
The Role of School Management in Emergency Reconstruction and Recovery: Evidence from Secondary Schools in Northwest Cameroon

Genevarius Nji¹

Abstract

Education systems in crisis-affected regions face profound disruptions that threaten the accessibility, quality, and sustainability of learning, as observed in Cameroon's Northwest Region, which has experienced prolonged emergencies. One of the critical problems in this context is the limited capacity of education management to effectively coordinate reconstruction and recovery efforts during and after emergencies. Weak managerial preparedness, inadequate resources, and insufficient policy support have constrained schools' ability to respond adaptively to crises. This study aims to examine the role of education management in emergency reconstruction and recovery processes and to identify the managerial challenges that hinder effective education delivery during emergencies in Cameroon. The study employed a descriptive survey research design. Data were collected using a structured questionnaire administered to 215 teachers and 85 school administrators in the northwest region of Cameroon. Simple random sampling was used to select teachers, while purposive sampling was applied to select school administrators with direct managerial responsibilities. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques to capture trends and patterns in respondents' perceptions and experiences. The findings reveal that many school administrators lack essential skills in emergency preparedness, crisis response, and post-emergency recovery management. Furthermore, the study identified key obstacles, including inadequate funding, weak institutional planning, limited professional training, and insufficient government support. However, these challenges can be managed if strategic planning, sustainable funding mechanisms, and strong institutional commitment are strengthened. The study implies that strengthening education management capacity is crucial for effective emergency response and long-term recovery. It recommends targeted capacity-building programs, increased government investment, and the integration of emergency management frameworks into educational policy to ensure resilient and inclusive education systems in crisis-prone contexts.

Keywords: *Emergency Situation; Recovery, Resilience, School Management, Secondary Schools*

A. Introduction

Cameroon is among the countries in central Africa facing numerous crises that require urgent action from key stakeholders. For UNICEF "emergencies encompass natural disasters like floods and earthquakes, and man-made crises like civil war and civil conflict", as well as unobtrusive emergencies like HIV/AIDS, abject poverty and street children (Pigazzi, 1999: 1). One of the most significant guidelines school managers must keep an eye out for in terms of education in emergency and crisis contexts is rapid response, utilizing a community-based strategy, capacity-building through training of teachers, youth leaders and school management

¹Educational Administration and Planning HTTTC, University of Bamenda. Cameroon. ngenevarius@gmail.com

committee. Messages and information on survival and peacebuilding must be incorporated in formal and non-formal education. Programmes must increasingly involve all groups of students, i.e., girls, adolescents, and disabled individuals. Some of the emergencies that have arisen in the context of Cameroon are the HIV/AIDS Pandemic, the Covid19 pandemic, the boko haram war, the socio-economic crisis in the northwest and southwest, and so many more. Actually, one of such blazing emergencies at hand is the Anglophone crisis, with significant destructive effects on the education sector, whereby thousands of children have deserted hundreds of schools, and a number of educational infrastructures have been destroyed. On the 8th July 2022, a reconstruction plan for the north and south-west was published, but this should not have been done without consulting and agreeing with non-state armed groups. Reconstruction and rehabilitation activities were ineffective without major stakeholders being present on the ground themselves, unable to remain within their localities.

In an emergency, school administrators are responsible for students' safety until they can be reunited with their families. Lessons from participants' experiences established factors before, during, and after an emergency that contribute to an effective response. Foremost among those factors was the importance of prior preparation. This means that every school must establish an emergency response plan. Ali (2021) identified recurring response activities, irrespective of emergency type, which enabled the development of a six-stage model of an effective school-based emergency response. The stages are: Alerts; Safety behaviours; Response actions; Student release/Family reunification; Temporary school closure; and Business as usual (Tipler, Tarrant, Tuffin, & David, 2018).

Education in emergencies focuses on providing rapid and enduring solutions to emergencies affecting the entire education system. School management involvement in this cannot be overstressed. Restoration and rebuilding after an emergency state are imperative in re-establishing normalcy in all societies. Educational societies must operate in a peaceful state to achieve institutional objectives and optimize internal efficiency. In this context, management has an obligation to build resilience among administrators, teachers, and students to reduce exposure to future emergencies.

