Leadership for Social Justice? Exploring Training and Support Needs of Indian School Principals

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ABSTRACT

School Leadership is a fairly unexplored area within the education discourse, especially in developing countries like India. The purpose of this research study is to identify the training and support needs of Indian school principals, working with students from marginalized, under-resourced communities. This purpose is met by attaining a holistic understanding of a school leader's perceptions about his/her role and responsibilities, challenges, underlying mindsets and opportunities.

For the study, five school principals were interviewed and the data analysis followed a qualitative, content analysis methodology. The principals have different personal backgrounds, cities, years of experience and school types, who when interviewed within a semi-structured format provided a variety of perspectives. The results of the study were explored specifically with respect to the research questions, and generally under the consideration of the Capability Approach (CA), propounded by Sen (1999).

The results of the study reveal the demanding role and responsibilities of Indian school principals, especially ones working within the government or public private partnership school setups, catering to marginalized communities. The results additionally provided insights into the challenges, opportunities and underlying mindsets of the principals. A perspective of social justice was noticed as the results showcased an activist approach to school leadership.

The study concludes with elucidating the functionings valuable as well as the factors influencing the support and training needs of Indian school principals using the CA. Furthermore, the recommendations from the data are analyzed against national standards set for school leadership development by the National Centre for School Leadership (NCSL) in India. The study closes with a comment on the need for social justice approach to leadership in the Indian school leadership space.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Societies around the world are transforming at a pace hard for our schools to keep up with. At the core, schools are considered a social structure responsible for a child's holistic upbringing while developing the future of a society, city and country. Traditionally, schools have been held responsible for the learning outcomes of students as well as broader goals like "cultivating effective citizenship for a diverse democracy" (Jacobsen, Frankenberg, & Lenhoff, 2012, p. 813). However, factors like rise in female employment, increase in single parent households, strengthened family-school partnerships, growth of knowledge-based economies and learning societies, advancement in the use of technology as a driving force for change, shifting concepts of skill and career, increasing child poverty, high youth suicide rate, etc. are some of the positive and negative, economic, social, political and environmental influences that impact the world of education, therefore, shaping the outcomes, nature and agendas or aims of tomorrow (Centre for Educational Research and Innovation , 2001).

> The Newtonian world, based on permanence, unambiguous concepts, clear administrative structures and predictable consequences of action, is changing into a quantum world characterized by constant change, ambiguity of concepts, diverse networks and increasing difficulty in terms of anticipation (Alava, Halttunen, & Risku, 2012, pp. 8-9).

Reiterating this quantum shift as quoted by Alava et al. (2012), schools are resource centers that play a critical role in promoting socialization and sense-making for students in communities, especially in times of change. Therefore, this brings significance and makes it of prime importance to discuss and critique the way schools are run, consequentially also critiquing the roles and responsibilities at the hands of school principals (also called, school leaders, or head masters). As per OECD (6-7 December, 2001, p. 32), "school improvement movement of the past 20 years has put a great emphasis on the role of leaders". It has been widely observed and documented that school leaders not only directly influence school culture and team effectiveness and therefore, indirectly influence student outcomes within the school (Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Heck & Hallinger, 2009; Fullan, 2001), but also, "effective school leaders are key to large-scale, sustainable education reform" (Fullan, 2002, p. 15). It is therefore enough to say that the job of a school principal is hectic, full of internal and

external pressures, yet one of immense power and responsibility. The study aims to however, focus in the country of India which has had a slightly delayed urgency around the scope of school leadership, as further explained in Chapter 3, *Schools and School Leadership in India*.

Furthermore, despite reforms and well-intentioned restructuring of educational provisions, school leaders in challenging environments face yet another obstacle where many children from certain groups in society are observed to not achieve school success as much as previously dominant and traditionally successful groups (Shields, 2004, p. 111). In India, the caste divide, gaps in earning levels amongst people, differences in educational quality within vernacular and English medium schools, gender expectations as well as the idea of 'blaming the victim' like blaming poor children's lack of educational success on their economic status, are some of the common hindrances faced by school leaders challenging the status-quo and fighting for equity in educational outcomes for all students.

This study aims at exploring such a school leadership phenomenon seen in some, low-income, Indian government schools that are led by principals passionate about ensuring high quality education for all their students, keeping in mind their personal roles in transforming the future value of societies. The study explores how these school principals see their own roles and responsibilities, what motivates them to take a stand for equity and justice for all their students, as well as what are their needs to perform their role well. While analysing the data, the capability approach (CA) by Amartya Sen (1999) is utilised to comprehend these principals' capabilities, valued functionings and sense of agency.

Chapter 2 familiarizes the readers to the changing goals of schooling and the types of school leadership currently dominant in the education discourse. It examines the need for change in school leadership styles, and therefore, comments on the needs and motivations of school principals globally.

Chapter 3 sets the context of this study and gives a brief description on education in low-income Indian schools as well as introduces the field of school or

educational leadership in the country. The chapter aims to posit the study in the contextual reality of Indian government and public-private partnership schools delivering to the most economically-deprived children and communities. It also aims to expand on the current situation in school leadership training and support given to Indian school principals leading such institutions.

Chapter 4 explores the idea of social justice and social justice leadership, especially with its focus in educational leadership. It considers qualifying the need of such an approach in schools serving lower-income communities. The chapter also introduces the lens of the Capability Approach by Amartya Sen, which is used to further understand the data collected in the study.

Chapter 5 defines the research aims and objectives and states the research questions for the study. Chapter 6 further elaborates on its implementation with information on how the topic, aims and research questions were chosen, the process it took to reach this focal point of analysis and how the participants were involved in the research. Chapter 6 also includes ethical discussions on the research method and previous professional experiences of the researcher.

Chapter 7 shares the results from the interviews with study participants and further makes sense of the data analysed and provides answers to the research questions mentioned in Chapter 4. Chapter 8 closes the study with a discussion on understanding school leadership training needs using the Capability Approach. It provides deeper understanding of the subject by analysing the interviewed principal's recommendations for training against the country's recommended School Leadership Development framework. The final chapter 9 briefly clarifies the limitations of the study and comments on the scope of further research in this field, especially for India. This is followed by the References and Appendices for the study.

2. FUTURE OF SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

This chapter aims at briefly describing the changing nature of schools and schooling as per recent discourse. It further clarifies the different ways of leading a school and what the current, popular understandings of school leadership are. The chapter closes with some comments on the roles of a school principal as well as their needs and motivations.

2.1 Schooling and School Leadership

The future of schooling is as popular a discourse in the education and human resource sector as it is in the business, technology, creativity & innovation space. Around the world, companies are looking for a diverse, multi-qualified pool of employees, especially with foundational literacies, varied challenging competencies and character qualities (World Economic Forum, 2016). In response to this, schools and education ministries worldwide are searching for ways to respond to this cultivating need. Authentic pathways of learning (Berry, 2011), use of media and technology (Selwyn, 2013; Williamson, 2013), project based or phenomenon based learning (Bell, 2010; Sandler, 2015), holistic development of children through play and passion (Goldstein, 2006), etc. are some of the many options available to current schools to help prepare their students for the future.

It is important to note that with changing times, a school like any other organization needs to maintain its fluidity and growth mind-set, which isn't possible in a school without the strong leadership of a school principal. Almost all literature on leadership brings in "the concept of future direction and moving the organisation forward" (Davies, 2005, p. 2), which is hard as the demands from the current society, authorities and workplace have drastically altered the role and responsibilities of a school principal. High stress, low turnaround time and overwork have become the norms and, therefore, support, appreciation and upgradation have become a necessity. There is also a constant confusion on what school principals really do. As per PricewaterhouseCoopers (2007, p. 10), the head-teachers in United Kingdom are involved in roles regarding staffing, networking, operations, accountability, strategy,

and teaching and learning. Hallinger (1992) historically speaks of the evolving role of American school principals from managerial to instructional to transformational leadership. In Finland, there is emerging focus on collaborative and synergetic perspective on leadership through co-performance and a shared learning process (Jäppinen & Ciussi, 2016, p. 483). In India, though not well defined, the role of a school leader typically includes administrative and leadership duties like meetings, curriculum and teaching related tasks, staffing, student interactions, and engagement with parents and the local community (Central Square Foundation, 2015). These roles and responsibilities in most situations are mostly met by authoritative, managerial or transformational leadership styles though are influenced by the context of the school and community. However, as mentioned above, there is a growth in new concepts like collaborative leadership, learning-centred leadership, servant leadership, network leadership, etc. which are challenging the way school leadership is understood globally.

Upon further consideration, it can be generalized that globally an aspect of school leadership which is not critiqued or challenged equally around the world is the way future-oriented school principals are being trained, developed and supported. The next section briefly explores this as "in the same way that the knowledge and skills students obtain from their schooling is influenced by the quality of the preparation and conduct of teachers, the quality of a nation's schools relies heavily upon the preparation and conduct of its school leaders" (OECD, 2014, p. 67).

2.2 Support and Development of School Principals

Benjamin Britten has said '*Learning is like rowing against the tide. One you stop doing it, you drift back*'. If a school leader is not motivated or properly trained for their job, it is almost impossible to find success and positive impact in their work. This can lead to demotivation, deprived school culture, lower academic achievement and ultimately a paucity of good applicants for future school leadership positions. Additionally, the huge responsibility of school principals to implement the national educational philosophies/standards while working to achieve the schools' values, goals and

objectives, will be disrupted. There is, therefore, an increasing international and local demand for initial and ongoing professional development of school principals, even though most professional development funding is allocated for teacher development (Prothero, 2015).

Authors around the world have studied the subject of school leadership training and defined it in varied ways. Training, in general, can be defined as "an organized activity aimed at imparting information and/or instructions to improve the recipient's performance or to help him or her attain a required level of knowledge or skill" (Aslam, 2013, p. 11). Leadership development particularly is known as "strengthening one's ability to establish clear vision and achievable goals, and to motivate others to subscribe to the same vision and goals" (Earley & Jones, 2009, p. 168). Bubb (2013, p. 14) expands professional development to include all staff members and describes it as an "on-going process encompassing formal and informal learning experiences that enable all staff in schools to think about what they are doing, enhance their knowledge and skills and improve ways of working so that pupil learning and well-being are increased."

Moreover, recent popularity in discourse around school leadership professional development has made school leadership training and support services a progressive focus for educational research. Training are being implemented in a variety of ways including courses, conferences, observation visits, one-on-one mentoring, personal reading, etc., though, they need to be contextualized to fit the local environment and context of the country. Darling-Hammond et al. (2007, p. 145) examined seven exemplary pre-service and in-service programs for school leadership development to identify meaningful characteristics common amongst them. These included (as cited in Schleicher, 2012, p. 23; Pont, et al., 2008, p. 133; OECD, 2014, p. 71)

- A comprehensive and coherent curriculum aligned with professional standards.

- A philosophy and curriculum that explicitly focus on instructional leadership and school improvement.

- Active, student-centred instruction that integrates theory and practice and stimulates reflection.

