

# School Leadership Challenges in Faroese Compulsory Schools During the COVID-19 Crisis

## Avbjóðingar hjá skúlaleiðslum í føroyskum fólkaskúlum undir COVID-19 kreppuni

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### Abstract

This qualitative study was conducted to explore the impact of COVID-19 on Faroese school leadership with a view to identifying challenges faced by leaders and to assess the efficacy of their crisis leadership in enabling a positive learning-teaching environment. The findings indicated that the challenges comprised teacher self-efficacy issues in teacher ability to adopt Information Communication Technology (ICT) to fulfill student learning outcomes, ensuring student participation and safe learning environments, teacher and leader emotional/psychological burdens and hygiene logistics. Faroese crisis leadership exhibited proactive support for teachers, helped with online teaching, offered channels of open, meaningful communication, supported teachers through active listening, accepted teacher feedback, and showed an inclusive approach to managing teaching. School leaders appeared to have stepped up to the challenge despite the crisis testing the resilience of staff, students and themselves. They reflected on what COVID-19 has taught them and have grasped the significance of the human element in crisis management. The Faroese school system may require an established framework from the National Board of Education to cope with future crisis to ensure a responsive instead of a reactive approach to maintaining core competences of schools in a challenging environment.

### Úrtak

Henda kvalitativa kanningin varð gjørd fyri at kanna ávirkanina av COVID-19 á føroyskar skúlaleiðslur við at eyðmerkja avbjóðingar hjá leiðarunum og meta um nýtsluna av leiðsluhættum undir kreppu til at skapa eitt fremjandi undirvísingar- og læruumhvørvi. Kanningarúrslitini vístu, at avbjóðingarnar fevndu um trupulleikar hjá lærarum at tillaga seg til tey kunningartøkniligu amboðini fyri at røkka læruúr-tøkunum hjá næmingunum, at tryggja lutluku í undirvísingini og at skapa eitt trygt læruumhvørvi, umframt at røkta kensluligar ella sálarligar avbjóðingar millum lærarar og leiðarar. Føroysk kreppuleiðsla sýndi framfúsán stuðul til lærarar, veitti hjálp við fjarundirvísing, gav móguleika fyri opnum samskipti, stuðlaði lærarum við at



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lurta aktivt, tóku ímóti afturmeldingum frá lærarum og nýtti eina inkluderandi tilgongd við handfaringina av lærarum. Skúlaleiðarar tóktust at hava tak á støðuni hóast kreppan avbjóðaði mótstøðuførinum hjá starvsfólkum, næmingum, lærarum og teimum sjálvum. Teir hugleiddu um, hvat COVID-19 hevði lært teir, og skiltu týðningin av tí menniskjaliga partinum í kreppuleiðslu. Fyri at kunna standa ímóti framtíðar kreppum kann tann føroyska skúlaskipanin hava tørv á føstum kørmum frá Undirvísingarstýrinum fyri at tryggja eina skipaða, heldur enn reaktiva, tilgongd til at røkja kjarnuførleikarnar hjá skúlum í einum avbjóðandi umhvørvi.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Faroe Islands, Compulsory Schools, School leadership, School Crisis leadership, Teacher Challenges

## 1 Introduction

This COVID-19 crisis is distinctive in its influence in modern societies, perhaps hitherto not so aware of their vulnerability. Seldom has change been so sudden and the teacher-student environments been so affected. The crisis brought about change to the teaching and learning environment of the compulsory education school system in The Faroe Islands. It required them to adapt to delivering different modes of education with minimal preparation. Given the abrupt onset of COVID-19, in lieu of well-planned and structured courses, schools went online or adopted the home-schooling model dictated by expediency and convenience and not by informed advanced planning and decision-making.

As change cannot be incremental or anchored in this COVID-19 pandemic, the role of the school leaders in coping with sudden change and functioning optimally is crucial in building confidence in their teachers that they are capable of providing leadership. The schools in The Faroe Islands began shutting down on March 12, 2020, and teaching went online within a few days. This study was launched on April 6, 2020, soon after the COVID-19 crisis made its unforeseen impact, and the survey deadline for the leaders was April 30, 2020. The interviews were subsequently requested on May 5 and completed by June 3, 2020. The rarity of this situation, brought about by external factors, makes it suitable for research aiming to identify some trends regarding the role of school leadership in crisis.

School leaders have to deliver the aims and objectives laid down by the Ministry of Education with minimal negative consequences for all. "There is no neat blueprint for leadership in such times, no pre-determined roadmap, no simple leadership checklist of things to tick off" (Harris, 2020). School leaders need to deal with the present, with focus on the future and establish the best possible teaching and learning environment, and student learning outcomes (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited, 2020).

## 2 Rationale

In a crisis, planning and implementation are near simultaneous instead of being sequential. During such times, active leadership is required to craft contingency management action with focus on enabling the fulfilment of the strategic goals of the organisation. Therefore, school principals, vice principals, head and solo teachers (solo teacher playing leadership role in very small schools and is the only teacher) need a clear emergency strategy to empower teaching and learning.

The study aimed to firstly identify the challenges Faroese school leadership faced in coping with the sudden, unplanned change COVID-19 brought, and secondly, to identify tendencies that may allow insight into the crisis leadership of Faroese school leaders in empowering teachers to ensure a robust learning-teaching environment during the crisis. To arrive at the relevant findings, the research questions posed were: What were the challenges faced by the school leadership in coping with the impact of COVID-19, and what aspects of crisis leadership and decision-making were evident in their actions in facilitating teaching?

The analysis is based on the cognitions of school leaders elicited through their self-reflection in response to the various issues raised in the survey to offer insight into leader actions. The questionnaire offered them scope to contemplate, describe and account for their response to the crisis in the relevant areas focused on in the research questions. The tenets of crisis leadership were identified and used as a benchmark to evaluate Faroese leadership performance.

## 3 Theoretical Underpinnings

In this context, literature on school leadership and crisis school leadership crisis may provide a multifaceted view of the issue at hand to build a platform for data analysis. Leadership in an organisation is always crucial, and more so in a crisis. Strong and effective leadership provides the critical fulcrum for driving change that optimizes organisational performance (Gilley, et al., 2008). It requires change leadership, which can be defined as being active and responsive to the constant flux in the organisational environment, using one's leadership to motivate people and accessing necessary and timely resources to establish a foundation for change (Higgs and Rowland, 2000). Crisis demands change, and the role of the leaders in facilitating change is a key factor in crisis leadership as leaders make meaning and help other stakeholders understand key information in a crisis (Christianson et al., 2009). In so doing, they provide stability and mitigate the potential for chaos (Schneider, 1992).

### 3.1 School Leadership

School leadership is viewed as a forward-looking process that involves the development and communication of a joint vision through goals and objectives designed to achieve the strategic aims of the institution (Kouzes and Postner, 2007). Successful school leaders are motivated and actively engage with their staff through listening,

reflecting, and empowering staff using clear, meaningful communication to achieve results (ibid). This would be seen to be exhibiting authentic leadership, which is seen as a process based both on the psychological capacity of leaders and the capacity of an organisation resulting in positive organisational behavior engendered through self-awareness and self-regulated positive attitudes (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). The authors emphasize that authentic leadership creates flexibility in the educational environment and enables response to change. A leader should seek to serve staff in a manner that encourages, empowers and involves staff and creates trust and collaboration (Wheeler, 2012). School leadership must play a key role in actively guiding the schools in crisis times as their actions and communications with staff contribute towards a culture of trust in times of change and challenges (Kasper-Fuehrer & Ashkanasy, 2001).