Schools in an emergency context face tremendous uncertainties, chaotic changes, and significant crises of all kinds, varying in intensity, that impose an urgent need for emergency management in schools operating in all emergency contexts. The Cameroonian landscape is beset by numerous emergencies that require significant interventions by school management. Emergencies such as the Covid-19 pandemic, several Cholera outbreaks, especially in the Northern regions, the Boko Haram insurgency, the Anglophone Crisis, and many others have not only hampered social order but also negatively impacted the educational system in affected areas. Schools will regularly need to respond to outbreaks of infectious diseases in order to prevent further transmissions; students and staff may face crisis situations such as choking, stroke, and other medical emergencies that require prompt action and effective response. Ali (2021) points out that a sense of urgency gives way to inertia and organizational sheltering and self-interest by managers and staff alike. This is the most devastating institutional obstacle in the management of any crisis.

In many conflict-stricken areas, schools have been deserted by both teachers and students due to insecurity, and access to formal education has been prohibited. Because of this, many school-age children are out of school, and many run the risk of becoming social delinquents even in unsecured environments. Educational management has the responsibility to develop top strategies towards reconstruction. Such responsibilities encompass the determination of damages and needs, Reconstruction planning, Reconstruction of Services and Infrastructure, Psychosocial Support and Reintegration, and Evaluation and Monitoring of Reconstruction. The paper

examines the role of educational management in establishing order and maintaining normalcy following an emergency.

This study is guided by two central research questions that focus on the capacity of school management in crisis-affected contexts. First, it seeks to examine the level of preparedness of school managers in ensuring effective reconstruction and recovery in schools affected by crises. Second, it examines the key obstacles school managers face in carrying out reconstruction and recovery processes in emergency-affected school environments. These research questions are designed to capture both the internal capacities of school leadership and the external challenges that influence emergency response and recovery efforts.

In line with these questions, the study's primary objectives are twofold. The study aims to assess school leaders' preparedness to manage reconstruction and recovery in crisis-affected schools. In addition, it seeks to identify and analyze the obstacles school leaders face in ensuring effective reconstruction and recovery during and after emergency situations. Through these objectives, the study endeavors to provide a comprehensive understanding of managerial readiness and constraints within emergency-prone educational settings.

The significance of this study is multifaceted, encompassing theoretical, practical, policy, and community dimensions. Theoretically, the study contributes to the existing body of knowledge on school-based emergency management, particularly within the context of Bamenda Center. It offers empirical insights into school management's preparedness to respond to emergencies, thereby enriching theoretical discussions on educational leadership and crisis management. In practice, the findings are expected to inform the development of context-specific emergency response plans and strategies tailored to schools' needs. The study's recommendations can assist school managers and policymakers in adopting proactive measures to enhance school safety, minimize risks, and strengthen support systems for students and staff affected by emergencies, thereby promoting well-being and academic continuity. From a policy perspective, the findings can inform the formulation of effective, relevant emergency management policies and resource allocation strategies. Finally, at the community level, the study can raise awareness of the importance of emergency preparedness in schools and foster community participation, ultimately contributing to the development of a culture of safety, preparedness, and resilience within schools and the wider community.

B. Literature Review

Education in emergency situations in Cameroon

Mladjan and Cvetkovic(2021) define an emergency as those conditions in which risks and threats or consequences of catastrophes, extraordinary incidents and other hazards threatening the population, environment and material goods are of such a volume and intensity that their occurrence or consequences cannot be prevented or eliminated by regular action from the part of authorities and services in charge, due to which it is necessary to deploy special measures, forces and means together with the enhanced work regime, in order to mitigate or eliminate them. Crises involve events and processes that pose severe threats, create uncertainty, and demand urgency. Crises come in a variety of forms, such as terrorism, natural disasters, accidents, riots, etc. Some crises can be managed successfully, while others can lead to severe failure and further calamities or disasters (Ali, 2021).