- Faculty knowledgeable about their subject areas and experienced in school administration.

- Social and professional support in the form of cohort structure and formalised mentoring and advising by expert principals.

- Vigorous, targeted recruitment and selection to seek out expert teachers with leadership potential.

- Well designed and supervised administrative internships under the guidance of expert veterans.

A missing link in most countries, however, is the critical focus on understanding personal motivations and needs of school principals under training as well as helping them manage their personal roles and responsibilities. Highly dependent on the role and setting of the school, the needs and motivations of principals vary and therefore, personalised support plans need to be explored. In countries like India, these contexts are even more complicated, which is what this study is trying to explore and understand. Before we analyse principal needs and what influences these, it is crucial to understand the context of school leadership in India and the training provisions currently available in the country.

3. SCHOOLS AND SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN INDIA

This chapter aims to elaborate on the status of schooling in India by providing authentic national data to qualify the need to improve educational provisions and leadership in the country. It also elaborates on the traditional outlook of school leadership, the role and responsibilities of an Indian school principal, their selection criteria, and the support provided to the profession in the country. The chapter closes by commenting on the rise in school leadership support programs and elaborates on one such government initiative.

3.1 Schooling in India

India has played a significant role in universalizing education and has been a key participant in re-affirming the goals of Education for All as laid out by the Dakar Framework for Action (2000), Millennium Development Goals (2000) and now Sustainable Development Goals (2015) (Kainth, 2016). As per the goal for quality education (SDG4), member states are to "ensure inclusive and quality education for all and promote lifelong learning", which is further broken down into milestones like "by 2030, ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and Goal-4 effective learning outcomes" (UNESCO, 2015).

Inspired by a similar ambition, the most recent education reform led by the Government of India along with the Ministry of Human Resource Development, aims "to meet the changing dynamics of the population's requirement with regards to quality education, innovation and research, aiming to make India a knowledge superpower by equipping its students with the necessary skills and knowledge and to eliminate the shortage of manpower in science, technology, academics and industry" (MHRD, 2017). When successfully implemented, these ambitious, national goals will impact approximately 260 million school-going students and 1.52 million schools (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 2016, pp. 1, 33-34). However, the Indian context isn't the easiest to maneuver and therefore, there is value in grounding these goals within the current educational reality of the

country before say, uncritically implementing yet another reform that is being built on the National Educational Policy, which was initially introduced around three decades ago, in 1986.

To further clarify the context of schools in India, they are of multiple types catering to varied grades, religions and other regional demographics, can be funded privately, publicly, or be under an NGO or public-private partnership scheme, as well as follow its own alternative methodology, catering to students from low to high-income backgrounds. Each school has its own set of culture, values, curriculum, staff and educational administration practices, which can be further influenced by the local, state and national authorities. As per Pratham's ASER Report[1] (2017, pp. 43-45), India boasts of a 96.9% enrolment rate for students in the 6-14 age group and 84.7% enrolment rate for the 15-16 age group, which should be considered a major success in terms of accessibility. However, a few months into the academic year, only around 71.2% of primary students are seen to be attending the school. This brings in the question of why students are not present in classrooms even when they are provided with resources and infrastructural benefits like mid-day meals, safe and *pukka* (brick) classrooms, free uniforms, textbooks, bags, notebooks, etc. As per the same report (pp.43-45), only a limited 27.7% of the country's grade III children can do 2-digit subtraction, 42.5% can read a grade I text in their local language and 28.5% can read simple words in English. These statistics though elaborate on the two major issues of quality and accessibility of education across the Indian territory, there are many other concerns faced by the education sector like high drop-out rates especially after grade 10, low levels of learning and achievement especially in rural settings, poor functioning of schools, lack of strong leadership, inadequate school infrastructure, etc. (Kant, 2014). In the country, there is an obvious need to question and critique the way schools are run, the school leadership as well as country's systemic leadership who are responsible for educational provisions to all children.

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[1]Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) is an educational survey that explores enrolment, attendance and learning outcomes. This year (2016), the survey was carried out in 17,473 villages, covering 350,232 households and 562,305 children in the age group 3-16.

Logistically, India is said to have two levels of administrative influence, namely Central and State, with each level having its own local government agencies, municipalities, corporations, village panchayats, etc. Every state in India also has their own training institutions for school administrators, though the quality and consistency of these cannot be relied upon (Shukla, 1983, p. 41). In India, there are around 8.69 million teachers, though only 70% of the schools have a headmaster (MHRD, 2016, p. 71; National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 2016, p. 70). Interestingly the biggest educational management information system (EMIS) for India, called DISE Report, doesn't provide any data for head masters, on their numbers or qualifications, except if the head masters have a separate room in their school, which was a small 54.97% in 2015-16 (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 2016, p. 30).

In India, there are also other complexities that feature in the regular work of a school principal based on their context, like the lack of provisions for education to indigenous or tribal groups, constant conflict in the choice of language of instruction especially with the increased use of English, the rise in private schooling, growing reservations for scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and other minorities, etc. (National Knowledge Commission, 2007, pp. 27-30). Additionally, regional conflicts like the fight for Kashmir between India and Pakistan or the Maoists attack on Naxalite regions in the North- East of India; and girl education with only 47% of girls enrolled in Indian schools (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 2014), continue to be a problem in rural as well as urban districts. Therefore, the need to prepare the school principals of the country to lead educational reform locally and at a state level, is a crucial step in providing social justice and meaningful education to all students enrolled in schools.

3.2 School Leadership in India

By now, it has been established in the study that the job of a school principal is not easy. They are "expected to develop learning communities, build the professional capacity of teachers, take advice from parents, engage in collaborative and

consultative decision making, resolve conflicts, engage in effective instructional leadership, and attend respectfully, immediately and appropriately to the needs and requests of families with diverse cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds" (Shields, 2004, p. 109), while delivering to national and international reforms and goals.

Historically, in India, school leaders were revered upon as community leaders though today, they may have varied levels of power and authority based on the type of school they are employed in. As per Sinha (1977, p. 15), the style of Indian educational administration "has received much of its spirit and philosophy from the British-style public administration". It is critical to note that this trend is still present as most senior teachers in India are promoted to a school leadership position entirely based on their tenure, and not based on their motivation, knowledge, skills or ability (Central Square Foundation, 2015). This, unlike other developed countries, makes it difficult for the national authorities to ensure effective implementation of the national and local reforms in some schools.

Recently, school principals were included in the seventh pay commission set by the Government of India, which provides above average salaries to principals (Pay Scale, 2016), with an aim to make the profession more attractive and sustainable. However, there hasn't been a major change in this aspect. This is because it is common knowledge that school principals are held to many demands like delivering high quality learning through high quality teachers, curriculum and pedagogies to the students in their schools, without much support. They are to ensure that all paperwork and procedural duties are being met by the school staff. They are also to build and maintain school culture which is inspiring and goal oriented, therefore leading to stronger student achievement (Sinha, 1977; Witzier, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003; Lynch, 2012). Additionally, they are to achieve all these with little support, respect or appreciation. Given such challenges, India recently started working on providing support to the school principals through a National Centre for School Leadership, which has been briefly introduced in the next section.

3.2.1 School Leadership Development Framework by NCSL

The National Centre for School Leadership (NCSL), set up in 2012, is a new effort in ensuring that the Indian school principals are ready and successful in their roles. The centre defines the role of a school leader as one who ensures smooth functioning of the school, maintains academic records, coordinates and disseminates crucial information from system officials to teachers, parents and other stakeholders, participates actively in the teaching-learning process, observes classrooms and gives feedback to the teachers, allocates funds and mobilizes resources in order to promote creativity and innovation in his/her school (National Centre for School Leadership, 2014, p. 25). These roles can be established as the means of reaching the end of "developing new generation leaders to transform schools so that every child learns and every school excels" while "enhancing leadership capability at a school level for institution building to deliver quality education" (National Centre for School Leadership, 2014, p. 3).

The centre is set up to train central school leaders, however, it will provide curriculum framework and training guides for states to forward and implement similar training with the school principals in their regions. The state is responsible for conceptualizing and contextualizing the curriculum and modules given by the NCSL, translate the work in local languages, provide additional state resources and expertise, etc. with the help of the State Resource Groups (SRGs), the State Council of Educational Research and Training (SCERTs), the District Institute for Education and Trainings (DIETs), etc. The State Resource Groups are expected to develop a consortium of experts which will act as Leadership Academies to ensure sustainability of practice and learning. The attempt to decentralise the implementation of the training, namely curriculum and material development, capacity building, networking and institutional building, and research and development, is an integral component of the programme design (National Centre for School Leadership, 2014). The implementation of such a program has its own restraining and enabling influences, for example, administrative apathy, lack of coordination and spread of responsibility are factors that can restrict the pace at which such trainings reach the

school principals, whereas setting of local expertise groups can enable collaboration and faster, local action in communities.

The centre further recommends a curriculum framework that has been designed by the collective effort of resource persons, individual specialists, mentors, national resource groups as well as the National College for Teaching and Leadership (NCTL, UK). In the framework, six key areas are explored for school leadership trainings and development:

- *Perspective on School Leadership*, which aims to understand the role and impact of a leader on school transformation and the role of a school as a learning organization.
- *Developing Self*, which aims to help leaders reflect on their values, capabilities and attitudes, and develop a positive self-concept.
- *Transforming Teaching-Learning Process*, which aims to make classroom practices more engaging, creative and child-focused, by expanding on schools as creative units.
- *Building and leading teams*, which focuses on group dynamics, opportunities for collaboration, conflict resolution tactics and teamwork.
- *Leading innovations*, which aims to set conditions, systems, structures and processes that support new ideas and actions within schools.
- *Leading partnerships*, which focuses on developing strong, fruitful relationships with external stakeholders like the parents, community leaders, officials in education departments, other neighbouring schools, etc.

These trainings are provided through a 10-day, face to face programme with follow up provisions that lead to a year-long cycle of leadership development for the school principals. Though formulated on the most common and generic demands from school leaders, it is critical for the state authorities to contextualise and ensure accountability and credibility within the local communities.

Currently, the program has been implemented in sixteen states out of the twenty-nine states and seven union territories in India. Work has also begun in

translating the program in local languages of the remaining states as well as overlooked districts and regions, to ensure wide spread implementation. From 2013 to 2015, the NCSL has taken workshops for curriculum and material development in many states, participated in national and international seminars like the International Seminar on School Leadership: Policy, Practice & Research in New Delhi and has networked with School boards like NCERT, Kendriya Vidyalaya Sangathan, etc. (National Centre for School Leadership, 2015). Since fairly new, the impact of this program will show in the level of education and the quality of school leadership found in the country, only in the next decade or so. However, the establishment of the centre has started a new drive to raise the quality and productivity of school leaders, which is the need of the hour. Additionally, the researcher has noticed a rise in private institutes initiating school leadership training, which compliment this establishment.

