

Yidan Prize Conference

Report Back – Subgroup on School Leadership

1. Current Situation

The subgroup agreed that strengthening school leadership systems is a critical priority across Africa. While promising initiatives exist, there is a need for more coherent and sustainable systems that strengthen:

- National policies and governance for school leadership;
- Professional development and career pathways;
- Evidence generation through research; and
- Coordination across the education sector.

2. Key Approaches and Solutions

The discussion underscored the importance of moving beyond isolated training programmes towards comprehensive school leadership systems. Key priorities include:

- Building integrated school leadership systems rather than stand-alone programmes, while embedding principles of inclusion and equity, including gender-responsive leadership and the needs of diverse contexts.
- Developing clear leadership structures, competency frameworks, and career pathways; and
- Ensuring that leadership development is grounded in local contexts and builds on indigenous knowledge and practices.

3. What Is Needed to Scale Up?

To achieve sustainable impact at scale, the subgroup identified several enabling conditions:

- Recognise school leadership as a strategic investment within national education reforms by embedding it in ministry systems, teacher education institutions, and national budgets.
- Clearly define the competencies and skills expected of school leaders from the outset.
- Strengthen professional networks and communities of practice for school leaders.

- Institutionalise mentoring and coaching through middle-tier education structures, such as district or sector offices.
- Establish transparent, competency-based recruitment and selection processes for school leadership positions.

4. Key Recommendations

The subgroup recommends that countries and development partners:

1. Institutionalise coaching and mentoring for school leaders through structured programmes, drawing on experienced education leaders.
2. Separate leadership positions from career rank, ensuring that appointments to school leadership roles are based on demonstrated competencies rather than seniority alone.
3. Strengthen incentives and invest in the well-being of school leaders to improve motivation, performance, and retention.
4. Invest in research to identify effective leadership practices across gender, educational levels, and diverse contexts.
5. Establish robust monitoring, evaluation, and learning systems to generate evidence on what works and translate this knowledge into practical guidance for policymakers and practitioners.