In school several types of emergency situations can arise and some of them are the viz: the need for psychosocial support and follow-up, Emergency due to illness or accident; access to medication, Emergency due to assault, robbery or aggression; Emergency in the event of fire;

Emergency in the event of a bomb threat and in the event of an evacuation, emergency due to armed attacks and shooting exchange among armed groups. When schools are closed and burnt down, it becomes an emergency situation.

Table 1. Some emergencies that may occur in school

Types of emergency situations	Manifestations
Natural disasters	Earthquakes, tempests, floods, wildfires, landslides, and droughts
Man-made disasters	School shooting, terrorist attacks, bomb threats, arson, chemical spills
Health emergencies	Pandemics(COVID-19), outbreaks of infectious diseases (measles, flu, and other medical emergencies(cardiac arrest, poisoning, etc)
Infrastructure emergencies	Power outage, water supply disruptions, gas leaks, and structural damage to buildings.
Conflicts and violence	Bullying and cyberbullying, gang violence, student conflicts,
School environmental emergencies	Toxic substance exposure, asbestos contamination, and lead poisoning.
Armed conflicts	Gun attacks around and in school premises, kidnapping of students and teachers, rape, and bloodshed.
Technological emergencies	Cyber attack, data breaches, system failures

Procedure for Crisis Management and Emergency Response

Diagnostic assessments

Ali (2021) indicates that the key to crisis management is an accurate and timely diagnosis of the problem's criticality and the dynamics of the events that ensue. This requires knowledge, skills, courageous leadership, risk-taking ability, and vigilance from the school administration. Damage and need determination is a salient element of school crisis management and emergency response in all settings. School management should be able to conduct facility and resource evaluations to determine the extent of damage and the requirements for re-establishing normalcy. FEMA (2020) stresses that schools must prepare a damage assessment team to conduct assessments and determine requirements. Tools such as videos, photographs, and damage assessment forms can be used to document disasters and define requirements. The diagnostic assessment of damages and requirements appears to be a fundamental aspect of crisis management and emergency response for schools because, if conducted in detail, it would allow school management to provide targeted response efforts, distribute resources optimally, ensure safety, and build resilience. The assessment of the psychosocial and emotional effects of damage on students and teachers is also salient, as it can help schools provide evidence-based interventions and support recovery and resilience (Alexander, 2006; NASP, 2020). This would require the use of Standardized assessment instruments, such as psychological surveys and tests, to identify individuals at risk for mental health problems.

Reconstruction Planning

Reconstruction planning here could be done in three stages: Reconstruction Plan Preparation, Development of Resources and Partnerships, and Development of a Monitoring and Evaluation System. The preparation of a reconstruction plan remains crucial for crisis management and emergency response in the education sector. A well-developed reconstruction plan can help the education sector prioritize resource allocation and efforts, encourage recovery and resilience, and ensure that reconstruction aligns with the needs of staff and students (FEMA,

2020). Preparing a reconstruction plan is a formal and methodical process. According to UNDRR (2020), schools must establish a reconstruction planning committee to develop a comprehensive plan that addresses the needs of students, school staff, and the community in crisis management. The group may employ tools and techniques, such as project management software and stakeholder engagement, to create a realistic, deliverable, and aligned plan based on students' and staff's needs. The main obstacle here may be that school managers are lagging behind in exhibiting these skills. Nevertheless, well-developed plans may help educational organizations specify priority areas for targeted intervention, thereby enabling resilience and sustainability. By developing a master plan, schools can align efforts and resources, promote recovery and resilience, and demonstrate their commitment to them. Organizations that develop a master plan can promote recovery and resilience among employees and students (Harvard Business Review, 2020).