### **3.2 Crisis-as-event and its Implication for School Leadership**

A crisis is an event of significant impact that threatens the capability of the organisation - it results in uncertainty in the cause-effect relationship and outcome and warrants a mindset of quick decision-making (Lagadec, 2007; Pearson and Clair, 1998). The crisis-as-event standpoint facilitates research that studies stakeholder reactions to uncommon and unique events (Williams et al., 2017). According to Coombs (2007), a crisis carries the hallmark of the awareness that the situation is a threat to organisational goals and affects stakeholder expectations with possible serious negative consequences. Elliott et al. (2005) outline five common denominators for nearly all crises, which are independent of the kind of organisation involved. They affect many stakeholders; involve time pressures demanding prompt response; hit without warning; create high ambiguity with no clarity on cause and effects and pose a threat to an organisation's strategic aims and objectives. Based on all these features, it would be fair to claim that COVID-19 fulfills the definition of a far-reaching crisis that educational organisations saw affecting the fundamental mode of instruction in schools. It required school leadership that could weather the storm and minimise negative impact on all the stakeholders. This article deals with crisis as an event i.e., it focuses on the crisis dynamics of COVID-19, and how school leadership sought to re-establish balance (Lalonde and Roux-Dufort, 2013) to enable schools to function optimally. As noted by Kezar and Holcombe (2017), school leadership has a vital role in anchoring the institution, creating stability, and ensuring certainty and confidence during a crisis. This is accomplished by providing avenues for trust and hope through open, effective and meaningful communication.

Leadership prior to a crisis has a significant impact on crisis leadership. The already existing culture, if it is one based on trust, teamwork and inclusive leadership, will positively influence organisational resilience to cope during the crisis (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). These authors further underscore that if school leaders had already created this foundation in their schools, then this crisis could be withstood in cooperation within

school systems serving as a foundation for contextual group decision-making based on shared leadership. Leithwood et al. (2006) identify leadership as a catalyst for positive impact, which is key to leading in a crisis.

### 3.3 School Crisis Leadership

Fernandez and Shaw (2020) highlight the qualities of an effective crisis leader as accountability, trustworthiness and integrity. He adds that in crises like COVID-19, academic leaders must provide training, support and resources to teachers to teach online. Kezar and Holcombe (2017) underscore that despite the importance of building relationships based on mutual trust, it is challenging in a crisis. This is because it places demands on leaders to be authentic, commit to active listening, have a nonjudgmental attitude, be open to advice, and unequivocal in communication, while ensuring a sense of psychological safety for their staff. Doraiswamy (2012) rates emotional intelligence and emotional stability as important criteria for crisis leadership.

Crisis response requires *ad hoc* capabilities of leaders. This demands improvisation in decision-making, categorising and assembling resources and creating a sense of order through communication and coordination (Neal and Phillips, 1995; Shepherd & Williams, 2014; Stallings and Quarantelli, 1985; Dynes, 2003). In the context of Faroese schools, the COVID-19 crisis created a situation that required rapid and decisive action *in media res*. The National Board of Education was quick to signal this transition and established online learning or homeschooling as appropriate. This swift response was a clear signal to school leaders that the board had grasped the importance of the crisis and was acting accordingly.

A framework for assessing crisis leadership performance designed by Boin et al. (2013) sums up what leadership should do in a crisis and encompasses the issues identified from the literature review. It offers a concrete overview of the various tasks for consideration without claims to being comprehensive or prescriptive. This framework may afford a basis to study the manifestation of school crisis leadership traits of Faroese school leaders through their self-reported cognitions, decision-making and actions. Table 1 sums up the authors' suggestions to create a basis for the evaluation of leadership role in Faroese schools.

Based on the review of school leadership in action in a crisis, 'best practice' can be said to encompass leader role and rest on various foci: engendering confidence, ensuring an atmosphere of trust through meaningful communication to inspire confidence among staff, empowering staff to function optimally by being open to teacher concerns and providing concrete help with teaching.

## 4 Methodology

The methodology adopted for this project can be defined as a mixed methods approach 'Qual + quant' approach with a dominant role for the qualitative component

**TABLE 1**

Leadership in Times of Crisis: A Framework for Assessment (Boin, et al., 2013, pp. 82-87).

<b>Tasks of Leadership Assessment:</b>		<b>Crisis Leadership Dimensions</b>
1	Early recognition	Identify and recognise a threat and the imperative for action.
2	Sensemaking	Understand nature, characteristics, consequences, and potential scope and effects of the crisis and share for informed decision making.
3	Making critical decisions	Separate strategic and operational decision making and due process in decision making.
4	Orchestrating vertical and horizontal coordination	Promote inter and intra cooperation with stakeholders.
5	Coupling and decoupling	Isolate the problems and concentrate on systems needed here and now.
6	Meaning making	Provide leader understanding of crisis and possible solutions to return to status quo.
7	Communication	Explain the crisis, identify consequences, and steps taken to mitigate consequences. Give advice on who is doing what and why = “actionable advice”.
8	Rendering accountability	Identify what worked and did not to provide accountability to higher ups.
9	Learning	Focus on learning during and after a crisis will ensure that organisations can adapt and learn from it.
10	Enhancing resilience	For crisis management to be effective, organisations should be able to weather the consequences and recover rapidly.

and a secondary role for the quantitative component with “intramethod mixing” (Johnson and Turner, 2003). At the survey stage, this duality is represented in the different questions, but in the analysis stage, the findings work together to examine the complexity of the phenomena under study. The quantitative aspect underpins the findings to offer, if not triangulation, a multifaceted perspective of the issues under study.

For Denzin and Lincoln (2005), qualitative research is interpretive and naturalistic as it is conducted within the environment to comprehend the phenomena under scrutiny using the eyes of the people, who are the subjects of the study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). The points of view of the leaders offer focus and build on the scope of the study as they

offer insight into the demands and changes that managing the crisis brought to their jobs. The ethos of qualitative research as embodying “. . . interpretation, not quantification; subjectivity over objectivity; focus on context; the contribution of behavior and situation as a cogent factor in shaping experience, and acknowledgment of the undeniable impact of the process of research on the research environment” (Kohlbacher, 2005 in Vijayavarathan, 2018, p. 94) is the stance adopted by the researcher through emphasis on perspectives of school leaders i.e., their reflections on their professional praxis at a particular point in time. For this reason, this study could be viewed as an idiographic approach (Starman, 2013), i.e., where the distinctive experience of the individual school leader is significant even though the person may not share traits in common with another, despite being in the same boat – i.e., school leaders during the COVID-19 crisis.

