



FINAL REPORT

2025



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INTRODUCTION

About the network

The School Leadership Network (SLN) is not just another initiative; it is the **global influence hub where school leadership meets transformative action.**

Driven by the Varkey Foundation, Global School Leaders, and the UNESCO Teacher Task Force, our network was created with a singular mission: **to strengthen the principal as the fundamental change agent for equitable and quality education.**

With a community that today surpasses 600 school leaders and 100 experts from 62 countries, the SLN has achieved something essential: closing the gap between education policy and daily practice.

In the SLN, the principal's experience becomes strategic knowledge. Here, **leaders exchange proven practices and analyze academic frameworks to turn them into real tools that work in the classroom.** At the end of the day, SLN exists to ensure that every principal has the support, connection, and peer-validated solutions to lead transformation in their own school.

Main goals

AMPLIFY VOICES OF
SCHOOL LEADERS

BRIDGE THE GAP BETWEEN
POLICY AND PRACTICE

FOSTER A COMMUNITY-LED
NETWORK

+1000
School
Principals

+180
Educational
Experts

130
Countries

THE ACTION PLAN

Teacher shortage is not a future challenge: it is the educational crisis that defines and limits the potential of our school systems in the present. Reports from UNESCO, OECD, and our own analyses in the School Leadership Network (SLN) confirm an inescapable reality: demand for teachers exceeds supply, and the emotional and administrative burden is pushing many excellent educators out of the classroom.

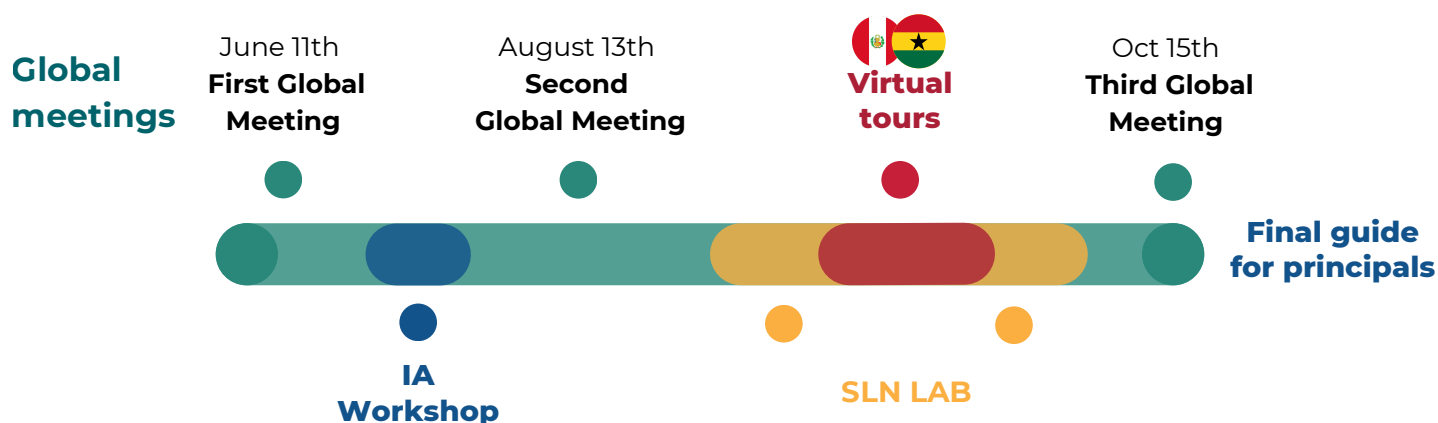
Since 2023, this challenge has been the central focus of our Global Meetings and dialogues, mobilizing not only hundreds of principals, but also a list of top international experts and scholars in leadership and retention. **We have moved from a deep understanding of systemic causes (salaries, administrative load, education policy) to identifying the most effective local levers.**

In this sense, this year's plan focused on:

Connecting school principals with ideas, tools, and good practices.

Creating spaces for principals to share interests and learn from different school contexts.

Supporting the implementation of concrete strategies to address teacher shortages.



The following phases were developed to effectively address the three core objectives:

Recap of the challenge



Beatriz Pont
Director of Global Training at IIEP (UNESCO)



Carlos Vargas
Head of secretariat Teacher Task Force

Recap of the key findings from the Global Report on Teachers and the challenge of Teacher Shortages

Workshop: IA

Michael Johaneck

Explore good practices



Abraham Okumba
Senior Manager of Programs
Global School Leaders



Suzanne Freedman
PhD Professor at
University of Northern Iowa

Leading with forgiveness and Distributed Leadership: Practical takeaways to implement and face the challenge

Virtual Tours

Peru and Ghana

SLN LAB

Four school principals applied a practice from the global meetings in their schools, demonstrating how strong leadership can address teacher shortages and foster lasting improvements.