Resource identification and partnerships are crucial elements of educational institution crisis management and emergency response. Educational institutions may identify existing resources and partnerships that support reconstruction efforts, such as government agencies, non-profit organizations, and private-sector companies (FEMA, 2020). Mapping resources and collaborations can also enable educational institutions to mobilize resources and expertise for post-disaster reconstruction. The World Bank (2020) is of the view that learning institutions can collaborate with institutions to obtain funding, specialist expertise, and equipment for post-disaster reconstruction. Educational managers can utilize collaborations to mobilize resources and expertise to drive recovery and resilience. By identifying prospective resources and partnerships, learning institutions can leverage expertise and capabilities to enable reconstruction work, support recovery and resilience, and demonstrate their intent to recover and be resilient. The International Association of Emergency Managers posits that learning institutions can apply resources and partnerships to enable reconstruction work and foster recovery and resilience (IAEM, 2020).

It is essential for schools to elaborate specific goals, objectives, and indicators to track progress and measure reconstruction performance. Instruments and techniques such as logic models, data collection, and data analysis can be used by school managers to establish a monitoring and evaluation system. The installation of a monitoring and evaluation system is a critical element in the educational system's crisis management and emergency response. The United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction (2020) states that educational institutions can leverage a monitoring and evaluation system to track progress, identify areas for change, and make informed decisions based on data in reconstruction efforts. This implies that school administration can use a monitoring and evaluation system to track indicators such as work in progress, budget spending, and stakeholder satisfaction.

Rebuilding Infrastructure and Services

FEMA (2020) points out that constructing and restoring infrastructure can help schools restore essential facilities and services, promote recovery and resilience, and support the educational process. Here, school managers can rebuild structures, roads, and utilities, making them secure, functional, and student- and staff-friendly. The Restoration of essential services is a part of crisis management in emergency response in schools. Restoration of essential services can help schools promote learning, aid recovery and resilience, and ensure the health and well-being of students and staff (FEMA, 2020). Essential services may include utilities, communications infrastructure, transportation, and health care services.

Restoration of core services must be systematic and organized. Restoration of core services should be given priority by schools based on need, feasibility, and sustainability (Bennett, 2018). Damage assessments, needs analysis, and project management are among the tools and

techniques principals can use to guide the restoration process. Prevention and integration of safety measures is the key to crisis management and emergency response in schools. By giving pride of place to security and prevention activities, establishing a protective and caring school environment, guaranteeing accountability and transparency, and engaging stakeholders, schools can reduce risks, increase resilience, and ensure students' and employees' well-being. According to a Harvard Business Review (2020), organizations can promote recovery and resilience and improve results when they prioritize prevention and safety (Harvard Business Review, 2020).

Psychosocial Support, Reintegration, and follow-up.

Providing psychosocial and emotional support is critical to school crisis management and emergency response. School psychologists (2020) emphasized that schools can provide psychological and emotional support to students and staff to foster recovery and resilience. In Cameroon, secondary schools have trained counselors who can provide such services to both teachers and students, even though the counselor-to-student ratio remains very high. Primary schools and universities do not have counseling services. This means that the provision of psychosocial support to victims in times of or after emergencies in Cameroon schools remains precarious because many stakeholders on the ground seem unprepared. The reintegration of Students and Educational Staff, and the implementation of support and follow-up programs, cannot be underestimated.

Reconstruction Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of reconstruction activities is vital in crisis management and emergency response in educational institutions. According to UNDRR (2020), schools can monitor performance in reconstruction to ensure they are successful in their efforts and maintain recovery and resilience. Evaluation activities may include comparing the quality of reconstructed buildings, monitoring progress, and identifying areas for improvement. This means the school managers must set up monitoring and evaluation teams to carry out this task. The process of monitoring and evaluating reconstruction activities should be led by experts to ensure effective quality control and assurance. Here, building an evaluation framework could be of great importance, as it will enhance the efficient use of resources (World Bank, 2020).

Implementation of Measures to Prevent Future Emergency Situations

The Prevention of future emergency conditions is a salient component of crisis management and school emergency response. School administrators can establish actions to prevent future emergency conditions by identifying and mitigating potential hazards (UNDRR, 2020). Certain actions include developing a school emergency readiness plan, conducting risk assessments, and implementing safety measures. The installation of measures to prevent future states of emergency requires a proactive, systematic effort. Educational management should develop and implement comprehensive emergency management plans that include prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery (FEMA, 2020; Dryden-Peterson, 2018). Prevention can be directed through tools and methods such as risk analysis, hazard mitigation planning, and emergency preparedness training in schools. With a focus on prevention efforts, safety and resilience culture, reducing the potential and hazards of emergencies, and augmenting stakeholders' engagement, schools can enhance school safety for students' and staff members' well-being.