The attitude of the researcher plays a significant role as Denzin and Lincoln (2005) highlight: ‘Behind all research stands the biography of the gendered researcher, who speaks from a . . . class, racial, cultural and ethnic community perspective’ (p. 21). As a professional, who is interested in educational sciences and finds school leadership an important success criterion for school progress and development, the keenness to understand how leadership worked in the crisis is a given. As an ‘outsider’ to the actual compulsory school environment, the researcher can claim some objectivity in studying the outlined phenomenon.

#### 4.1 Method of Data Collection

The instruments used for data collection were a mixed research questionnaire and semi-structured interviews to elicit the know how only the people involved have i.e., the particular expertise, which leaders have by virtue of being in leadership positions at this time. Purposive sampling, with an emphasis on expert sampling, was used to identify the key players to be the source of expert knowledge of leadership in action (Patton, 2002; Etikan, 2016). There were 32 questions in the quantitative section consisting of three parts (appendix A) and 6 open questions in the qualitative section, which were used as the basis for the subsequent semi-structured interviews (appendix B).

The questionnaire used closed-ended and open-ended question, with the former providing quantitative data and the latter, qualitative data (Creswell et al., 2006). The open questions offered the scope of “greater level of discovery” (Gillham, 2000, p.5). This two-in-one method in itself offers a kind of triangulation. According to Erickson and Kaplan (2000), combining closed-ended and open-ended items within the same questionnaire offers the dual benefits of both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Open questions may more correctly convey the respondent point of view (Nunan, 1999).

Gillham (2000) and Brown (2001) identify clear advantages and disadvantages in using questionnaires for surveys. The advantages include cost and time efficiency, and access to a large number of respondents simultaneously, while ensuring anonymity that

may encourage more open attitudes to sharing information. In a tiny country like The Faroe Islands, this is particularly significant. The disadvantages could be that some responses may be ambiguous or incorrect and the rate of return maybe low. The way the questions/statements are constructed may skew the responses. The questionnaire was originally written in English and translated into Faroese, and this may have affected the clarity of the questions. This was evidenced by a couple of leaders calling me, the researcher, and another two emailing me for clarity.

Sixty people were chosen as the sample out of a possible 72 to represent the different areas in the islands, different sizes of schools, an equal gender representation as possible and various leadership roles. Emails were sent to the potential participants with a clear description of the project and agreement to be signed for participation and unconditional freedom to withdraw, and clear information on confidentiality, secure treatment and storage of data. The short-term nature of the project, and the amount of data that may be generated in the qualitative section of the questionnaire were other deciding factors in deciding the number of participants given the time pressure for results to be disseminated. The survey responses received were 38 in all i.e., 62.2%.

Some leaders offered some interesting responses in their questionnaires, which were deemed worthy of closer scrutiny. So, fifteen leaders were contacted for interviews, but only three finally completed the semi-structured interview over the telephone with the research assistant. Consent was sought for participation on the same lines as for the survey.

The very phenomenon that inspired the study threw up clear barriers directly and indirectly. The COVID-19 period created considerable stress and kept leaders busy, and they were reluctant to participate given their workload.

## 4.2 Ethical Concerns in the Study

Several leaders expressed concern over the phone about their identities being preserved. They were keen to get reassurances that identities would be kept confidential. To minimise participants tempering of their responses, assurance was given by telephone to all participants that the agreement they had signed regarding confidentiality i.e., researcher's "agreements with persons about what may be done with their data" (Sieber, 1992, p. 52) was taken very seriously. Furthermore, the grant saw publicity for this study among other COVID-19 studies, so it was important to create leadership confidence in the value of their contributions.

Given the small size of Faroese society, and even smaller compulsory school environment, a special effort has been made in this article to ensure that participant identity can in no way be traced. As a researcher, demands on my professional ethics require that I maintain the confidentiality of the identity of the respondents. To prevent deductive disclosure, also termed internal confidentiality (Tolich, 2004), I make no attempt in the analysis to identify the region, gender, school size the leader represents, as it would be very easy to combine these two variables to pinpoint the school and the leaders involved. My goal was complete confidentiality for every single participant, which Baez (2002) terms the "convention of confidentiality," which ensures that participant involvement in the study causes them no harm.



## 5 Analysis of Data

The data was collated by two research assistants with one assistant anonymising the documents and plotting the data into Excel, and the other importantly, co-coding in NVivo using the codebook. NVivo was used for coding qualitative data deductively with a set of thematic codes built from the literature review in tune with the aims of the project. Data was labeled with preexisting codes preceding interpretation and applied to both the open questions and interview data. During the process of coding, only a single additional code was added inductively by the research assistant. The leaders were categorized numerically as L1, L2, through to L38.

Both the researcher and research assistant coded in NVivo, but independently of each other. This was undertaken as a kind of 'internal' triangulation to ensure that data analysis had been thorough and to check coding consistency between the two coders. The 16 thematic nodal data were printed and perused to ensure that coding fit the theme. The researcher compared the collated 6 responses in Word to the NVivo print out to ensure that no important details had been overlooked. There was indication of "diverse confirmatory instances" (Armstrong, et al. (1997) in McDonald et al, 2019, p. 6), which underpinned the findings.

### 5.1 Reliability and Inter-rater Reliability in Qualitative Research

When evaluating qualitative studies, Guba and Lincoln (1989) offer four criteria as benchmarks, which this study fulfills. Credibility – In this study, one could argue the mixed method approach has elicited the social reality of the school leaders in fulfilling its aims to elicit the challenges of Faroese school leadership and its performance in a crisis; Transferability – "Thick description" of this study facilitates transfer to other studies. The context and method of this study have been described in detail, giving other researchers an option to use this design should it meet their needs; Dependability – The audit trail provided of the data analysis is detailed. Moreover, dual coding of qualitative data in NVivo must reduce 'cherry picking' i.e., choosing data that underpins research focus and Confirmability – It requires mitigating researcher bias by stating the researcher's position, which has been stated overtly.

### 5.2 The Inter-rater Reliability Fitness Values between Two Data Coders

There is no one accurate way to approach reliability in qualitative research. In the words of McDonald et al., (2019), "Although statistical measures can help confirm that interpretations are consistent between coders, they are not a substitute for interpretation and making meaning from the data" (p. 6). The use of inter-rater reliability in NVivo was an attempt to ensure that the codes were valid, the data had been fully utilised, and rigour could be established in analyzing data. Mordal et al. (2010) classify Cohen's kappa values as: > 0.75 indicate excellent agreement; < 0.40 poor agreement and values between, fair to good agreement. IRR as a statistical measurement is devised to ascertain agreement

between two or more researchers coding qualitative data to indicate consensus between researchers on what sections of data are coded at the various NVivo nodes, each with their own attributes.

Fifteen codes in the code book were created by the researcher deductively from the literature review, representing different attributes of participant behavior and 1 code by the assistant inductively after perusing the data. The Kappa coefficient range for qualitative coding (appendix C) for the 38 respondents with individual co-efficient of each of the 16 codes can be found in appendix D. Overall, the inter-rater reliability (IRR) was high for the data, establishing agreement between the two coders on thematic coding of data. Revisiting data at the very few codes that showed low IRR revealed insignificant differences, which did not warrant code modification.

