wellbeing can be helped by exploring mechanisms that can support them at an individual and collective level. Teachers' individual health, financial stability, psychological and emotional wellbeing is intricately tied to the health of our communities and our interactions with them. It is likely that our connectedness has been lost in a haze of social distancing, track and trace protocols as well as prohibited relationships. Thus, the current (financial) difficulties facing the teaching profession can be eased through cultivating supportive relationship among students, parents, and colleagues to enhance teachers' efficacy and student outcomes. Teachers should be recognised for their invaluable contributions to the education system. Policymakers should consider rendering the best professional benefits and scarcity insurances for these teachers.

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