Resilience theory

Resilience is the ability to function well in the face of adversity. The Dynamic Learning and Action resilience model (DLA) is a framework that helps individuals, organizations, and systems build resilience in the face of calamities. Being dynamic means being adaptable, flexible, and responsive to changing circumstances. The learning component focuses on learning from

experiences, feedback, and reflection to improve resilience, while the action component centres on encouraging proactive, intentional actions to build resilience and address challenges. The DLA resilience model principles are awareness, assessment, planning, implementation, review, and reflection. Introduced by Holling (1973), resilience theory describes a system's capacity to absorb disturbance and persist by maintaining its core structure and function. It challenges the traditional view of a single equilibrium, suggesting that systems can exist in multiple, alternative states. Resilience is the measure of how much disturbance a system can withstand before it shifts into a new configuration, a concept applied to ecological, social, and economic systems. Masten (2014), as cited in AlMutairi (2024), indicates that building resilient educational infrastructures can help mitigate the negative impacts of conflict and support long-term recovery.

C. Methods

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive survey research design to examine the preparedness of school management and the obstacles encountered in ensuring reconstruction and recovery in crisis-affected secondary schools in Bamenda Centre, Cameroon. The descriptive survey design is appropriate for studies that seek to systematically describe existing conditions, attitudes, and practices within a specific population (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the context of education in emergencies, this design enables the collection of empirical data on leadership preparedness and institutional challenges without manipulating variables, thereby providing a realistic picture of school management practices in crisis-prone settings (Sinclair, 2002; INEE, 2020).

Research Procedure

The study was conducted in selected secondary schools in Bamenda Centre, an area severely affected by prolonged armed conflict and recurring emergency situations. The research process began with the identification of the target population, followed by the development of a structured questionnaire informed by literature on crisis management and educational leadership (Ali, 2021; FEMA, 2020). The instrument underwent expert review to establish content validity, and a pilot test was conducted to assess its reliability using the test-retest method. Prior to data collection, permission was obtained from relevant school authorities, and ethical considerations, including informed consent, anonymity, and voluntary participation, were strictly observed, in line with standard educational research ethics (Cohen et al., 2018).

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using a structured questionnaire designed to capture respondents' perceptions of school managers' preparedness, emergency response capacity, and obstacles to reconstruction and recovery. The study population consisted of 215 teachers and 85 school administrators. Simple random sampling was employed to select teacher respondents to enhance representativeness, while purposive sampling was used to select school administrators due to their leadership roles and direct involvement in emergency management processes (Fraenkel et al., 2019). The questionnaire items were measured on a Likert scale to ensure uniformity of responses and facilitate quantitative analysis, a commonly adopted approach in educational management studies (Bellibaş & Figen, 2025).

Data Analysis Techniques

The collected data were coded and analyzed using descriptive statistics, specifically means and standard deviations. These statistical measures were used to determine the level of preparedness among school managers and to identify the severity of the obstacles encountered in managing emergency situations. Descriptive statistics are suitable for summarizing survey

data and identifying patterns and trends within educational research contexts (Field, 2018). The findings were interpreted in relation to the study objectives and supported by existing literature on education in emergencies, school leadership, and resilience-building in crisis-affected educational systems (Dryden-Peterson, 2018; UNDRR, 2020).

D. Results and Discussion

Table 2. Respondents' Background Information

Items	Modalities	School administrators		Teachers	
		Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Males	50	58.82	78	91.76
	Female	35	41.17	137	63.72
Professional experience	0-5 years	25	29.41	45	52.94
	6-10 years	28	32.94	75	34.88
	11 years and above	32	37.64	95	44.18
Academic qualifications	Advanced level	28	32.94	98	45.58
	Bachelors degree	38	44.70	87	40.46
	Masters and above	19	22.35	30	13.95

The table above presents respondents' background information according to gender, age, professional experience, and professional qualification. Here, two groups of respondents were used in the data collection and analysis process.