4. SOCIAL JUSTICE LEADERSHIP

In this chapter, a new form school leadership will be explored. Socially just or Social Justice leadership is a practice uncharted in India, even though it has been widely studied in countries like United Kingdom and the United States of America. The chapter briefly explores the concept of social justice, examines this new type of leadership within the roles of educational leadership, and defines social justice leadership in education using the Capability Approach (CA).

4.1 Social Justice

Social Justice as a concept is hard to define but stems from the central issue of unequal relationships among individuals or groups of people, thereby defining the work of constructing harmony in diversity through an act of social cohesion. The idea is to provide equality in an environment based out of inequalities. Under the practice of being socially just lies a moral grounding where one is driven by making value based judgements while considering the consequences of ones' actions on others (Bosu, Dare, Dachi, & Fertig, 2009, pp. 1-2).

The changes in worldwide functioning with respect to lifestyles, social structures, advent of technology, and like, has given rise to societal differences which therefore requires a socially just approach from school leaders working with a variety of community members. Furthermore, the leadership of institutes need to work with such a perspective to provide essential feelings of democracy, freedom and human rights to their followers (Turhan, 2010, p. 1357).

To build an understanding of social justice, one can explore its three dimensions as provided by Nancy Fraser (as cited in Tikly & Barrett, 2011, pp. 6-7), namely, 'redistribution', 'recognition' and 'participation'. *Recognition*, as the name suggests, is concerned with the acknowledgement of the positive existence of historically marginalized groups and minorities, which as per Fraser (1997) is "the central problem of justice". The other two dimensions of *redistribution* and *participation* deal with how resources are distributed or allocated, and what kind of opportunities

are given to marginalized communities to participate in dialogue and decision making (Bosu, Dare, Dachi, & Fertig, 2009, p. 2). These three attributes can be used to analyze the works of socially just leaders and institutions in providing opportunities for all to succeed.

4.2 Towards an understanding of Social Justice through the Capability Approach

> Many of our schools are hungry for leaders who will stand with their communities and against policies that divert education and resources from the real needs of children and their families. (Larson and Murthada, 2002, p. 157, as cited in Karpinski & Lugg, 2006, p. 286)

Amartya Sen, an economist and a Nobel Prize winner, shared the concept of capabilities in the pursuit of well-being at a time when other economists and influential organizations were trying to establish tools to qualify their projects according the human rights or the human capital approach. As per Sen (1999), well-being or the pursuit of true happiness cannot be calculated by the amount of income or resources that an individual has, but rather should be examined by understanding the level of freedom or choice amongst opportunities one has in living a life an individual has reason to value. The approach asks the focus to be on people, rather than commodities (Saito, 2003, p. 19). Sen looks at capabilities as an alternative measure of development and proposes its use in assessing equality of opportunities available to an individual, rather than simply access to resources or equality of outcomes (Tikly & Barrett, 2011, p. 7). The Capability Approach (CA) is "not a theory that can explain poverty, inequality or well-being, instead it rather provides a tool and a framework within which to conceptualize and evaluate these phenomena" (Robeyns, 2005, p. 94).

It is critical to understand the key terms of the Capability Approach, before one tries to analyze social justice leadership in education using this tool. The following sub-sections, therefore, describe keys terms from the CA, namely, capabilities, functionings, well-being and agency, and conversion factors, for further use in this study.

4.2.1 Capabilities and Functionings

Capabilities lies at the core of the Capability Approach, which asks social policies and reforms to provide opportunities to people to convert their capabilities into valued functionings by promoting their agency and well-being goals. Capabilities are therefore defined by what people value and what they are effectively able to be and do. This depends on the opportunities that are available to them to make a choice from, which further leads to their well-being goals. Capabilities in other words are freedoms or valuable options available to individuals so that they can convert them into realized achievements or functionings (Robeyns, 2005; Walker, 2005; Alkire, 2005; Saito, 2003).

> A capability is a potential functioning; the list of functionings is endless. It might include doings and beings such as being well nourished, having shelter and access to clean water, being mobile, being well-educated, having paid-work, being safe, being respected, taking part in discussions with your peers, and so on. The difference between a capability and a functioning is like one between an opportunity to achieve and the actual achievement, between potential and outcome. (Walker, 2006, p. 165)

Functionings, therefore, are "constitutive of a person's being" (Alkire, 2005, p. 118). However, these functionings are, by definition, limited to those of value and do not include harmful or evil goals. These can be different from person to person. For example, two people with the same capabilities can have completely different levels of achieved functionings based on the choices they make. Therefore, it is the responsibility of social organizations, reforms and policies not to measure and provide platforms of increased funictionings but of increased capabilities to people, for them to make different choices based on their idea of a good life (Robeyns, 2005, p. 101).

4.2.2 Well-being and Agency

Another key aspect of the CA is the distinction between well-being and agency. As per Sen (as cited in Robeyns, 2005, p.102), "the standard of living is 'personal well-being related to one's own life'." Well-being, therefore, relates to one's own life and action that impacts one's own life. However, when supplemented with actions that showcase commitment to others, we start looking at the concept of overall agency. Sen (1999, p. 19) defines an agent as

[...] someone who acts and brings about change, and whose achievements can be judged in terms of her own values and objectives, whether or not we assess them in terms of some external criteria as well.

Overall, these concepts can be used to explain actual achievements or well-being on one hand and freedoms or agency, on the other. An example, given by Robeyns (2005, pp. 102-103), further explains the distinction between wellbeing and agency where two sisters with same achieved well-being levels happen to go under different situations which impact their agency and therefore achieved well-being. One of these sisters goes on a demonstration and gets arrested, which lowers here agency freedoms thereby impacting her well-being, whereas the other sister stays at home and preserves her wellbeing while practicing less of her agency. This showcases that agency is when a person, using his prerequisite set of capabilities, exercises his or her freedom of choice to achieve what he/she has reason to value (Walker, 2005, p. 105).

4.2.3 Conversion factors

In the study of capabilities, functionings, agency and well-being, there are three types of crucial factors that play a significant role in conversion of capabilities into functionings and how one practices their agency. As per Sen (1999, p. 5),

What people can positively achieve is influenced by economic opportunities, political liberties, social powers, and the enabling conditions of good health, basic education, and the encouragement and cultivation of initiatives. The institutional arrangements for these opportunities are also influenced by the exercise of people's freedoms, through the liberty to participate in social choice and in the making of public decisions that impel the progress of these opportunities.

How one achieves functionings, therefore, depends on both individual and institutional contexts, but also on the social and economic arrangements as well as on political and civil rights (Walker, 2005, p. 105). Therefore, in the CA, conversion factors are also included for evaluative purposes and can be broadly categorized into personal, social and environmental conversion factors. Personal conversion factors include factors like a person's internal motivation, metabolism, physical conditions, sex, reading skills, intelligence, etc. Social factors include social norms, public policies, gender roles, societal structures, power relations, etc. whereas environmental factors include the location, climate, geography, etc. (Robeyns, 2005, p. 99; Tao, 2013, p. 3). In the CA, having goods or resources does not necessarily translate into using these

resources to convert your capabilities into valued functionings. The context and the circumstances play a critical role in seeing such conversions to fulfillment. The CA, therefore, provides a holistic, normative framework, which is used in the next sections to evaluate the field of education and social justice.

4.3 Capability Approach in Education

"The key idea of the CA is that social arrangements should aim to expand people's capabilities- their freedom to promote or achieve 'functionings' which are important to them" (Unterhalter, Vaughan, & Walker, 2007). This idea links the CA to the field of education, which also is focused on opening new doors and providing opportunities and freedoms to students to achieve their best. In the field of education, the access to opportunities or freedoms defines how much an individual can convert his or her capabilities into functionings, and lead a life he has reason to value (Walker, 2005).

In such regard, schools are considered active agents in developing student's agency and autonomy, form identities, build capabilities and enhance their ability as individuals to identify and live their ideal lives. (ibid, 2005, pp. 107-108). Education plays the dual role of an end or basic capability (for example, being educated) as well as means of reaching other capabilities (for example, of being employed). It has both intrinsic value to the well-being and freedom of people, and instrumental value in influencing social change and economic production (Saito, 2003, p. 24). Therefore, capabilities can be both enhanced or diminished through education.

As leaders of schools, it is the school principal's responsibility to ensure the expansion of freedoms for his students and staff members alike. Under the CA, school leaders need to ensure that obstacles are being removed from student's and teacher's paths, with the aim to expand capabilities of students and teachers, thereby, accelerating the conversion of capabilities into functionings.

> If all persons were the same, then an index of primary goods would yield similar freedoms for all; but given human diversity, the comparisons in the space of social primary goods will fail to take notes that different people need different amount and different kinds of goods to reach the same levels of well-being and advantage. (Robeyns, 2005, p. 97)

It is therefore crucial for school leaders, pursuing educational equality, to ask the same question, "Equality of What?", as asked by Sen. When considering equality, are school leaders looking at equality of inputs, access, treatment, achievement or outcomes; and how does this get influenced by personal and socio-environment factors at play? (Unterhalter, Vaughan, & Walker, 2007). This linking relationship between the field of educational leadership and social justice, inspired by the CA, has given rise to a new style of leadership, commonly known as the social justice leadership, which has been further expanded in the next section.

4.4 Social Justice in the field of Educational Leadership and Management

Influenced by the Capability Approach, education is defined as the provision of expanded opportunities to all students irrespective of their demographics or backgrounds. However, it is a common fact that some students or groups of students not like the traditionally dominant student body, have been seen to be marginalized and therefore, encounter different experiences, resources and opportunities in schools across the world. These differences can range from differences in race, gender, sexual preferences, income, cognitive ability, etc. and can automatically put groups of students at a disadvantage (Bosu, Dare, Dachi, & Fertig, 2009; Karpinski & Lugg, 2006).

In moments like these, schools play a role in bringing together communities of students and other key stakeholders in providing platforms for dialogue, socialization and acceptance. The school principal's indirect influence in driving student learning and direct influence in setting school culture (Lynch, 2012; Witzier, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003) is another justification for educational leaders to work towards the cause of social justice. School leaders need to prepare schools that advocate for education that advances the rights and education for all children. They are responsible for subverting the dominant paradigm, fostering equitable school practices, processes and outcomes, and advocating for traditionally marginalized and poorly served students (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). They have the authority and opportunity to redefine

how communities interact with each other by modeling value-based behaviors, by practicing ethical decision making, committing to fairness and equity, fostering critical perspectives and promoting social action (Bosu, Dare, Dachi, & Fertig, 2009, pp. 3-4).

Though the role of a school leader drew heavily on hierarchical and simplistic business models, the school leaders of 21st century need to be more than managers. Social justice leadership needs to be about creating equitable schooling and education; examining issues of race, diversity, marginalization, gender, spirituality, age, ability, sexual orientation and identity; and fighting anti-oppressive education (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009, p. 4).