The validity of the method can be claimed to be 'fit for purpose', in its use of purposive, expert sampling in identifying key players with the relevant know how to be elicited. The survey identified the challenges leaders had in coping with COVID-19 and their leadership-in-action in their support of their teachers. These are appropriate to fulfilling the aims outlined for the project.

## 6 Findings in Context and Discussion

The analysis focused on the pertinent issues that predominated COVID-19 school environment in Faroese compulsory education. The findings below identify the challenges faced by Faroese school leadership during the COVID-19 and aspects of crisis leadership in praxis.

### 6.1 The COVID-19 Teaching Environment

In all, 38 school leaders from small, medium and large schools from various regions in The Faroe Islands participated with 52% of female leaders and 45% of male leaders, with 3% preferring not to disclose gender. Though this is a small percentage, it might be an indication of the need to preserve confidentiality.

Microsoft Teams was used by 95% of the schools *per se* or used in conjunction with Facebook for online teaching. The preponderance of Teams is likely due to the National Board of Education promoting its use. The data indicated that over 65% of teachers appeared to have taught frequently via Teams, and only 19% sometimes or rarely.

**Peer Support Among Teachers:** As teachers are used to working in groups, in a time of crisis, the assumption was that teachers would help and support each other. Leaders claimed that about 67% of teachers did so, which still left about a third, who did not cooperate for reasons that leaders identified could be varied as being the only teacher to teach the subject in a small school or one who preferred to work solo. About 40 % of the leaders were clear that for some teachers, the challenge of Information Communication technology (ICT) may have proven to be another barrier, and opined that teachers were not accepting of help from colleagues for fear of revealing their incompetence

Given that school leaders are part of a system, where they have localised authority, but are part of a national education system, decision making was influenced from higher up the hierarchy. Therefore, it made sense to discover what help, if any, was available to them.

**Role of the National Board of Education:** The National Board of Education is the authority that school leaders can consult in these kinds of crises. The analysis demonstrated that leaders were given help by the board including organising courses in Teams to help schools cope with the *status quo*. The help given by the board received mixed reviews from the leaders. The feedback was mainly positive, about 65% of the school leaders saying help was given over the phone and in written communication. Four leaders remarked that the media was informed before they were and felt that the National Board of Education had not been helpful. One leader felt the board could not give timely help as they had to wait for political guidance, and one leader felt they did their best.

## 6.2 The Challenges Faced by Leaders

**Teacher Knowledge Gaps for COVID-19 Teaching:** Eighty-six percent of leaders stated that teachers required help with online teaching. This is high, considering the overnight move to online teaching praxis with little time for concrete preparation. Leaders identified that teacher insecurity with ICT meant some teachers struggled with Teams despite completing courses in using it pre-COVID-19 crisis and getting refresher courses once Covid-19 hit. ICT in a few school environments had not figured in daily teaching, and this proved to be a barrier in a crisis that challenged the teachers. The data reinforced that leaders felt teachers needed to develop skills required to use ICT as an integral part of education as some teachers refused to use Teams because they found it intimidating.

Leaders said that some teachers did not have work computers (usually provided by the municipality), and school leaders felt this was imperative to equip them to teach online. The range of percentages mentioned by school leaders of teachers who adapted to the new *status quo* is 35% - 95%, including overall factors and not just ICT. School leaders estimated the extent to how much teachers struggled to adopt ICT from 5% - 40%. The leader who mentioned 35%, implied that teachers did not adapt to online teaching, because they were unfamiliar with ICT. The leader who mentioned 95% indicated that teachers used Teams or Facebook prior the crisis for teaching/communication with students, and these teachers tried to cope and engaged actively and found that their success engendered student motivation.

Leaders noted that they had informed the Ministry of Education about the need for a proper focus on developing ICT as required in 21st century digital pedagogy. Several leaders said the response hitherto had been lacklustre. The lack of an ICT infrastructure

and a culture of being conversant with digital pedagogy meant that the situation proved particularly stressful for teachers. A few leaders noted that this lack of foundation put their schools at a tremendous disadvantage. While the impact this may have had on student learning in this period is outside the premise of this study, there may be some cause for concern.

When it comes to information technology and education, there is the challenge of enabling teachers to use digital pedagogy to facilitate learning and teaching i.e., “. . . the content, transmission, and goals of learning in relation to DDT (digital technology and tools)” as defined by Bontly et al. (2017, p. 2). ICT skills are considered important among students within the literacy skills of the 21-century skills paradigm (Stauffer, 2020) and must somehow be reflected in desiring and ensuring that teachers acquire similar skills to use digital pedagogy.

***Emotional/Psychological Issues of Teachers and Leaders:*** A fifth of the leaders noted that some teachers suffered from feelings of angst and inadequacy. They revealed that both teachers and students felt stressed that they had to learn to use a new programme — Teams and teach/learn subjects concurrently. Leaders said teachers struggled emotionally from dearth of face-to-face teaching. They felt insecure and doubted whether students learned from the Teams/Facebook sessions. Furthermore, leaders remarked that teachers lacked confidence in the security of Teams, and when the Data Protection Agency was approached for guidelines, none were available. This left teachers insecure, fearful, nervous and strained.

Leaders shared that teachers felt their roles had been undermined by technology, and Teams usage was given too much importance without enough focus on helping teachers cope in a turbulent environment. If they were not ICT conversant, this created additional stress. One leader remarked that he/she had not anticipated the emotional upheaval that Covid-19 wrought and was caught off guard and did not have the means to address the complexity of the issue. Another mentioned that he/she told the teachers that they were not to over burden their students with work, and for teachers, who taught the higher grades, this became a huge barrier as pressure to get students ready for exams was felt to be a part of the teaching responsibility.

One leader indicated that a third of his/her teachers refused to accept that things had changed and, in their anxiety, did not adapt to teaching online. They did not follow up on the student assignments or give the kind of formative feedback that could have benefitted the students. They behaved “as if nothing had changed, and they could carry on and this is their normal negative attitude to ICT in teaching” (L13). The leader declared that not only did this affect teacher efficiency, but also undermined their ability to get students involved fully and be supportive of their students. As talking to them did not help, the leader too felt overwrought and overwhelmed.

Another leader described a sense of isolation from his/her leadership team and found the changed decision making from a team-oriented approach to an individual one burdensome. Teams as a channel of communication between leader, the leadership team and teachers, seemed to enhance this sense of alienation. One leader concluded that the change was within herself/himself. There was no mention of whether any leader sought peer help or guidance to mitigate stress or provided direct stress relief measures for the teachers, apart from 'being there' for the teachers. Arguably, this was not ideal as leaders, teachers and students need support in crises to carry out their responsibilities.

A third of the leaders were clear that the effect of COVID -19 on the core competences of Faroese schools left all levels of the organisation in a kind of limbo. Common vocabulary used by leaders were, "feelings of frustration", "anxiety and tension", "helplessness", "stress" "confusion", "not a normal work environment" and "very concerning" in the context of the experiences of all involved. The fact that teaching and learning were adversely affected only added to the burden.