Table 3: School manager preparedness and readiness in managing emergency situations

Items	Teachers questionnaire		Administrators Questionnaire		Sum
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
As a school principal, you have a well documented school emergency plan	3.4138	.88333	3.4263	.89305	3.4200
School managers are trained on how to manage emergency plans	3.1034	1.10005	3.0757	1.10555	3.0895
Teachers receive emergency training and support during emergency situations	2.9770	.95207	2.9602	.95834	2.9686
Principals frequently attain seminars on crisis management as a whole	2.4828	.99839	2.5100	.99343	2.4964
Principals make first aid kits functional in all school	2.4138	1.19643	2.4183	1.19176	2.41605
School administrators and teachers do receive	3.8736	1.26495	2.8725	1.25526	3.37305

treatment on the provision of psychological support					
School collaborates with society in the provision of emergency response	3.6207	1.19341	2.6534	.09138	3.13705
Emergency response models constitute part of teacher professional development	2.7356	.08008	3.7530	.87544	3.2443
School managers possess key skills in monitoring and evaluating reconstruction projects.	3.9885	0.41516	2.9920	1.20330	3.49025

N of teachers =215: N of administrators =85

From the data presented above, it can be deduced that school administrators lack key skills in managing emergency situations. This could be justified by the lack of an institution in the country to train school administrators. In Cameroon, school administrators are mostly appointed based on longevity of service. This keeps them wanting, as far as meeting work exigencies is concerned. This prevents the school system from meeting its set objectives.

Table 4. Obstacles faced by school managers in managing emergency situations.

Items	Teachers questionnaire		Administrators Questionnaire		Sum
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	
Lack of safety for staff	3.9522	1.09440	2.8754	1.25840	3.4138
Geographical and transportation barriers	3.8765	.94904	3.9632	.94904	3.91985
Lack of communication infrastructures	2.9335	.96805	2.8754	.96805	2.90445
Limited funding and resources	3.8904	.06230	2.3964	.16230	3.1434
Social determinants of health	3.8685	.29107	2.7725	1.19107	3.3205
Corruption and misappropriation of funds	2.7884	.78511	2.8877	.28511	2.83805
Lack of adequate staffing and training	3.0080	.35217	3.9054	1.25217	3.4567
Lapses in supply chain management	3.0016	1.06751	3.7987	1.06751	3.40015

N of teachers =215: N of administrators =85

School managers face many obstacles when managing emergency situations. These obstacles are severe impediments that could be addressed through interventions by the government and other stakeholders. The removal of most of these obstacles could go a long way to improve the quality of education.

As far as the preparedness of school leaders in crisis-affected schools is concerned, the results showed that:

- Many school leaders reported lacking the training and support needed to respond to crises effectively.
- Crisis-affected schools lacked the resources needed to provide quality education.
- School leaders and teachers reported experiencing trauma and stress, affecting their ability to provide support to students.

The following Obstacles are faced by school leaders in managing emergency situations.

- Limited funding and resources. Principals lack funding to rebuild damaged or destroyed school infrastructure. Also, schools lack funding to create emergency shelters, medical facilities, communication systems, and to respond to emergencies effectively
- Lack of safety for staff. In the Anglophone regions, there is an increased risk of harm, disruption of learning environments, and decreased morale for staff and students.
- Inability to provide adequate training for staff and students. Staff and students need regular training in emergency procedures, including evacuation drills, first-aid kit use, and crisis response techniques.
- Maintaining a safe physical learning environment. Principals find it difficult to ensure students' and staff's safety in a consistent manner due to the frequent presence of armed groups. School leadership struggles to provide adequate psychological safety for school actors.