Though a just and needed cause, social justice isn't often considered a crucial part of school leadership. The role, mainly looked through the lens of management, is seen to take occasional, ill-informed stabs at identifying and working towards the removal of inequities. It is even observed that many school leadership training programs, especially for school and principals working with diverse, multiethnic and economically varied communities, doesn't interact with the idea of multiculturalism, language and resource barriers, religious beliefs, etc. in their training programs. Additionally, school leadership trainers may not have "the knowledge, materials, strategies, rationales or skills to infuse their curriculum content with issues related to poverty, language minority, special needs, gender, race and sexuality, etc." (Turhan, 2010, pp. 1358-59).

In the rising globalized world, Pitt (1998) critiqued the field of educational administration for not expanding the scope of the work of educational or school leaders to include causes of social justice. As per him, there are certain key themes in the educational leadership discourse of 'new times' (see table 1), which continue to exist in the educational leadership discourse even after almost two decades, especially in developing countries like India.

TABLE 1: Key Themes in Social Justice in Education in 'New Times' (Pitt, 1998)

Dominant Language	Marginal Language
• market driven	• social cohesion
• global competitiveness	• social capital
• individual access	• community
• measured competencies	• reciprocity
• development plans	• trust
• accountability	• co-operation

Based on such dominant discourse, some school principals can get into the trap of, unknowingly, blaming the poor performance of their school to marginalized groups based on socially constructed, stereotypical assumptions (Shields, 2004, p. 111). Moreover, despite right intentions, the practice of social justice leadership does come with its own hardships. School principals are often seen at a conundrum where social justice and their personal values guiding the school practices are seen to go against social values and understanding. For example, promoting living the best authentic lives for some students struggling with their sexual orientation and building a school open to accepting that journey, may not hold against the societal values, especially for societies that value only heterosexuality.

In conclusion, all schools catering to students from different socio-economic and socio-cultural backgrounds need to be aware of such challenges in the socialization process for the communities and therefore school administrators need to play the role of a social activist in ensuring social justice in their schools, communities and if possible, nationally, while practicing their everyday leadership. The next sections focus on data gathered from the interviewed school principals on how they look at their role of school leaders, especially as they work with marginalized communities and hard educational environments, through the scope of social justice in education and Amartya Sen's Capability Approach.

5. RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

The study was framed with the objective to explore and understand the training and support needs of Indian school leaders supporting students from marginalized and under-resourced communities. The study provides a holistic understanding of the school leadership space, especially with those focused on providing equitable and socially just education and support to students, with the help of the following research questions:

a) How do school principals understand the role and responsibilities of their job?

b) What are the challenges faced by school principals and how do they motivate themselves despite these trials?

c) What are the training and support needs of school principals and how can they be better supported and developed?

For the purpose of the study, five principals were interviewed who were identified as passionate educators working with marginalized students and communities across both the government and public-private partnership set-up. The interview questions were framed in a format that arrives at both direct and indirect inputs, classified as questions about their personal journey as a school principal, their own motivations and challenges, as well as their support and training needs.

6. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

This chapter aims at describing the development of the research study including the narrative behind the changing focus of the research topic, the selection and interviews of participants, the selection of research methods and the flow of the data analysis procedure as prescribed in the study. The chapter ends with a discussion on reliability and ethical considerations, supplemented by the researcher's personal experience with the research topic.

6.1 Participants and Finalization of the Research Topic

The study has gone through several rounds of reiteration based on what resources were made available or unavailable to the author. As mentioned in Chapter 3 *Schools and School Leadership in India,* the role of a school principal isn't always assumed as one practicing social justice leadership, but is rather in tune with a managerial or hierarchical delivery. The focus for school leader support by local, state, national as well as private bodies, therefore, is mostly directed towards organizational leadership and managerial administration trainings. It is also fair to say that the consistency of such a support is highly dependent on where a school principal is employed. One can vouch from the recent establishment of National Centre for School Leadership (NCSL), which was established by National University of Educational Planning and Administration (NUEPA) only in 2012, as an example of previous lack of continuous and consistent support.

The research study was initially drafted to understand the needs of school principals working in government schools in the western region of India. The author reached out to a private school leadership training institute and NUEPA to get permissions to interview some of the school principals under their training programs but wasn't provided with any support. The author then went ahead and interviewed some principals she had worked with earlier in her professional career or knew of.

The participants included both male and female school principals to prevent any gender biases towards the study. Additionally, these participants came with

varied years of school leadership experience, ranging from three months to fifteen years at the time of the interview. Out of the five school principals interviewed for the study, three of them lead secondary schools, which caters to grades 8th to 10th, whereas two lead comprehensive schools catering to kindergarten or 1st to 10th grade. These schools include being in their first year of set up to already well-established schools, catering from 108 to 800 students and 10 to 39 teachers. All of the participating schools are essentially government or public schools, though only one of these schools is solely supported by the government. Two out of the four remaining schools are supported by a well-established NGO, whereas two have been set up recently and are supported by an educational startup.

Additionally, to recognize the leadership support they had, it is useful to know that three out of the five participants had assistant school leaders who supported them in their daily tasks. Additionally, all of them had been undergoing some sort of school principal support program at the time of interview, though this doesn't qualify that all of them had pre-service or full training and support from the first day of their role as a school principal.

Upon completion of the implementation process, the research questions though kept focus on the training and support needs of the interviewed school principals, it provided an additional perspective of 'leadership for social justice', across both the government as well as public-private partnership school setups, that has been explored in the Chapter 8, *Discussion.*

6.2 Context and the Research Process

As mentioned earlier, the research study is based in the western part of India, with inputs from five school principals based out of three different cities across two states. These two states collectively have 1.6 million schools, though it is hard to get an estimated number of how many of these schools are government schools taken over by some public-private partnership or an NGO (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 2016, p. 1). However, as widely known, across India, there has been a rise in privatization and therefore, many players are stepping in to

work with the public system. For example, for one of the states, 20.97% of all its schools fell under the category of private aided schools, whereas 15.65% of all schools were considered private unaided schools (National University of Educational Planning and Administration, 2016, p. 4).

For the context of this research study, however, schools were selected based on their leadership. These school principals are known to the author, either personally or professionally, for their commitment to providing quality education to all their students. The author reached out to them through an email, which invited them for a Skype interview and informed them that their response will be taken as an approval to use their interview material as a data point for the study. This was followed up by setting interview times on Skype, and reconfirming the permission to use the data at the start and end of each interview. The interviews took around 38 minutes to an hour, except the one attained through a google form.

The interviews were left open-ended, though some questions and a skeleton structure was drafted beforehand. The interview questions meant to explore the personal journey of the participating school leaders and gave the opportunity to them to share their own successes and challenges as well as their underlying motivations, etc. The principals were also encouraged to share their ideas on what an ideal school principal training program in India should be. All the responses were analyzed specifically to the question in focus but also in relation with other questions from the interviews, leading to the results for the research questions.

It is important to note that the process of data collection initially included one interview which was taken face-to-face, whereas four interviews that were through Skype. However, the data for the face-to-face interview was found corrupted, which in turn made the data invalid for analysis. To balance the various perspectives needed from the data, a government school principal was asked to fill an online form with the same interview questions as the principal was unable to commit to a Skype call (see Section 6.2 for participant description).

6.3 Research Methods

Since the study aims to analyze human perspectives and ideas about school leadership, especially within complicated, under-resourced settings, a qualitative research method was finalized for the study. This was qualified with the finding that most authors who research motivations and opinions also use the qualitative approach as it provides the flexibility needed in analyzing data and grounding it in the problems being studied. The qualitative approach helps breakdown a certain phenomenon and supports its subjective interpretations. (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005, pp. 1277-1278). Though, as per Cohen, Manion & Morrison (2011, p. 414), quantitative studies are used to describe or complement a phenomenon already interpreted and the collected data is describing the phenomenon's credibility.

To meet the objectives of the study, the questions and the interview process was left semi-structured and wasn't aimed at directing questions to fit the answers in pre-conceived categories (See Appendix 1). For this study, there was a need for flexibility as not many authors have researched leadership for social justice in India and it is only now getting recognized as a scope to explore within the educational leadership paradigm. Furthermore, the Capability Approach was decided to be used in the research analysis process and will be seen in the discussion section of the study. The qualitative approach therefore, being a content-sensitive method that promotes flexibility in terms of research design, made it the natural option for this study.

6.4 Data Analysis

After the interviews were recorded and all the data was collected in one common portal, the process of data analysis began. The first phase included transcribing the data. The interviews were conducted in English and all the data was received in the same language. Though there were some sparse words and phrases in Hindi, the author, whose has the same mother tongue, translated them into English. This was done to ensure the meaning wasn't lost from the data, and yet could be considered reliable. It is also valuable to note that all principals interviewed felt comfortable speaking and being interviewed in English.

For the purpose of data analysis, the method of content analysis was chosen. As per Cohen et al. (2011, p. 464), content analysis

> […] takes texts and analyses, reduces and interrogates them into summary form through the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes in order to generate or test a theory.

It is hard to say that this study exploited a purely deductive or inductive approach to content analysis. The employed method was more iterative, which as per Tracy (2013, p. 184) encourages "reflections upon active interests, current literature, granted priorities and various theories" to be brought out by the researcher. It was a reflexive process with an intention well explained by Elo and Kyngäs (2008, p. 108),

> [...] to attain a condensed and broad description of the phenomenon, and the outcome of the analysis is concepts or categories describing the phenomenon.

The process of data immersion started with transcribing and listening to the interviews repeatedly. After the first phase of transcribing, all the interviews were reheard for any loss of data, checked and formatted for primary level data analysis. For the primary-cycle coding, a computer-aided approach was used where the program of google documents was used to summarize chunks of texts into key points or first level codes. The secondary-level coding helped organize the first level codes into larger, interpretative concepts (See Appendix 2). Under each major concept, first-level codes were rearranged, rephrased, merged and split based on the content of the codes, to build meaningful second level or tertiary level codes and broader categories. Seven major concepts emerged from this data analysis process, which helped synthesize and showcase how the concepts were connected and how each concept has categories supporting them as well as how concepts and categories influenced each other (See Chapter 6 *Results*). The entire process was documented and maintained chronologically with supplementary author notes.

Citations from the interviews are shared using labels in the study. All principals are stated as Px and their schools as Sx (with x representing interviews 1 to 5). Other abbreviations are used to conceal the names of people, institutions, programs, cities, etc. which have been mentioned in the interviews to support anonymity. As per Tracy (2013, p. 207), a certain number of exemplars and vignettes

as well as metaphors can supplement the meanings identified from the data, which has been followed up on for the study.

The final step included formulating a loose outline of the analysis as prescribed by Tracy (2013, p. 197), which helped make sense of how the data collected. The results are presented in a sequence similar to the course of the interview, to provide a meaningful flow in the *Results* chapter. The following section (See Chapter 8 *Discussion*) will connect and build parallels between the results from the data analysis to the Capability Approach and the literature explored in section 2 *Future of Schools and School Leadership*, section 3 *Schools and School Leadership in India*, and section 4 *Social Justice Leadership*.

6.5 Reliability

As per Cohen et al. (2011, p. 202),

> In qualitative research reliability can be regarded as a fit between what researchers record as data and what actually occurs in the natural setting that is being researched [...]