Leader (L5) mentioned that the lack of face-to-face contact undermined fundamental communication. It also modified the normal power structure in relationship between teachers and students, as students were not physically present within a school for norms and authority to play their usual roles in shaping the learning and teaching milieu. This was particularly a challenge with the higher grades. The stark absence of help given to leaders in this psychological/social context suggests that the National Board of Education focused on teaching exclusively than on building a sustainable basis for long term school resilience.

Angst and feelings of inadequacy can have an adverse effect on some of the teachers' self-efficacy, i.e., an individual's belief in his or her capacity to perform behaviours necessary to produce specific performance goals (Bandura, 1997). The stress teachers have felt could potentially undermined their self-efficacy, which can by extension, reduce motivation (Ryan and Deci, 2000). The absence of a safe and secure learning environment, which is fundamental to student learning (Kutsyuruba et al., 2015) can be attributed to the COVID-19 effect.

***Lack of Student Participation and Lack of Secure Learning Environment:*** Nearly all the school leaders categorically identified some problems from the teachers' perspectives. Three leaders commented that the Corona period had been only negative for teaching for several reasons. It was difficult to get students to participate online and student disengagement was identified as the paramount troublesome feature of the Faroese Corona school. Between 60 – 65 % of the principals outlined that teachers felt that dialogic teaching i.e., talk and interaction between teachers and students as a vehicle of learning had been replaced by monologic teaching, with teacher-centred, lecture-like one-way communication. In their opinion, student class behaviour was not characterised by the usual discussion, active communicative exchanges, which hitherto had made the environment supportive of learning.

Nearly 40% of leaders commented on their teachers being challenged by the lack of sharing physical space with students and therefore direct contact with them in the teaching and learning environment. One leader went so far as to say that 70% of his/her teachers found this lack of physical space sharing extremely difficult and a troublesome barrier to teaching. This led to further issues: teachers were unable to establish contact with students; unable to gauge if they had understood what was being taught; unable to judge how much work was optimal and could be justifiably given for students to do at home and how much time was to be spent on Teams from home.

“Students who already have learning problems are suffering in this time. Motivation of teachers is low as they miss the human connection with students” (L18). The person continues, “I think this has affected how children see themselves – some are lucky & privileged to have online teaching, while others have home schooling. This does not help when we think of the bullying issue, which comes from making difference between students. Teachers feel classes with till about 12 students is easier to manage.”

Several leaders declared that teachers had found intruding into the home environment with parents and siblings in the same room genuinely stressful and little rewarding. Concerns were raised by teachers regarding unequal treatment of students i.e., some in face-to-face schooling and others online. There was a fear this difference in treatment would exacerbate bullying given the Corona school environment was not set up to be inclusive. Their concern was also for students who required face to face contact as there were social issues involved. A clear majority of the leaders were unequivocal in agreeing that the lack of equity was a heavy burden for the teachers.

It is safe to conclude that the change that COVID-19 brought meant that leaders, teachers and students did not enjoy the comfort of a familiar environment. Kutsyuruba, et al., (2015) draw attention to the importance of a positive school climate to promote a healthy learning environment so “favourable educational and psychological outcomes for students and school personnel” (p. 104) can be achieved. The authors highlight that a negative school climate may hinder learning through impacting the environment and affecting the efficacy of learning and development, which could be the case with the Faroese Corona teaching and learning environment.

**Hygiene and Sanitation Logistics:** Not all schools had the physical environment for the recommended COVID-19 set up, and several leaders found this additional headache cumbersome. The demands placed on leaders to suddenly become proactively involved with janitors in drawing up a plan for a hygienic environment saw them functioning at the operational level. Logistics for students and staff entering and leaving the school during face-to-face classes, classroom seating, social distancing and raising awareness of use of hand spirit required effort, and leaders appeared to resent this added responsibility.

### 6.3 Aspects of Crisis Leadership

To capture leadership behaviour in a moment of crisis and in context allows for a foundation on which to evaluate its robustness in compulsory schools. It is a unique opportunity to posit the capacity of Faroese school leadership to cope with such issues in the future. With education being a fundamental right of students, its contribution to the development of society and the strength of the nation cannot be exaggerated.

**Active Leadership Support for Teachers:** The COVID-19 crisis has offered leaders insight into certain gaps in teacher knowledge. Therefore, the picture the data gives as to how leaders supported their teaching staff to close possible gaps in the short term is important in crisis management. The school leaders assessed that their teachers were helped in their online delivery with 92 % of leaders saying that teachers received help ranging from 'almost always' to 'often'. The leaders were clear that teachers knew they could actively seek support from them. Given the high percentage of this assurance, it may well have been the case. As the study did not include the teachers' perspective, one can but assume that the leaders had made it clear to their staff. Knowing they could rely on their leaders could contribute to teacher confidence, efficacy and mitigation of stress allowing for identifying a clear attribute of crisis leadership.

Nearly 58% of the leaders described their leadership style as one of encouragement and enabling teachers to do their best, and this is borne out by nearly 84% of school leaders who responded 'always' or 'almost always' to accommodating teacher feedback. Time was spent on enabling and building confidence of teachers, so they could cope with teaching online and helping students and parents to use Teams. Staff who were vulnerable were kept informed, so they felt they too contributed through their online teaching from home.

Some leaders actually taught their staff Teams and were on standby for their teachers to contact them. Others organised courses, where teachers could acquire skills simultaneously as they had to adapt to teaching differently. As perceived by the leaders, clear guidelines were in place, so teachers could feel equipped to cope with their modified roles supporting the criteria for crisis leadership.

In general, leaders felt they had exhibited awareness of the uniqueness of the situation and committed time and energy towards ensuring a productive and positive work environment for the stakeholders. It is evident they believed that they respected their staff and committed to making sure that teachers knew they had their leader's support. To all intents and purposes, the empowering of teachers, which is a tenet of crisis leadership, has been conscious and focused based on the sentiments expressed by leaders about their roles.

**Meaningful Communication with Parents:** Communication, as established in literature, is key in a crisis, so it is important to explore leaders' views and thoughts on communicating in this period. Parents, as significant stakeholders, were involved in home schooling without any proper preparation. It is relevant to see if school leaders had increased communication with parents at this time. The figures indicated that 54%

of leaders communicated 'sometimes', 'rarely' and 'never'. The reason for this figure could be that other leaders in the same school might have had the responsibility or the leaders had not thought it important to connect with parents. Given that parents had taken on the responsibility of home schooling, it may appear that the concerned subject teachers might have had specific communication, so that the school leaders may not have had to do so.

***Meaningful communication with Teachers:*** Leaders were aware that their communication with teachers had a significant role. "The fact that the teachers were clearly informed that I was there for them facilitated them to seek help actively" (L7). L3 was emphatic in concluding that his/her communication kept teachers grounded. L6 was conscious of the stress facing teachers and communicated to mitigate this impact and kept focus on enabling frameworks for teacher action. About 48% of leaders said they maintained clear communication with teachers, and this is reinforced by similar percentages for keeping teachers up to date. L9 felt that communication calmed the teachers and helped them focus on the microcosm of their responsibilities without being caught up in the macrocosm of the disturbance caused by COVID-19 in the national and international arenas. School leaders appear to have used open and ready communication as a positive tool, which is a facet of crisis leadership.