From Diagnosis to Action



Maggie MacDonnell
Teacher in Canada
Global Teacher Prize Winner 2017



Ranjitsinh Disale
Teacher in India
Global Teacher Prize Winner 2020

Launch of Guidebook: From teacher shortage to opportunity

FINDINGS OF THE YEAR

Throughout our 2025 Global Meetings, the SLN delved into the dichotomy between the Systemic Causes of teacher shortages (salaries, administrative load, education policy) and the Local Levers of Retention (culture, recognition, professional development).

Our conclusion is that, while the principal cannot change salary policy, they are the only ones who can modify the three cultural factors that guarantee permanence:

PILLAR 1: THE CULTURE OF LEADERSHIP VS. THE SYSTEM

The decisive factor for a teacher to remain in their school is no longer the entry salary, but the sense of professional value and belonging. Our dialogues confirmed that retention happens when the principal:

- Creates a Sense of Community (a professional refuge within the school).
- Ensures that effort and impact are Visible, Formal, and Genuinely Recognized.
- Fosters Professional Autonomy and access to Growth Pathways that meet the ambitions of high-performing educators.

PILLAR 2: DISTRIBUTED LEADERSHIP (DL) AS A SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Distributed Leadership (DL) is not simply about delegating tasks; it is the institutional strategy to build a professionally enriching environment that reduces turnover caused by overload.

By empowering teachers with leadership roles and responsibilities (such as peer coordinators, innovation leaders, or mentors), the principal achieves:

- Reducing Principal Fatigue by sharing the weight of management.
- Increasing Teacher Self-Efficacy, transforming "followers" into "owners" of school success.
- Institutionalizing Growth, so that the school is perceived not only as a workplace, but as a hub of professional development.

**PILLAR 3: THE
TRUST FACTOR:
LEADING WITH
HUMANITY AND
FORGIVENESS**

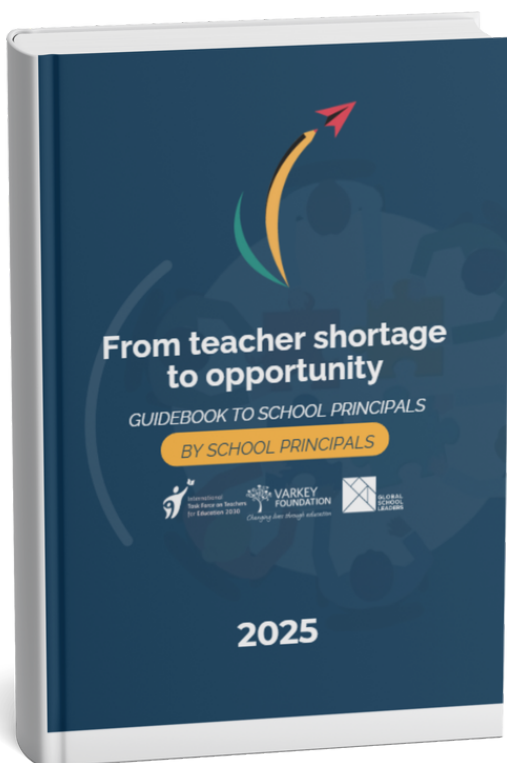
As analyzed in the 2nd Global Meeting of 2025 (based on the work of Suzanne Freedman), the most effective leadership is the one that builds trust and resilience.

In a context of high pressure and burnout, the leader must be a catalyst of positive change by:

- Seeing the “person behind the role”, prioritizing educator well-being.
- Modeling a culture where vulnerability is safe and mistakes are opportunities for learning.

This humanized approach to trust is the foundation for teachers to feel secure enough to take risks, innovate, and most importantly, commit long-term to the school's mission.

Guidebook: From teacher shortage to opportunity



As a result of these learnings, we created a Laboratory of Good Practices to address the challenge of teacher shortages, focusing on three key areas:

- **Attraction:** Opening the Door to Talent – Strategic approaches to recruit the right educators.
- **Retention:** Strengthening Purpose and Value – Building a school culture where teachers feel recognized and motivated to stay.
- **Supporting Novice Teachers:** Creating a Soft Landing – Providing guidance and support to help new teachers thrive from day one.

In this lab, four school leaders from our network, located in different parts of the world, took part by (1) identifying their teacher shortage challenge and (2) selecting a practice to implement in their schools. The good practices framework guided their implementation process, along with a (3) systematization meeting where they shared their experiences to contribute to the creation of the guide.