Reliability in the qualitative research community can therefore be explained as how dependable is the gathered data, opposite to the validity percentage that one looks at in quantitative research data. The data collected through the interviews for this study can be considered unreliable for some researchers because of the limited number of participants and lack of random sampling which is known to prove a better representation of a larger group (Bouma & Atkinson, 1995). However, the author's reasoning behind reaching out to specific principals who were known to practice strong leadership with commitment to social justice, with or without their own knowledge, was done to meet the aims of the study. It was crucial for the study that the participants honestly express opinions about their current realities and are willing to share the hard facts. Even with the smaller group, transferability can be seen to be maintained as there is a feasibility to transfer the research findings into other contexts (Shenton, 2004) as explored in the section 8 *Discussions*. Also, at this point, the research study only wishes to explore and initiate discussions on the topic of leadership training and support needs within the Indian school leadership community.

As per Hsieh & Shannon (2005, p. 1280), peer debriefing, prolonged engagement, negative case analysis and member checks are some ways to establish credibility and trustworthiness. The study has followed up on such recommendations to the extent possible for a masters level thesis study. Debriefs with peers and personal advisor has helped ensure credibility of the process followed. As specified in the section 6.4 *Data Analysis*, repeated checks to prevent loss of data during transcription and translations of phrases made by a mother tongue speaker was carried out to further make the data reliable. According to Cohen et al. (2011, p. 204), researchers also have influence of their research studies by way of their own role, attitudes and understandings, which can lead to a certain bias towards the content of the study. This has been acknowledged by recognizing the authors personal experience within the field in the next section.

6.6 Ethical Solutions

Throughout the process of the study, ethical considerations were taken into account to ensure reliability, quality and ethical integrity. As mentioned in section 6.4 *Data Analysis*, consent was taken from all participants initially when they agreed to be interviewed, but also at the beginning and end of each interview. Anonymity has been maintained by keeping the name of the principals, their schools, the cities in which they were located, hidden. This has been followed through for even any affiliations mentioned in any of the interviews, so that the identity of the school principals does not get revealed.

The data has been analyzed only by the author, and any peer or supervisor led debriefs have been done without the mention of the participant's details. It has also been decided to delete the interview material after the thesis has been formally published. At the request of the school principals, the author has promised to share the final thesis with all the participants.

6.6.1 Researcher's Personal Interest

As a solution towards minimizing the bias stemming from the researcher's personal interests, this part has been included in the ethical solutions section to ensure transparency and build reliability and credibility.

I, the researcher, has always been intrigued by the role of school principals. There are various reasons for this, which I have tried to share in this section. Personal experiences like having been traumatized by my own school principal on the one hand, but working as a teacher with a highly-invested principal on the other, has made me question as well have belief in the role of a school leader. This interest has been further complimented by my experience of working in a school serving marginalized, economically backward communities in the city of Mumbai. This was made possible as I was part of the Teach for India fellowship, which is a two-year teaching fellowship that believes in the motto "Teaching is Leadership". Additionally, the school I taught in was a government school that was taken over by an NGO, passionate about bringing quality education to students from harder situations.

All of this combined made me curious of the drivers and motivations of such teachers and school principals, given that the work they do is physically and emotionally exhausting. Through my experience, I also observed that the support given to leaders of such schools was minimal and was highly dependent on what your immediate managers had in store for you and your school.

In this development and education space, I noticed schools that were doing very well and schools that were struggling, despite having similar resources. This further pushed me to explore the field of educational leadership, especially with a focus on social justice and equitable solutions. Personal conversations showcased that the school principals felt a lack of support, resources and frequently, time to meet the needs of all students and teachers in their school.

As a result, after exploring educational philosophies of many different high-performing countries, I chose to come to Finland, at the University of Jyväskylä, to pursue my Masters in Educational Leadership. Through the two year's program and

having the chance to go on a 6 month exchange at the UCL-Institute of Education (UK), I have been able to gather a basic understanding of what motivates and drives passionate school leaders. Though the school leadership discourse back at my home country, in my opinion and based out of my personal experiences, is different from Finland or the UK. This urged me to academically research the needs and motivations of Indian school leaders, especially the ones with a focus on social justice. My personal aim from the study is not to qualify my experience, but be a part in bringing awareness to the needs of this community.

7. RESULTS

The section aims at describing the results attained from the interviews with the school principals. The process followed is as described in Sections 6.3 *Research Methods* and 6.4 *Data Analysis.*

The first subsection describes the interviewed school principals' understanding of their own roles and responsibilities, and how the role has transformed with time from their own experience. The second subsection elaborates on the challenges faced by these school principals which range from personal to structural and environmental challenges. This is followed by a further description on how the school principals keep themselves motivated, despite the challenges. The subsequent section explores the underlying-mindsets of these school principals as well the opportunities that are available to them including provisions made by the state, external stakeholders as well those that are self-made and available within schools. The final subsection identifies the common support and training needs of these school principals while commenting on certain individual priorities.

The results are presented in a flow identical to the interview's structure and inevitably has been divided into categories that help answer the research questions (See Section 7.6 *Summary of the findings)*

7.1 The role and responsibility of a School Leader

All the interviewed school principals expressed their opinions on various aspects of the school leadership role, especially those associated within an under-resourced school environment. This section describes the work of these school principals by isolating the various roles played by them and by elaborating on the responsibilities that come under each role.

The role of a school principal has undergone some shifts where currently the role is seen as a balancing structure between a teacher's hard work (input) and a student's outcomes (output) (P2, 212-214). This shift in approach was agreed upon by most of the interviewed school principals, where they approved to have seen a change

or shift in the way a school leader performs his/her function. In the words of P3 (116-120),

> […] calling that (old) position 'school principal' to now calling it a 'school leader' makes a hell lot of a difference. From calling yourself a principal or a headmaster or a head mistress to being a school leader and believing that I am the person leading this school and this group of people, plays on the mindset.

Four out of the five principals agreed that the role of a school principal used to be administrative where the key responsibility was to look after paperwork, manage logistics and simply "stay inside their office" (P1, 199-201; P4, 148-149). This, in their opinion has changed, where more schools and school leaders are being concerned about classroom practice, instruction and student outcomes. School principals have become more approachable, hold themselves accountable for results, don't unnecessarily blame the teachers and are constantly pushing barriers (P2, 149-161).

However, interestingly, the fifth school principal, who runs a purely government-supported school, disagreed with this transition. In his opinion, the role of a school leader used to be the one that was responsible for student learning, but the current systemic structures and expectations ensure that the school principals are distracted from their core work and are busy with preparing "good-looking reports" (P5, 53-62).

Though there are few overlaps, the following roles are seen to be played by these school principals in their everyday work.

7.1.1 Leader (Organizational Leadership)

The interviewed school principals have a personal investment in the way the school works and grows. The principals are committed, self-motivated and take ownership of their actions towards the development of the school. P4 (160-168) mentions

> […] what excited me was an opportunity to lead a ship, […] being a captain of the ship is being in charge of adventure and freedom and going wherever you want to take that ship, with all its crew members. And I just could not say no to that. The adventure of it all called to me and you know I thought this is my chance to do whatever I want- nobody is watching!

These leaders see their responsibilities as divided to the school, the teachers, the students and the community they serve. The school principal is expected to set and

have clarity of the school's vision, build the culture and tone of the school, expand impact and focus the energy of the school towards the end goals, using authentic data. Grounded in that vision, the school principal is to build investment and ownership in the team, providing opportunities and access to all their students (P2, 45-56; P5,18-26). These school principals hold themselves responsible for the motivation and productivity of their team, for problem solving and making hard decisions when necessary and leading a positive mindset and habit change for their students and teachers.

While connecting with school and personal values, these school principals work to establish a brand and tradition that defines the school and helps the team articulate the school philosophy in actions. In the words of P3 (123-127),

> I am directly responsible for the student outcomes or rather every student action, every teacher action that happens within the four walls of the school. It is of prime importance that every teacher here is giving their best, every student here is receiving the best and ensuring that they do that in return as well.

The school principals are seen to build a safe environment for their teachers by giving them flexibility, decision making freedoms and an open space to dialogue and discuss problems as well as celebrate success. They balance the expectation setting practice with authenticity, vulnerability and shared ownership (P3, 216-223). P4 further explores the concept of shared support amongst teachers in her team leading to a culture of shared investment (125-128).

At a community level, these school principals work with students from marginalized, economically weaker sections of society. Despite challenges, they feel invested in the potential of their students, have big dreams and ambitions for them and are seen to work with a sense of urgency to match the institute's vision towards the larger purpose of education. P4's dream is to, "want our children to be on the cover of Time magazine because of the marvelous things they have done", whereas P1 (94-100) is charged up as he exclaims,

> The amount of potential they are coming in at grade 7-8 is enormous and our system is systematically killing that potential. […] I mean the depth of their experiences, their lives, challenges, the amount of grit they have shown- it is phenomenal. […]So, we got to fix this system where in P city out of the 55 schools nobody drops out. We got to keep expanding there!

All these principals believe in being authentic, caring about the future of their students and communities and see themselves building a movement towards goals like nation building, social justice and "redefining the workforce of a country" (P3, 59-61).

7.1.2. Manager (Operational Leadership)

Another aspect to the role of a school leader widely discussed by the study participants was their role as a manager. The participants hold themselves responsible for setting up and managing operations and logistics for the school, which includes a range of activities, like recruiting new, qualified and relevant teachers, growing staff size through expansion efforts, setting clear work expectations, retaining staff while ensuring their growth and development through capacity building and personalized, professional development exercises, ensuring supportive discipline systems for students and staff alike, looking after the physical infrastructure of the school, allocating resources for utmost benefit, etc. (P1, 95-115; P2, 29-44; P5, 15-17)

These principals are concerned about the student and teacher outcomes as well as overall school results. They see systems and structures as tools to ensure staff motivation, productivity, while holding them accountable on the ground of genuine relationships (P4, 92-100). The school principals mention the need to be clear, focused and often strict to drive the team, make difficult decisions when necessary and connect mundane chores to the school's vision (P4, 283-286). P4 (82-86) also shared how important it was for her to set up operations for her school to be able to concentrate on other tasks,

> […] when I got my admin and ops (operations) working in order, that was when I was able to focus on other things. Before that it was not teachers, it was not children. When my office was not working in harmony, that was when I landed up in doing everything myself and I burnt out and had breakdowns.

The school principals practice institutional management strategies (like setting up school and teacher timetable, check teacher quality, etc.) and support the expectations of school leaders as administrators. Though the principals mentioned that it is considered a crucial part of their role, they often have not been appropriately trained for it (P3, 18-20).

7.1.3 Teacher (Instructional Leadership)

The role of a school principal as a teacher is closely aligned to their role as instructional leaders. Two of the five school principals spend a part of their working hours teaching a few grades across the school. All, however, mentioned interacting with their students to understand their needs and aspirations as a tool to further guide their work. In the words of P1 (336-339),

> I will have this sharing circle with my grade 10 kids and I get a bunch of feedback from them just around the teachers, the practices, around myself, around school culture and so on- and it works like a charm. It informs me about so much.