***Leadership Approach of School Leaders:*** The role of the school leaders is pivotal to successful student learning outcomes, especially mid-crisis (Fernandez and Shaw, 2020) and involves the smooth running of the school. A clear majority of 87% of leaders were clear that leadership style warranted change during the crisis, but when asked to delineate the changes they had incorporated, a clear picture did not emerge of how they accomplished it or how it differed from their routine approach. This is not surprising given that it is not easy to convert cognition to words (Vijayavarathan, 2018), but there were some indications to underpin their claims.

The findings revealed just under half the leaders in the study definitely agreed that they had decided on a Corona strategy with staff, about 63% used the steps laid out with teacher input to actively fulfil the goals; just over half of the leaders definitely agreed that they lent a listening ear. Fourteen of the school leaders, constituting 62.3%, defined their leadership as inclusive, democratic and enterprising. They justified this by describing how they demonstrated patience, listened without being judgemental, gathered knowledge, reflected and sought to communicate openly - all hallmarks of crisis leadership for organisational direction. L5 said, "Patience in a confusing time is worth its weight in gold in my role as a leader and colleague." Leaders speak of their interest in not stressing their teachers. Several leaders use 'openness', 'inclusive', 'cooperative', 'building trust and responsibility' 'democratic', 'approachable', 'helpful' and 'meaningful communication' in describing their approach to leading. "I have praised them for their good suggestions and their positive attitude and tried my best to establish calm in a very chaotic situation" (L5). The power of positive feedback engenders teacher cooperation and involvement in school that is considered desirable for a positive and enabling school culture and makes teachers feel supported in a crisis (Kelly, 2005).



Nine leaders felt they had used change leadership, i.e., to inspire and influence their staff to act using foresight and flexibility to engender change. They proactively created channels of meaningful communication, so change could occur. They all emphasised the importance of planning, even in the middle of a crisis, so there could be a sense of structured action to simultaneously cope with parents, students and teachers' needs. This echoes some aspects of crisis leadership.

About 48% definitely agreed that they modified plans based on teacher feedback. In conjunction with the 38% who said COVID-19 decision making was changed, if it caused conflict in school, it suggests about 10% of leaders were not afraid of indicating they were in charge. This established that inclusive style of leadership had to be balanced within the demands of crisis leadership, which might sometimes leave little leeway for democratic decision-making.

One leader defined herself/himself as “controlling by nature” (L22). Despite the turbulence, by keeping in touch with staff constantly, they had become closer as a school and “established stronger bonds”. Two crucial and interesting points were made by this leader underscoring the person's implicit understanding of crisis leadership: firstly, despite the isolation, the leader had learnt that all decision-making need not be a group endeavour. Sometimes, it was easier to just take the decision as consultation could be long-winded and time short in the crisis. Secondly, the leader talked of undergoing a process of self-discovery, without the physical sharing of space with people who were a part of the environment. This made the person contemplate and reflect on change in self and the importance of the human angle in a crisis. The crisis has taught this leader the importance of making decisions to follow a course of action justifiable and essential in a crisis and reflect on its efficacy. Literature designates this reflective phase as laying the foundation for coping with future crises.

In keeping with Smith and Riley (2010) about instant decision making, a couple of leaders mentioned acting instantaneously without concern for rules to achieve the goal of facilitating teaching. One of them commented that one could not consult with teachers all the time, because time was short and the responsibility for the school functioning under these conditions were fully the premise of the leader. It would be fair to observe that school leaders appeared to have experienced some frustrations, but this appears not to have hindered them from reacting in a decisive manner when the crisis struck. LaPorte (2007) describes this as a valuable quality for a leader.

An attribute for effective crisis management identified by Covey (2004, pp. 20) is “opportunity solving”. He believes that problems should be valued as opportunities, be it to ensure high staff morale, improved communication systems or creating the right image of the organisation outward. This should leave schools a better place after the turmoil of the COVID-19 crisis.

*“Should such a crisis suddenly return, then we can say that we are in a very good position when it comes to technology. We’re prepared to switch to online teaching instantly. I believe both the schools and the educational system have learnt a lot from this crisis. But not*

*everything can be organised via a computer, because face-to-face contact is important, isn't it?" (L14).*

School leaders agreed that COVID-19 would impact the future of schools. It has been a steep learning curve for teachers and leaders in setting up emergency solutions and getting hands on with ICT. Many of them were clear that teacher and stakeholder attitudes had a clear impact on effective and relevant adoption of digital pedagogy. They acknowledged that online teaching was no simple case of transference, but a complex process that included emotional, psychological and physical well-being under stressful circumstances, so as to minimise negative impact on teaching and create positive student and teacher management, while proactively keeping other stakeholders satisfied and informed.

The data has shown that in terms of solidarity among staff, there has been a sense of being united in the crisis. Leaders have demonstrated enabling communication, shown awareness of the importance of improved ICT skills for teachers, and prospects for increased ICT adoption in the school system in the future. The leaders referenced their empowerment of teachers and providing them with coping mechanisms, and despite the leaders mentioning that they were not prepared for the emotional fallout, one could cautiously conclude that Faroese school crisis leadership was proactive to some extent. In the context of Faroese schools, the COVID-19 crisis created a situation that required school leadership to take rapid and decisive action *in media res*. Some leaders spoke of *laissez-faire* in terms of allowing teachers to take decisions, as it was not possible to track teacher actions in detail. They felt teachers must exercise autonomy within the established framework and make professional decisions. In this sense, they did not perceive any noticeable change in their styles during COVID-19. The establishment of remote teaching and learning required a sea change during COVID-19. In such a crisis, leaders are expected to show leadership and *laissez-faire* does not imply fit-for-purpose leadership. On the other hand, if these leaders always practised this kind of leadership, then the authentic, resilient and focused leadership, which earmark leadership competencies in dealing with crisis situations (O'Brien and Robertson, 2009) was never present in their repertoire, and therefore, cannot be adopted *ad hoc*.

Using the framework of Boin et al. (2013), it is possible to map the actions of the Faroese leaders for crisis management from the data to highlight and detail their roles (see Table 2).

The mapping indicates the contextual performance of Faroese school leadership, and while it matches the criteria identified to a greater or lesser degree, there are possible limitations to be considered. As the study was conducted so early in the crisis, it may not have really given time for the leaders to reflect on their experiences or express their cognitions. Therefore, insight obtained in this study cannot be and is not the complete picture. The interviews gave some indication that from managing the crisis practically, leaders would have to be more forward thinking and place more emphasis on strategically developing robust learning and teaching environments. In this sense, the