Kavita Sanghvi
Kotak Education
Foundation



Tatiana Popa
Heritage International School



Dario Greni
Escuela rural N° 88



Denise Shillinglaw
Broome Senior High
School

The experiences collected in this guide reaffirm a central truth: teacher shortages is not just a systemic challenge—it is a leadership opportunity. **While principals cannot always change policies or salaries, they can shape the culture that determines whether teachers stay, grow, and flourish.**



[Click here to see the guide](#)





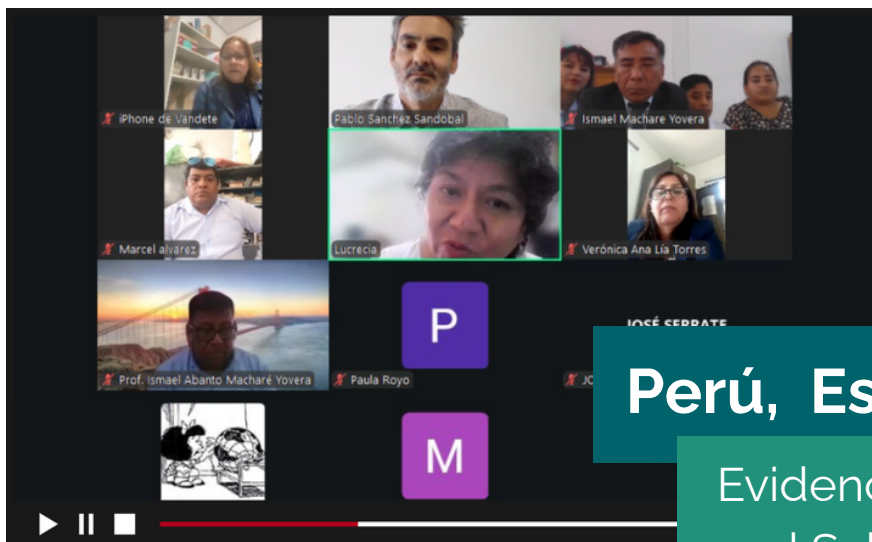
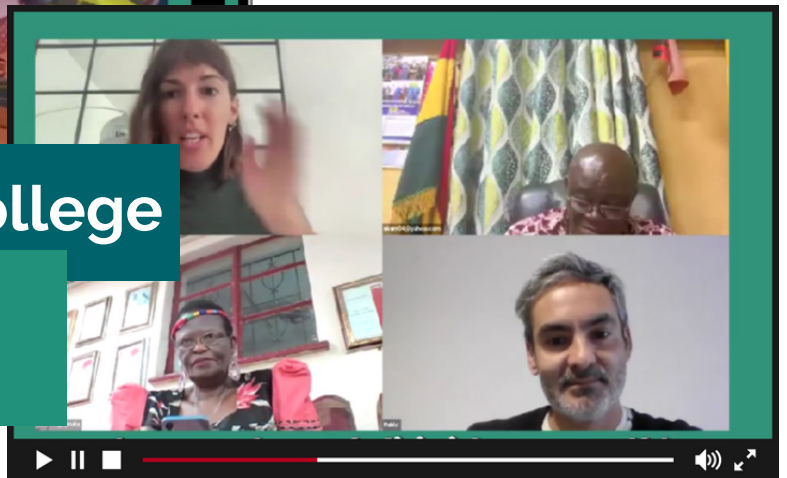
FEATURED EVENTS



Virtual Tours:

Ghana, Komenda College

The Power of Team Effort



Perú, Escuela: I.E 14752

Evidence-Based Practices
and School Autonomy

UNGA learning trip

The Education House, Teach for All: in the framework of the United Nations General Assembly



K. Naga Seetha

Principal, Tiny Scholars
School India

**Fernando
Gimenez Zapiola**

Principal, Labarden School
Argentina



*"It was such a special experience to represent our network in these inspiring conversations. The panel explored **how school principals are the missing link between policy and practice**, and we were the only ones speaking from the schools' perspective. Sharing our daily challenges and the policies that truly make a difference felt meaningful. What amazed me most was realizing how connected we are, even when we work in such different parts of the world. I'm deeply grateful to the network for making this possible."*

-Fernando Giménez Zapiola, Testimony

We are **deeply grateful for joining us in this fifth year of the network**, a journey full of learning, shared experiences, and collective achievements. We especially want to acknowledge the school principals whose leadership and commitment made every progress possible. **To celebrate everything we have accomplished together and the highlights of this year, we are excited to share a special video reflecting our journey and milestones.**



*"When a principal trusts their teachers and celebrates even the smallest victories, **they transform school culture** — fear turns into connection, and students and teachers thrive together."*



Maggie MacDonnell
Teacher in Canada
Global Teacher Prize
Winner 2017

Ranjitsinh Disale
Teacher in India
Global Teacher Prize
Winner 2020



*"Great school leaders don't just demand results; they create the conditions for teachers to experiment, take risks, and grow — **because flourishing teachers shape flourishing schools**"*

NEXT STEPS

Visit our website!



- Discover the network's journey, **key milestones, and achievements.**
- Explore insights and reports **on leadership and school management.**
- If you are a school principal, **join our network today.**



**School
Leadership
Network**