The first research question of this study examines the level of preparedness of school managers to manage emergency situations. From the data collected, it is evident that most school administrators are not prepared to handle emergency situations. Head teachers not only lack the technical know-how but also the necessary tools and gadgets to manage emergency situations. Many school heads do not have complete first aid equipment, which could enable them to provide primary health care to wounded teachers and children on school campuses. From the Dynamic Learning and Action resilience model, it can be deduced that school heads lack dynamism, which would systematically hamper their resilience efforts. A school manager who is not dynamic would certainly not create the avenue that would enable him and his collaborators to gain experience, and, as such, would not be able to take concrete action to build resilience, reduce suffering, and save lives. Managers must build resilience in challenging scenarios. Subordinates would be inspired by managers' resilience. This will go a long way to build intrinsic motivation and a strong sense of apathy among workers, even in challenging moments.

The second research question focused on the obstacles school managers face in managing emergency situations in Cameroon. The first and major obstacle within this context is safety first for everyone. This is because schools are operating in a heavily armed environment, where teachers are sometimes targeted either for kidnapping for ransom or being killed for collaborating with the enemy camp. To build sustainable resilience, dynamic school heads discreetly negotiate with armed groups to ensure schooling can continue safely. The shortage of teachers is enormous due to high student and teacher migration to safer areas. Most teachers request transfers to safer zones, while some abandon teaching to save their lives. In most cases, school heads find it difficult to maintain teachers who work in armed conflict areas but do not receive risk allowances, but are instead punished by authorities when they refuse to teach in chaotic areas.

Bellibaş and Figen (2025) underlined that Crisis response leadership, emphasizing early detection, communication, preparedness, and immediate response; Supporting mental health and well-being, highlighting the critical role of emotional leadership from immediate care giving to systemic well-being initiatives; Community engagement and partnership, including collaboration with local authorities, effective communication with parents and students, resource integration, and collaborative decision-making; instructional and digital leadership, focusing on flexible instructional planning, and digital learning; and Adaptive leadership, emphasizing on adaptive mindset, innovation, and reflective practice for continuous improvement are all key elements that are needed from school managers in emergency situation and it is the articulation of these attributes that qualifies people as effective managers.

Education management can play a central role in the recovery and rebuilding of emergency situations in Cameroon. Efficient coordination and strategic education resource planning are vital to quickly establishing schools and providing much-needed stability for students and teachers, and this is the area of competence of the school manager. After natural disasters or conflict, school managers are responsible for assessing damage, mobilizing financial and other resources, and developing comprehensive plans of action for the rebuilding of schools and the restoration of normalcy to affected communities. Their leadership and decision-making can indeed be highly influential in shaping the entire recovery process, ensuring that the educational infrastructure is restored and that children have access to quality education, despite the negative environment. By prioritizing students' needs and facilitating partnerships among various stakeholders, Cameroon's education managers will be able to revolutionize recovery processes and create a more resilient, inclusive education system. Education management will need to place greater emphasis on the importance of anticipating and preparing for emergencies. In Cameroon, there is no school for principalship training. Experienced teachers are simply appointed to head a school without prior training; however, it is assumed that through experience, they have learned the job. Their inability to overcome obstacles in an emergency situation demonstrates that they need significant training in this area.

E. Conclusion

Conclusively, school heads lack the prerequisites to effectively manage emergency situations in school settings. They are not skillful enough to prepare and execute school emergency plans. Despite the challenges they are facing, ignorance of emergency management is primordial. This means that lapses in teacher education pertaining to the development of knowledge and practical skills in emergency situations constitute a major obstacle. This means that training teachers and school administrators in preparedness, planning, and emergency response in education is urgent. Considering the frequency and intensity of atrocities in armed conflict areas, one may conclude that armed conflicts appear to be a type of emergency that requires exceptional managerial abilities to ensure resilience for him, members of staff, and students.