**TABLE 2**  
Mapping of leadership tasks for crisis management.

<b>Tasks of Leadership Assessment:</b>	<b>Faroese School Crisis Leadership Dimensions</b>
1 Early recognition	The National Board of Education (NBE) being at the strategic level did this together with the school leadership.
2 Sensemaking	The leaders certainly understood it was a crisis, but the data does not indicate sensemaking more than some leaders planning together with their staff, to a small extent with parents and discussion with staff to arrive at solutions and procedures.
3 Making critical decisions	The prompt response and decisive decision to close schools came from the NBE, but on the ground, at the strategic level within each school decisions were taken by the leaders. The operational aspect was done together with the teachers. There is some indication that there was sharing for informed decision-making and where this was not possible, leaders did what they had to keep things moving.
4 Orchestrating vertical and horizontal coordination	Clearly, the leadership communicated with NBE above them in the hierarchy for major decision making as these decisions covered all schools. They communicated with staff below them in the hierarchy, but there is no indication that they drew on other school leaders.
5 Coupling and decoupling	Leaders isolated that online teaching was crucial. Some schools made learning packages for students to work on at home. Leaders invested time and energy to get teachers working on Teams. They got on with the here and now.
6 Meaning making	Leaders acknowledged the crisis and took the decision to support online teaching. Solutions were based on surviving in the crisis and not a return to status quo as COVID-19 prevented this.
7 Communication	Leaders claimed that they kept communication channels open with their teachers, and could be called upon anytime, using the 'open door' policy. They said they kept teachers informed of the status quo and were supportive. Listened to teacher feedback and were inclusive in their leadership majority of the time. Gave help at the operational level to facilitate teaching.
8 Rendering accountability	Identify that ICT did not work, and this meant student needs were not met in certain instances. They conveyed to NBE that ICT should be enabled by helping teachers with digital pedagogy and supplying them with laptops.

findings are the findings of a particular moment in time, and perhaps, not fully representative of all the challenges, the lessons learnt or possible long-term influence of COVID -19 on the schools.

Based on the data analysis, one could argue that a decent percentage of leaders fulfilled Smith and Riley's (2010) requirements for leadership efficacy in crises, which include coping with ambiguity, responding quickly, changing direction to encompass change as it happens and working with stakeholders through meaningful communication towards creating order in the crisis.

Another possible limitation of the study maybe that the data has been collected only from the leaders' perspectives. A justification is that in a crisis, it is the leadership that acts and is in a heightened state of alert. The leaders have responsibility of guiding the organisation through the crisis, "of getting the job done". The teachers and students depend on them for direction and decisions, and they have to yoke together unfamiliar aspects when routines and regular resources cannot fulfil the demands on the school environment, while placating the various stakeholders (Boin et al, 2013). Hence, the study focuses on the strategic level of the educational organisation. Only the leaders were cognisant of the plans of the National Board of Education first and could actively state their plans to the teachers. So, to understand leadership cognition and processes of decision making and action taking, one has to go to the leaders. Only if they understand the challenges posed to teaching and teachers can their leadership be on point to ensure that students get the optimal learning environment. The accountability of leaders is very high in a crisis, so they are the significant and central persons of interest (ibid).

When it comes to what leaders perceive as the challenges their teachers had, it would be appropriate to include teacher perspectives to analyse if they identify similar issues. Being able to identify teacher challenges gives leaders the resources to adopt a strategy in a crisis and navigate the complex environment to lead the organisation out of the crisis. This insight is valuable and may create the understanding and support necessary for teachers and teaching to fulfil educational aims and objectives.

## 7 Conclusion

The article has explored the impact of COVID-19 on Faroese schools by identifying the challenges faced by leadership, and how leadership efficacy was manifested in the crisis. The picture that emerged of Faroese crisis leadership was varied and complex, revealing tenets of crisis leadership. The indications are that Faroese school leaders appeared to have coped to a degree with the challenge despite the crisis testing the resilience of teachers, students and themselves.

Whether Faroese school leaders were prepared or not, they appear to have stepped up to the challenge and facilitated the transfer to online teaching by helping teachers to orient themselves with Teams, kept channels of communication open to give help, allowed teachers to express their fears and concerns, ensured that the teachers could

do their jobs, restricted though it was and established a culture of trust in their schools. They have resorted to pragmatic decision making to cope with the COVID-19 crisis.

Leadership skills differ from their norm in a crisis with increased demands on professional input. This may also be a source of stress and impact leader efficiency and effectiveness. Given the unpredictable nature of crises, the capacity of the leader to take clear, focused action, while pivotal, cannot be substituted for being prepared for unexpected developments. Lessons learnt here, may on reflection, impact the robustness of the school system and its preparedness for other such eventualities. Each crisis is unique and demands substantial flexibility of the school leader.

One needs to query whether the school leaders could have done anything differently and ponder as to the short term and long-term consequences of this crisis experience. The educational sector usually functions with a long-term strategy, which dictates its visions and missions. This makes it slow to change and vulnerable during quick change in the external environment. School organisational culture is seldom fit for rapid change, so a planned strategy for crisis response would be key.

The fallout from students having to miss lessons, the effect on their motivation and the demands for high standard scholastic performances from the external environment may adversely affect student achievement and progress to the next stage of education. If excellence in education, which is one of the hallmarks of a welfare nation is the goal, then leaders should become well-prepared to mitigate the negative consequences of such crises. They have to be authentic, resilient, focused and foster creativity, which O'Brien and Robertson (2009) argue earmarks leadership competencies in dealing with crisis situations. To cope is not enough, so leaders should be equipped to master such challenges and ensure optimal functioning of the school environment to the advantage of all the stakeholders. If COVID -19 has taught the leaders something, it must be that they need to acquire resilience and establish a crisis plan for their schools and for the psychological wellbeing of all stakeholders.

While COVID-19 is incontrovertibly a pandemic of epic proportions from a health perspective, it has certainly become an educational one too. To prevent crises from undermining educational gains important to both individual and society at large, this crisis should motivate the Faroese educational system to design a detailed plan to ensure equity in education for students and staff. The National Board of Education might consider it gainful to establish crisis management frameworks to ensure a robust Faroese school environment that can fulfil strategic goals by preparing and supporting leadership and teachers to maximise teaching and learning for students in future challenging crises.

## **8 Academic contribution**

The article breaks new ground – no research exists on school leadership in compulsory schools in The Faroe Islands during the Covid-19 school crisis leadership. In placing Faroese school leadership under scrutiny, it may pave the way for discourse that

is focused on pedagogical leadership for improved learning outcomes rather than financial accountability to the Ministry of Education and Culture. Given the incontrovertible role of school leaders in enabling excellence in teaching and achieving student learning outcomes, it would be fruitful to contemplate how leadership can fulfil its remit to the fullest in The Faroe Islands to ensure a dynamic learning and teaching environment that can best serve students and the society at large, even in a crisis.

## 9 Future Study

A study has been conducted to explore teachers' points of view to establish the challenges they faced and how school leadership in Faroese compulsory education proved to be enabling or otherwise in a volatile, ambiguous environment. This would offer a new perspective on teacher cognition about the COVID-19 impact, as this would be a re-visitation of prior teacher situation and experiences since some time has lapsed since the study. It would also provide a valid basis for comparison between teachers' experience of the crisis vis-à-vis that of the leadership.