Interestingly, they look at their roles as teachers through different lens. One principal talked about being a role model and having her instructional practice as a proof point for excellence for her teachers (P3, 205-210), while others ensured that they played a role in observing classrooms, jumping in to co-teach, giving feedback to the teachers and encouraging teacher quality (P1, 110-112; P2, 38-42). P4 (111-117, 306-308) sets time within school hours, by timetabling cluster meetings, grade level meetings and subject group meetings, to ensure student growth and development through pedagogical leadership.

The principals are themselves open to learning and growing, model positive behavior and provide individualized support, to build transferrable skills that the teachers can incorporate in their own interactions with the students.

7.1.4 Supporter (Coach)

> […] you think of the most wonderful thing you ever thought of and figure out a system to be mass produce it- all the wonders are gone. How beautiful it would be if the garden was rich enough to grow five wonderful things, 10 wonderful things, 15 wonderful things, each unique. So why can't the school be that to and for teachers. (P4, 231-234)

The role of a supporter or as seen here, a coach, has overlaps with the other roles mentioned above but requires a special mention. All principals stressed upon the need to empower their staff towards outcomes by identifying individual teacher's needs and styles, building personal connections, creating authentic experiences for growth and "driving investment over consensus" (P4, 104-106). P4 also stressed upon the idea

of shared support over shared ownership and a lack of competitiveness in her school due to open dialogue and teacher autonomy.

> Whenever we have become too conformist, that's when our children have had more problems. Whenever the dialogue or the communication piece has remained intact, then our children have seen taking more initiative, feeling more ownership, feeling more successful, doing better generally. (P4, 181-185)

Building a school culture based on team support and distributed leadership was mentioned by P3 (53-54) as she focuses on "ensuring that the school culture is in a place where the kids feel like it is a family, feel like we are here for a mission". P1 (107-109) mentions he spends 50% of his time coaching teachers as "you either hire awesome teachers or you get people with great potential and make them into awesome teachers-that's the only way the school improves."

7.1.5 Relationship Builder (Collaborative Leadership)

All the interviewed school principals work in lower income communities with a general lack of resources that is available to them. However, all the principals are committed to their student's growth and development. They ensure ways of acquiring resources by building an extensive network, setting strategic partnerships and collaborating with other external stakeholders. Four out of the five schools were being supported by external parties, which meant that a part of their daily routine involved managing relationships with a variety of stakeholders. All the schools were still under the government jurisdiction which meant the school leaders had to collaborate with education officers and other government officials as well. These school principals are assumed the face of the organization and are expected to manage communication amongst a variety of channels (P4, 275-278).

Within schools, the school principals spent time forming healthy relationships and genuine bonds with their students, teachers and other staff members to ensure all are aligned with the school's vision. Collaborative decision making and interpersonal skills are crucial to ensure the vision doesn't get lost in creativity. The school leaders are seen to connect needs with resources, invite expertise (P4, 120-122) and share their leadership for smooth progress. Relationships with parents has been another

important feature of the work of these principals. P2 (189-193) believes in the importance of parental investment and the role of the community in ensuring a solid environment for the students to grow. As per P5 (63-66)

> People were not really aware about the right of education for their children but these days the community is highly aware of their rights in education so the responsibility has had been increased for a school leader.

Personally, to grow into better school principals, P1 stays in touch with previous employers actively who share resources with him (281-288), P2 (21-28) and P3 (150-159) use personal and professional networks to go for workshops and trainings, P4 (338-351) is a part of highly reflective, dynamic, group of schools which help her team reflect and innovate, and P5 (78-82) uses relationship building to collect additional perspectives on education,

> I have had a circle of educationists around me. Best part is that I am connected with all generation people, like the new comers in the system and also with the people who has had spent their life with the system as well. I find it quite easy to learn and connect myself at time with the youngsters as well so it opens me a wide range of network of youngsters. I am also connected with different HM across India as well.

7.1.6 Reflector (Personal Leadership)

The idea of a reflector as one of the many roles played by a school principal comes from the need to constantly reflect and grow as a school to meet the needs of students, teachers and communities. It is about the legacy one leaves behind. In the words of P5 (90-93),

> The HM (head master) and teachers will change over the period of time but if your schools have had strong values, unanimous and clear structure and explicit instruction as various stages, it will keep the school going irrespective of the fact that whosoever is leading it.

One cannot plan for the sustainability and long term impact of a school without thinking about the practice so far. While practicing reflection, P1 (8-11) , P2 (57-69) and P3 (137-149) were seen to draw learning from prior professional experiences, while also taking into account the present situation at the school by taking feedback from teachers and students (P1, 335-339; P4, 358-376). The commitment to consistent growth and continuously improving themselves and their schools also comes out in conversations with the interviewed principals as they reflect on personal beliefs and practices, redefine and expand their understanding of leadership and other

educational philosophies. They all understand the responsibility of their role and seek to reflect and grow,

> […] recognizing and honouring my own journey has been a huge continuous learning. I have to constantly take my bat away from my head so that I can be open with a no blame mind to dialogue to enrich myself. Otherwise I am robbing myself of that enrichment when I let others to pat me on my back and say things like 'Oh yeah, you have so many problems. Don't be so hard on yourself'. And every time I hear that I know it's a cop out, it something wrong and it's robbing me of an opportunity (to grow). (P4, 411-416)

7.1.7 Activist (Social Justice Leadership)

A unique feature that came out from the conversations with the interviewed school principals was their desire to change the system for the benefit of students and communities. P5 (32-36) helped set up an elementary school in his neighbourhood as he was upset about the challenges like high costs and far distance, that the young students were made to face. He shows his distress as he talks about "the bitter truth of our system and importance of creating a good report" (61-62) while elaborating on the flaws of the state's educational system. P4 (259-261) looks at her school as a rebel school which requires rebel or *dabang (dynamic in Hindi)* leadership, and sees her role as an activist and advocate for every child. P1 (28-33) took the social justice cause as he set up his secondary schools in response to the needs in his city,

> […] while there are 333 government schools overall, only 26 of them go all the way till grade 10 (All mediums included). If you look at English medium specifically, there are 54 government schools and none of them go to grade 10. All the others end at grade 7.

While P4 (160-168) is inspired by the adventure of the role, P3 wants to validate the power of a school principal's role. In her words (138-139), "I have realized that the school leader is the person who can make or break the deal" and defines what happens or does not happen in the school. P2 (169) doesn't want to "be the one closing those avenues for them (the students)".

Additionally, P5 (22-26) explicitly calls out for the need to contextualise education to meet the local needs of a community, P3 (58-61) intends to redefine the future workforce of the country, P4 (89-91, 122-125) wants to connect resources to causes and build an educational movement, P1 (242-244) is disgruntled with the fact that the system is failing our students and P2 (73-84) wants to promote inclusiveness

in our schools. P4 (280-283) speaks about her vision to be the best school in the world, where her students are ambitious and one day, give back to society, whereas for P3 (62-65), she wants her personal vision for her role to come alive,

> […] which is about creating equitable spaces and I feel school leadership, the role in itself, allows me to create that space for 108 children and, as a multiplier, many more. This is so the children get an authentic experience, so they are able to form their own identity.

7.2 Challenges in the School Leadership Role

> Every day is a struggle to come back. There are so many things that are not happening and everyday our school system is becoming more and more complicated, it is becoming more and more difficult to run as it is a school that doesn't conform in this setup and it is getting really complicated. (P4, 272-275)

The interviewed principals talked about seeing the power of the role of a school leader, especially with the decision making and external pressures that come with the job. They all focused on their personal ability to learn, grow, self-correct and inspire oneself. However, were faced with a variety of challenges in their everyday work. Upon analysis, these fall under three major categories: personal challenges, challenges caused by societal norms and structures, and challenges around SL training and support.

7.2.1 Personal Challenges

> Somewhere there I really hold myself responsible for those children […]. Honestly, I didn't know what to do at that time, nobody really knew. (P2, 140-142)

The principals cited how the roles they have been playing as school leaders are different from the ones they have seen being played by other, mainstream school leaders (P1, 194-204; P2, 149-153; P3, 121-123). This issue of redefining their role as school leaders has been one of their biggest challenges as there is generally a lack of clarity on what the role and responsibility of a school principal is, lack of knowledge and skills training for the role and therefore, often a lack of confidence associated with it. A critical perspective shared by these school principals was about the responsibility and loneliness that comes with the job and the need of a soundboard for support.

> The initial challenge has been not able to give enough time to, sort of, place my bets, because I am always too scared. I feel the need to always check with someone to see if this (what I am doing) is right way of doing things. That sort of decision making initially was quite a bit of a

struggle because everything was new and given that the school is a government (supported) system, it became even more complex. (P3, 106-110)

All school leaders talked about needing grit, motivation and a strong will, to be successful in this role. Additionally, there is a huge pressure from the government and external partners, which has brought in a lot of frustration as well as a time crunch for these principals to feel successful. P2 (45-49) calls the role 'handful' which requires a lot of 'personal investment', whereas P4 (250-270) shares about burning out in the role due to stress. The principals share the overwhelm they sometimes feel while coordinating with multiple stakeholders (P5, 48-52), balancing acts for all their roles and facing challenges when their personal style doesn't match the school needs (P4, 64-73). They share their frustration with not knowing how to help, wish to have done more, the immense ups and downs in their professional development journey (P3, 173-184) and the slow gratification from the role (P5, 44-45).

7.2.2 Structural Challenges

[…] honestly in India it's a very difficult path (school leadership)- To do right by kids is the most difficult thing in the world in India. (P4, 418-419)

There are various structural challenges that the interviewed principals face in their day to day work. The old thought is that student outcomes are the student's or parent's responsibility, not their teachers or school's (P1, 222-224). This mindset is slowly changing though it still exists in many schools in India. P5 (55-62) calls the focus on making good reports a policy-level failure and throws light on a major gap between documentation and reality of schools. P1(24-38) shares the gap in provision of education and how his work is bridging the access gap for secondary school students in his city. Additionally, in government schools there are high dropout rates, and an academic gap which most school principals are trying to fix,

So basically the (8th grade) kids that are coming in at grade level 1-2, which last year was 18 out of 125 kids. 15% of kids coming in 7-8 years behind is something we have not been able to address at all or well. (P1, 177-179)

Each principal also had their own structural challenge within their school boundaries. They mentioned the difference in the quality of support available for them and their students including a general lack of funds and resources (P4, 198-210; P5, 46-49).

Privatization is another structural challenge in India, which impacts these principals running government schools, where if a family can afford, they will send their students to a private English-medium school (P1, 39-42), which may not be of the best quality either.

Other structural issues include infrastructural challenges, like P3's school not having electricity (111-115) till she personally goes to the municipal 'corporator' and asks for it. P2 (33-38) faces the challenge of space crunch as she shares the school with other vernacular mediums and must run her school between two different venues and on two separate schedules. The struggle to manage resources is explained well with an example by P1 (189-193),

> I am constantly asking "How do I get more strong people in and who do I give them to: class of 40 students so more students make progress or do I give them to these struggling four so these four will make progress?" It is like this optimization work that has been challenging as well as kind of one of our biggest failures.