The study recommends that the government place the highest priority on education as a central pillar of recovery and reconstruction in crisis-affected contexts. School infrastructure should be designed and constructed to be resilient to natural disasters such as floods, storms, and other environmental hazards, ensuring the continuity of learning and safeguarding the well-being of students and staff. Disaster-resistant school construction is essential for minimizing learning disruptions and reducing long-term recovery costs. In addition, the government and other key

education stakeholders should adopt agile and responsive strategies to mitigate the impact of emergencies on schooling. This includes the timely provision of temporary learning spaces to reduce prolonged disruptions, the rapid rehabilitation and reconstruction of damaged educational facilities, and the implementation of concrete measures to support teachers' physical, psychological, and professional well-being in emergency contexts. Strengthening community participation in emergency response efforts is also crucial, as community engagement can enhance local ownership, trust, and collective resilience in addressing educational crises.

Furthermore, essential components of emergency response and crisis management should be systematically integrated into teacher education and professional development programs. Teacher training curricula should equip both teachers and school administrators with competencies in emergency preparedness, trauma-informed practices, first aid procedures, and remote or alternative modes of instruction. Such training would ensure that educators remain vigilant, adaptable, and able to respond effectively to diverse emergency situations. At the school level, all school managers should be required to develop and regularly update comprehensive emergency management and response plans tailored to their specific contexts. These plans should outline clear procedures for preparedness, response, recovery, and communication during crises. Finally, the study emphasizes the importance of securing sustainable funding through government budgets and strategic partnerships to support emergency preparedness and response. Adequate and predictable funding is critical for providing the resources necessary to strengthen resilience, ensure safety, and sustain educational delivery during and after emergencies.

References

Alexander, J. (2006). Education and rebuilding in post-conflict societies. *Journal of Peace Research*, 43(4), 441–456.

Ali, F. (2001). Handbook of crisis and emergency management. <https://books.google.fr/books>

AlMutairi, F. Z. S. (2024). Impacts of armed conflicts on education: Challenges and pathways to recovery. *RGSA – Revista de Gestão Social e Ambiental*, 18(8). <https://doi.org/10.24857/rgsa.v18n8-169>

Beck, U. (1992). *Risk society: Towards a new modernity*. Sage Publications.

Bellibaş, M. S., & Figen, K. (2025). School leadership during times of crisis: A qualitative meta-synthesis. *International Journal of Educational Management*. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJEM-06-2025-0450>

Bennett, S. (2018). The impact of conflict on education. *Journal of Education in Emergencies*, 4(1), 1–15.

Davies, L. (2016). Security, education and development compared. *Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 46(1), 15–30.

Davies, L. (2018). *Education and conflict: Complexity and chaos*. Routledge.

Dryden-Peterson, S. (2018). Refugee education: The significance of pathways. *Journal of Refugee Studies*, 31(1), 1–18.

Environmental Protection Agency. (2020). Emergency response planning (EPA Publication No. 2020-001).

Federal Emergency Management Agency. (2020). Emergency management guide (FEMA Publication No. 2020-001).

Global Partnership for Education. (2020). Emergency response in education (GPE Publication No. 2020-001).

Harvard Business Review. (2020). Emergency leadership: What to do in a crisis. *Harvard Business Review*, 98(3), 12–15.

Holling, C. S. (1973). Resilience and stability of ecological systems. *Annual Review of Ecology and Systematics*, 4, 1–23. <https://pure.iiasa.ac.at/id/eprint/26/1/RP-73-003.pdf>

Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies. (2020). Minimum standards for education: Preparedness, response, recovery (INEE Publication No. 2020-001).

International Association of Emergency Managers. (2020). Emergency management body of knowledge (IAEM Publication No. 2020-001).

International Committee of the Red Cross. (2020). Emergency response in conflict zones (ICRC Publication No. 2020-001).

International Rescue Committee. (2020). Emergency response for refugees (IRC Publication No. 2020-001).

Mlađan, D., & Cvetković, V. (2021). Classification of emergency situations. <https://vladimircvetkovic.upravljanje-rizicima.edu.rs/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Classificationofemergencysituations.pdf>

National Education Association. (2020). Emergency response planning for schools (NEA Publication No. 2020-003).

Sinclair, M. (2002). Planning education in and after emergencies. UNESCO–IIEP.

Tipler, K., Tarrant, R., Tuffin, K., & David, J. (2018). Learning from experience: Emergency response in schools. *Natural Hazards*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11069-017-3094-x>