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## 12 Appendix A

### Survey of School Principals on the impact of Corona on Teaching

*(Please answer all sections A – D)*

#### Section A: Please circle your answer in the table:

1. Age: <b>25-35</b> / 36-45 / 46 – 56 / 56 +	6. Our school has technology required for online teaching: <b>Yes</b> / No
2. Gender: <b>M</b> / F	7. We bought new equipment to teach online during Corona : <b>Yes</b> / No
3. No. of years as Principal: <b>1-5</b> / 6-10 / 11- 15 / 16 - 20 / 20+	8. Learning platform: <b>Moodle</b> / Zoom / Microsoft Teams / Facebook
4. School size: <b>Small</b> / Medium / Large	9. School has IT staff: <b>Yes</b> / No Some teachers give IT support: <b>Yes</b> / No
5. Students already had laptop/Ipad from school before Corona: <b>Yes</b> / No	10. Due to Corona school closure, we have regular meetings: Face to face: <b>once a week</b> / twice a week / thrice a week / more Virtual: <b>once a week</b> / twice a week / thrice a week / more

#### Section B : Please mark your answer with ‘X’ in the table:

(6 = Always; 5 = Almost always; 4 = Often; 3 = Sometimes; 2 = Rarely; 1 = Never)

No.		6	5	4	3	2	1
1.	Teachers had support to change to online teaching.						
2.	Teachers are face-to-face online with pupils.						
3.	Teachers need more help to teach online.						
4.	Teachers cooperate more with colleagues now.						
5.	Teachers feel confident about teaching this way.						
6.	Teachers know I am there to support them.						
7.	Teachers have actively changed their way of teaching.						
8.	Teachers have been asked for feedback about the situation.						
9.	Leadership skills to support my teachers has changed in this period.						
10	This experience shows that teachers need training to use IT effectively.						
11	I will be arranging for teacher development courses to help teachers.						
12	I have more contact with parents now to facilitate student needs.						

### Section C

Please mark your answer with 'X' in the table:

(4 = definitely agree; 3 = somewhat agree; 2= disagree; 1= definitely disagree)

I managed change in this period using the following leadership skills:		4	3	2	1
1	A Corona strategy was made with input from my staff to cope with this change.				
2	Steps were planned to achieve the goals together with teachers.				
3	The strategy was implemented using the steps to create focus on the required change.				
4	Teachers were supported actively through listening to their concerns.				
5	Some plans were changed to make sure goals could be reached.				
6	Clear communication was maintained with teachers to ensure confidence.				
7	If some decisions created conflict, they were adapted for the good of staff and teachers.				
8	The changes made were anchored and milestones achieved were communicated clearly to teachers.				
9	Teachers were kept upto date and meaningful and relevant communication reduced stress.				
10	My leadership style in Corona times is one that encourages teachers and enables them to give their best.				

### Section D

Please respond in detail as you can to all questions below:

1. How has undirvisingarstýrið helped you as head of the school in the Corona period?
2. What kind of challenges have teachers experienced when teaching in this period?
3. What percentage of teachers would you estimate adapted well to the change in teaching requirements?
4. In your opinion, what is negative about teaching in the Corona period?
5. In your opinion, what is positive about teaching in the Corona period?
6. What has been the greatest challenges for you as principal in the Corona period?

## 13 Appendix B

Interview questions for semi-structured interview

Identify three ways your leadership has changed in the corona times.

- What has this crisis taught you as a leader?
- What, if anything, would you do differently if such a crisis were to return?
- How has the experience been valuable to you as a leader?
- How has this experience made you aware of the possibilities of how schooling can change in the future?
- How did this influence your relationship with your teachers? Evaluate your performance in leading your teachers in this period.

## 14 Appendix C

**TABLE 3**  
Codes for Part D in Questionnaire & Interviews.

No	Attribute	Code
1	Inclusive leadership (decision making includes teachers & other leaders in school)	LIN
2	Strategic leadership (leads from the front and has a clear plan of action)	LS
3	Laissez-faire leadership (lets teachers find their way)	LLF
4	Motivational leadership (encourages & supports teachers)	LM
5	Change leadership (leading change proactively)	LCH
6	No change in leadership (not really changed leadership approach during Corona)	LNC
7	Crisis leadership (takes decisions which have to be taken)	LCL
8	Respect for teachers (understands teacher problems)	LRT
9	Meaningful communication (communicates with teachers clearly to reduce stress)	LMC
10	Positives about Covid Teaching	L Pos
11	Negatives about Covid teaching	LNeg
12	Possible influence on future teaching /lessons for the future	LFut
13	Teacher challenges in this period	TC
14	Teacher adaptability to change way of teaching & working in this period	TA
15	Help/guidance from 'Undirvísingastýrið' - National Board of Education	HU
16	Logistical issues in Corona teaching	LRC

## 15 Appendix D

**TABLE 4**  
Kappa Coefficient for Coding of Thematic Data at Nodes 1-8

[illegible]

**Table 4 Contd.** Kappa Coefficient for Coding of Thematic Data at Nodes 9-16

<b>Part.</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>
1	0.9711	0.9962	0.9873	1	1	1	0	0
2	1	0.7916	0.9954	0.9927	1	1	0.5899	0.3749
3	1	0.9977	0.9963	0.8597	1	0.2694	0.2441	-
								0.0156
4	1	1	1	0.3054	1	1	0	0
5	1	1	0.992	1	1	1	1	0.9921
6	1	0	0	0.9863	0	1	1	1
7	1	0	0	0.9853	1	1	1	0
8	1	0.869	1	1	1	0.8591	0.5731	0.887
9	1	0	0.9964	1	1	1	0	0
10	1	0.9928	0	1	1	1	1	0.9255
11	0	0.8551	0.9926	1	1	1	0.5222	0.9901
12	1	0.9911	0.9911	0.2567	1	1	0.9839	0.4826
13	1	0.9872	0.9897	0	1	1	0	0.5369
14	1	1	1	1	1	1	0.5	0.4935
15	1	0.9953	0.9478	1	1	1	0.4267	0.8233
16	1	0.9977	0.9959	0.9972	1	1	0.3028	0.2468
17	1	0.9985	0.6921	0.8611	1	1	0.4991	-
								0.0546
18	1	0.5	1	1	1	1	0.5972	0.9653
19	1	0.9628	0.9976	1	1	1	0.2762	1
20	0.9974	0.9538	0.9938	1	1	1	0.6253	0
21	1	0.9871	0.988	1	1	1	1	0.9879
22	1	0.9877	1	1	1	1	0	1
23	1	0.9971	0.9861	1	1	0.9931	0	0.1396
24	1	0	0.9874	1	1	1	0.9411	0.9955
25	1	0	0	0.9972	0.7976	0.9978	0.1636	0.2667
26	1	0.9776	0.9798	1	1	1	0	0
27	0.992	0.2857	0	1	1	1	0	0.9282
28	1	0.98	0.9947	1	1	1	0.5498	0.602
29	1	0.653	0.8569	0.2454	1	1	-0.0128	0
30	1	0.9322	0.9395	1	1	1	0	0.3879
31	1	0.9961	0.9962	1	1	1	1	-
								0.0226
32	1	1	0.9804	1	1	1	0.5	0.8448
33	1	1	0.9931	1	1	1	0	0.1731
34	1	1	0.9912	1	1	1	0	1
35	1	0.6905	1	1	1	1	0	0.3347
36	1	1	0.8122	1	0.7968	0.5	0.8392	0.6411
37	1	1	0.9748	1	1	1	1	0.9664
38	1	0.9598	1	1	1	1	1	1