The final structural gap, as per the data, is one associated with the lack of good teachers in the system. P4 (215-216) quotes that 'magic happens in three to four classrooms out of 20' and therefore, a school's struggle with manpower is universal. P1 (77-79) and P3 (225-230) bring out the low quality of teacher training available in India, with structural issues like rise in fake teaching certifications, lack of good pay and support, high retention rate, etc. leading to a failure of the current system.

7.2.3 Challenges with SL selection, training and support

These school leaders are held responsible for very high expectations but are neither supported nor trained to feel successful in their roles as school principals.

> If you think that it's a prestigious job and you are going get lime light and appreciation around, trust me you are investing your time and energy in wrong area. (P5, 102-103)

It all starts with the selection of school principals in India which as mentioned in previous section 3 *Schools and School Leadership in India* has no clear criteria. Both P5 (27-31) and P2 (82-91) were offered the role of a school principal when they necessarily didn't want it and would have preferred to be a teacher. As per P1 (194-199),

> […] who are school leaders, right? School leaders are teachers who have been in the school system for 20 years and they automatically become school leaders, right? Alternatively, in the low income private school space, it is a very family thing- the school is a business for most of them. So naturally, there sons/daughters/daughter-in-law/son-in-law, one of these four will become the next school principal.

The interviewed school principals with more than 10 years of experience further mentioned that they hadn't received any school leadership training when they started their role. There is now, however, a positive shift towards school principal training but the quality of support is still questionable (P4, 45- 54; P1, 75-79). The school principals complained about repetitive training (P5, 99), not grounded in theory or research (P3, 196-102), promotion of standardization, dearth of individualized support plans (P4, 230-234) and general lack of clarity towards the roles and responsibilities of the job (P2, 140-148). Additional needs like fund raising, teacher coaching, vision setting, student need identification and distribution of resources were also raised by the principals.

P4 (250-285) shares a statistic that she had learnt from one of her training where on average, founding school principals quit after 3.9 years of service due to stress and burnout. This was something she associated with herself and mentions the need for support for school leaders to understand the transition of a founding to a sustainable school leader. There is a general lack of support through the career of a school principal, especially in the latter years.

7.3 Underlying mindsets and motivations of School Leaders

Social norms and structures in India place many layers of challenges on the interviewed school principals. All the principals face challenges that come with catering to the poorest students and communities. These principals serve students who come from hard home backgrounds, many single parent households, and mostly economically low strata of society with parents with low paying jobs. The students have gone through many struggles and experiences. Additionally, there are various health and sanitation issues (P3, 20-23) related to the communities and slums the students live in. Interestingly, the principals don't see these drawbacks in student's lives as excuses or problems for their leadership practice. Through the interview data,

some underlying mindsets and motivations come out, which have been categorized as personal values and mindsets, motivations from prior experiences, motivations to help teachers and students, as well as motivations to help society and country.

> […] the SL role is no longer a puppet role where I do what the board tells me to do or what the *Shikshan Mandal* (Education Department) tells me to do. If this means I need to break a few things here and there, piss some people off to get the student outcomes I need, I am just going to go ahead and do it (P3, 133-136).

7.3.1 Personal values and mindsets

A variety of personal values guide the work of these school principals. They see themselves playing a role in fixing the system, being a part of the solution, having a long-term impact and being a role model for both their teachers and students. The principals enjoy autonomy, personal responsibility and the challenge or adventure of the role. P3 (62-65) wants to be responsible for creating equitable spaces for students while challenging what people perceive the role of modern day principal by being a proof point of excellence. The principals talk about using their role for good, balancing their passion with vision, owning their experiences and learning to prevent closing any avenues for their students (P2, 169).

Ownership is also connected with personal and professional learning. The principals constantly reflect to grow and develop, and take ownership in applying the learnings to improve their practice. They are motivated by data, both quantitative and stories. They find their work meaningful and inspiring, yet they also understand the high stakes and hence, the need to act now. P2 (93-135) talks about how her first student still inspires her actions, P1 (243-354) shares the grit and motivation of his students as his drive and P4 (357-370) shares incidents when her students have pushed her growth through open dialogue. They see themselves as producer of their own experiences (P1, 303-313), employ a growth mindset and yet question the irrelevant trainings (P4, 378-416).

Certain qualities that come out of the conversations as well as through recommendations to aspiring school leaders by the interviewed principals include ability to self-correct, self-inspire and having personal belief and confidence as the

school leader job is a lonely one. The principals are still seen to power through challenges because of other motivations as mentioned in next sections.

7.3.2 Motivations from prior experiences

All the principals had taught or worked with students from difficult backgrounds which motivated their actions and commitment. P2 (3-4) worked with students with special needs, whereas P4 (3-12) had studied and worked with street children as a part of her thesis, before starting as a school principal. Four out of the five interviewed participants have even helped set-up the schools they are currently leading.

Learnings out of such, prior work and personal experiences have helped the principals define how they react to current realities. There is a huge focus on collaboration and learning from others. P1 (58-73) and P3 (71-84) have strong bonds with their previous employers for resources and support, whereas P5 (78-82) has formed relationships with school principals across the country. P2 (170-177) and P4 (286-296) use the professional network to find out about relevant trainings and workshops. They believe in not spending a lot of time reinventing the wheel, but learning from experts and other schools. While P2 (180-193) went across India, both P1 (294-302) and P4 (291-296) got an opportunity to travel to the United States of America for international education conferences due to such networks. They all share their excitement of interacting with many strong school leaders and visiting excellent schools that has helped them define their own school practice.

The principals focus on informed practice with P3 (204-210) personally teaching a few classrooms, and P1 (335-349) and P4 (186-193) indulging in reflection circles with students and teachers respectively. P4 (211-214) even mentions that previous mistakes have helped shape her school.

7.3.3. Motivations to help teachers and students

While P1 (94) exclaimed "the kids need us man!" during the interview and P5 (51-52) complained about "the policy failure of the government […] to not update the education policy keeping in mind the current need of the education system", all the

interviewed school principals showcased an underlying motivation to help their teachers and students. They work towards empowering and enabling their staff members leading towards a change in attitude and habits. As per P5 (46-48),

> Academic excellence has had been one of my top priority for the whole school. We have had been continuously working on it as well but still I am not completely satisfied by the performance and I can say there is still lot to achieve.

The principals want to help students identify their strengths, passions and potential (P1, 257-261; P3, 62-66; P4, 314-317). They take it as a personal responsibility to balance between big picture and short-term tasks, between freedom and accountability, between ownership and loosening the reigns, with their school staff and especially teachers. They are inspired by the grit and forgiveness of their students and commitment of their teachers (P2, 162-169). They are against the 'one-size-fits-all' approach, aim to provide individualized support (P4, 378-390) and build a strong team culture which practices inclusion and informed decision making (P3, 97-105).

7.3.4 Motivations to help society and country

The interviewed school principals seem to have some level of frustration with the education system in India. However, they could see potential in an often criticized system and were motivated to act. The need to increase access to secondary schools (P1, 25-38), to cater to communities who are marginalized and build inclusive schools (P2, 82-84), to participate in nation building by redefining the country's workforce (P3, 59-61), to create students who are change makers and give back to society (P4, 279-285) and to question the quality education provided to all students (P5, 67-71), has been motivations for the interviewed principals to persevere in their role, despite challenging situations.

While P3 (138-143) wants the nation to look at the role of a school leader beyond that of administration, P2 (162-169) wants to challenge societal expectations from students from poorer communities. Additionally, P1 (265-267) is motivated to be of service to the nation and P4 (159-165) is excited to break the system while no one is watching. They look at their role as an opportunity to declutter and simplify what education needs to look like (P4, 334-337), prepare students to succeed in life (P3, 59-

60; P2, 133-135), but also expand their impact from one classroom to many (P1, 149-152; P3, 60-66). As per P1 (90-94),

> […] when I approached it I didn't think of it as that I would go to a school leadership school, then I would learn how to be a school leader and then I would do it. It was much more like I know this is a huge problem and there is a huge number of kids that are dropping out and we need to plug it and I am going to do it the best way I know possible.

7.4 Opportunities to and for School Leaders

Despite personal, social and environmental challenges that the school leaders have faced, they also talked about the increased number of developmental opportunities that have been made available to them in the last few years (P1, 58-73). These opportunities can be self-made, provided by the government, partner organizations, other NGOs, or can be made within the school structure.

Most of the interviewed school leaders talked about being a part of a variety of school leadership programs like both local and international communities of practice, school leadership accelerator programs, school leadership studios, as well as international conferences and visits, as sponsored by their partner NGOs. Furthermore, some principals who are alumni to a teaching fellowship mentioned that their previous contacts and meaningful connections in the city helps open varied resources for their benefit. P1 (281-288) shares the office space and attends staff meetings with the fellowship staff to inspire himself. P2 (172-177) gets informed of education news and events through fellows in her school. The NGO supporting P4's school pays for any additional professional development the principal is interested in (297-300). The NGOs have also set up personal school coaches which provide training and personal check-ins that help school leaders feel supported and gives them an avenue to brainstorm.

However, P5 (83-86), being the only purely government supported school principal in the study, added a different perspective explaining the reality of government school principals. He mentions about the irregular trainings provided by NUEPA and the state or local bodies, and creating opportunities for himself with the help of his school community and parents. For example, the School Management

Committee (SMC) provides added pressure on government bodies to deliver resources for his school.

Therefore, such increasing expectations have increased the investment in training by the state for the principals. As per P4 (242-246), a change is being seen:

> You know when revolution happens or when water boils, you see these stray bubbles come out. So that is happening now. You see these stray schools come out. You will see a stray Indian state trying an experiment and they are going in a completely different direction- maybe they will come back, maybe they won't, whatever, but at least a *hulchul (Hindi for a bubbling change)* has started now.

Within schools, the principals are further flattening the organizational structure, but are spending more time ensuring they select strong teachers. As per P3 (23-25),

> Unless and until you are 100% sure about a teacher, it is fine if the kids do not get that one, two or three week of instruction for that subject instead of getting poor teaching for a whole year.

They are ensuring dialogue based decision making, an open school culture and a no-closed-door school policy (P4, 170-192). This has led to a culture of increased autonomy, flexibility and freedom, and a lack of competitiveness, as per the principals. As mentioned in earlier sections, to see if the changes are working, school principals are actively taking feedback from students, teachers and parents, and holding cluster and grade level meetings within school hours to get everyone's opinions.

Additionally, from reading school leadership related articles and books (P3, 32-37; P5, 75-78), attending all relevant workshops (P2, 170-174), visiting schools (P2, 180-193; P3, 163-168), actively participating in informal and formal networks (P1, 288-293; P5, 78-82), being a member of a group of excellent schools (P4, 338-341), to pursuing formal, master degree courses in Education (P3, 171-172) while being a full-time school principal, these participants are using every opportunity to grow into better leaders and perform.

7.5 Support and Training Needs of School Leaders

> […] school leadership has moved from becoming a completely logistics, funding driven, timetabling and monitoring driven activity to a visionary activity filled with support, compassion with eye on the goal as well as the child and all of that. P4 (246-249)

As the role of school leaders have transformed, the needs of school leaders have changed. Across the interview, the principals explicitly or implicitly mentioned the kind of support they need. The biggest need was for a community- to brainstorm, collaborate, troubleshoot and make sense of issues in schools. P1 (58-63) enjoyed the global community of school leaders as he felt the group was responsive and relevant. The principals talked about the need for having a soundboard (P3, 106-115) to have a space to reflect on the ups and downs and overall journey of being a school principal (P4, 417-428). They want to strategize collectively for different groups and have a space to talk about how the world and society is changing.

Technically, the principals looked for ongoing, relevant support through regular and meaningful sessions or private coaching. They asked for recommended readings and articles, while being given the flexibility to go on their own pace. They even asked for opportunities to get formal certifications as in India there is no specific certification for school leadership. Additionally, the expressed interest in going on conferences and school visits both national and international, showcases the relevance of such an interactive support. (P1, 58-94; P2, 170-177; P3, 150-159; P4, 286-310)

The principals further asked for support in setting school vision, operations, culture and strategic partnerships. P5 (32-45) mentioned fundraising as well as pursuit of academic excellence as big struggles for him. P4 (273-279) shared about mismatch between training provided and her school's philosophy. P2 (18-20) shared that even when getting ongoing support from an NGO, she wasn't trained for the administrative part of the role as the focus was majorly on instructional practices, whereas for P3 (196-202), her organization needs to expand the focus of school leader training from managerial jobs to pedagogical leadership.

At the end of the interview, the principals were asked to define an ideal school leadership training program. There were overlaps amongst what were considered important components for such a training as per the principals, but since each school's context was different, there were outliers in each principal's response. This section shares the common and uncommon features as mentioned during the interview.

7.5.1 Vision and Goals of Education & Pedagogy

All the interviewed participants recommended training and discussions on what good, holistic education looks like and how to teach children. However, every principal looked at this broad bucket in a slightly different manner. While P1 (294-302) looked at this as knowledge building by visiting excellent schools, observing the teachers and classroom practices, and contextualizing the learning for his own school; P2 (227-236) talked about having a clarity of student vision- where is the school taking the students and how it aligns with their personal goals and aspirations. P3 (237-240) focused on developing skills for academic planning, both long term and lesson, and being able to give feedback for improvement to teachers. P4 (67-73) and P5 (18-26) wanted school principals to be introduced to various pedagogical and holistic development methodologies for their students, thereby impacting the overarching values and goals of the school. The aim here is to prevent oneself from getting restricted by one's own narrower perspective. In other words, it is important to not ask teachers to teach the "way that you taught, which is the way you will ask everybody to teach, which may not really work well" (P1, 361-362).

7.5.2 Team/People Management & Coaching

The second aspect that resonated with all the school principals as a training module was around team and people management, as well as their development and coaching. As per P1 (341-343),

> You need to be able to set goals well with your team, you need to give feedback well, you need to make sure people are achieving their goals and set that sort of culture of achievement in your school.

P1 (345-352) and P3 (233-236) further elaborate on the need to coach people intellectually with theories and frameworks grounded in research, and not only intuitively. P2 (222-226) calls this people management and wants principals to be trained in interacting with a wide variety of humans. This overlaps a little with stakeholder management, but she essentially wants the skills of using conversations as tools for decision making. P5 (109) asks for staff management strategies, whereas

P4 (454-457) asks for a highly-experienced coach to help operationalize one's school vision, preferably an ex-school leader of a highly functioning school.

7.5.3 Operations

The third common aspect that four out of five of the participants wanted to be included in an ideal school leadership training program was related to setting up operations for the school. P1 (364-368) who set up an educational startup that provides secondary schooling looked at operations as a key start-up practice,

> […] like short courses on hiring, how do you identify the right people, designing a good interview process to help you find the right people, writing job descriptions that will attract the right people, creating org charts and sort of growth plans for your organization… something around organization building because at some level you are the CEO of your school, right?

Interestingly, P2 (18-19) didn't mention administrative training as a needed module, though in the interview, she wasn't pleased with not being trained for the administrative role of a school leader. P3 (225-229) and P4 (429-439) focuses on setting systems and procedures which help productivity like how does one set efficient timetables, teacher appraisal systems, etc. P3 (230-232) adds that school leaders should be given help to set up the school's vision and culture with a focus on its values. P5 (111) looks at the operations training as knowing how to maintain reporting and administrative work, including budgeting and managing accounts.

7.5.4 Parent and Stakeholder Management

Two out of the five principals shared the need to be trained in community engagement and parental investment, especially when working with communities that are marginalized or have a general lack of resources. As per P2 (219-221), it prevents teachers from playing the blame game of 'parents are doing this at home'. P5 included other stakeholders like the government in this regard. As per him (P5, 112), it is essential for the school principals to be trained on various aspects of the state education policy to maintain strong bonds with the state officials.

7.5.6 Other recommendations

This section elaborates on specific recommendations that various principals have made, which though crucial aren't included by other principals. P3 (240-246), who was three months into her role at the time of the interview, includes managing self as a module for principals. She wishes for training that helps principals articulate what motivates them in the role, especially because, in her words, the role is lonely. She stresses on the need for a support system and asks principals to reflect on,

> […] what personally motivates me, what keeps me in this profession, what is my long-term vision and how this role fits into that […]

P4 on the other hand makes two recommendations which aren't included by any of the other school principals. She is a social worker by profession, has thirteen years of education and development work experience of which, for nine years she has been a principal for a school she helped set-up. She recommends a module on internship and sociology or social instruction as a part of an ideal school leader training program. As per P4 (440-449), an opportunity to intern with a successful school and shadow a school principal should be a module for at least a six-month period.

> In those six months, you have to design your school based on your belief, your vision, your values that you want around the school. And that piece is extremely extremely important because it leads everything else.

The module on sociology or social instruction is included to help principals identify the issues in the present-day society and what role education plays in that context.

> Schools are supposed to be a reflection of society's needs and specifically they are supposed to reflect in the school itself, they should be a reflection of today's societies. The purpose of the school is to help rear young people in dignified, equitable way so as for them to achieve their potential and be useful to society- we forget that piece often. And my job, pretty simply put, is to make that happen. It is to find a group of people who are invested in that vision (P4, 132-137)

7.6 Summary of the findings

The research study and interview questions aimed at giving an overview of the current reality of school leadership faced by these principals, working with a passion for social justice, and focus on their training and support needs. Since elaborate, this

final subsection aims to summarize the findings from the study before moving on to the next section *Discussion*.

The initial section explored the first research question, "*How do school principals understand the role and responsibilities of their job?*". Different features of the role of a school principal were explored in the principal's answers, which were then clubbed into seven different functions. As a **leader**, the principal is to practice organizational leadership by setting vision and goals and inspire his[2] team to take the school to greater heights. As a **manager**, the principal is responsible for the operations and logistics required to run a school effectively and includes responsibilities like setting the timetable, managing teacher and student attendance, etc. As a **teacher**, the principal empowers instructional leadership in his teachers and supports strong curriculum and pedagogy within and outside the classrooms. As a **supporter**, the principal plays the role of a coach, helping the staff members to identify their strengths and areas of development and therefore, ensuring everyone feels empowered to grow into better educators. As a **relationship builder**, a principal practices collaborative leadership and brings the network and resources together for the benefit of the school. This also includes sharing the responsibility and building leadership potential in his team. As a **reflector**, the principal shows equal commitment to his own development and growth and must reflect on his own and school's strengths, weaknesses and goals. He must be a role model for his teachers and students by showing the importance of learning and developing. Finally, as an **activist**, the principal fights for equal opportunities and educational equity for all the students in the school, irrespective of their income, caste, religion, gender or any other demographic.

While playing these varied roles and responsibilities, the school principals face many challenges and opportunities that has been described next to answer the second research question, "*What are the challenges faced by school principals and how do they motivate themselves despite these trials?*". The challenges ranged from personal to

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[2] The pronoun 'his' is used in the section to describe the school principal. However, the author doesn't intend to show preference to any one gender when it comes to strong school leadership.

professional ones. Unawareness and misunderstanding about the role of a school principal, lack of knowledge and skills, lack of confidence as well as feeling lonely at the job were some of the **personal challenges** shared by the school principals. The principals further brought focus to **structural challenges** that included questions on whose responsibility is the provision of education in schools, a general lack of access to high quality education, and a more specific lack of funds and resources for schools supporting students from hard backgrounds. They further explored the dearth of high quality teachers and other infrastructural challenges like lack of space, electricity, etc. The final **challenges within the role** were closely connected with the **selection and training needs** of a school principal. The principals mentioned a lack of respect and appreciation in the job, ineffective and repetitive trainings, random selection criteria for the role as well as a lack of individual and clear support plan for a principal in the later years of her career.

The study naturally then focuses on how the principals continue to motivate themselves, despite the tough challenges and lack of a supportive environment. These school principals are seen to possess certain underlying mind sets, which helps motivate them in their daily work. These include **personal values** like grit, ownership, problem solving attitude, possessing a growth mindset, etc. which helps these principals building justifiable spaces and be a role model for their teachers and students. The principals were also seen to be **motivated by their prior experiences** of work within schools and classrooms, as well as outside the school boundaries. They were inspired by stories of success heard in their professional network which further motivated them to get better and become informed practitioners. The need to **help teachers and students** is yet another motivation that encouraged school principals as they were disgruntled with the educational provisions in their schools, wanted to challenge the purpose of education and were against the standardization of schooling. On a positive front, another motivation of these principals is to **help the society and country** move forward. These principals want to play a part in nation building, redefine the national workforce, alter the culture and values of the citizens and promote social justice.

With such huge ambitions, the school principals further go on to talk about the opportunities available for and to them in their space. As most of the school principals were supported by the partner NGOs or educational start-ups, the principals talked about a variety of **external opportunities** like global visits, conferences, communities of practice, etc. These external platforms include the **national and state led opportunities** as well to visit good schools and receive training on important educational reforms. The principals further mention **self-made and opportunities made within the school walls**. These include peer learning support groups, online MOOCs, personal reading and learning habits, among others.

The study finally explores what would make the school principals feel more successful in their roles. This section along with complimenting information from previous sections, helped answer the last research question, "*What are the training and support needs of school principals and how can they be better supported and developed?".* The interviewed school principals talk about a **variety of needs** and ways to reach those needs, ranging from personalised support plans, regular trainings, access to materials and resources, etc. When asked about designing an ideal school leadership training program for Indian school principals, the interviewed participants agreed on some common features while introducing some unique features relevant to their situations. The common features included **setting vision and goals** for the school with a clear understanding of how the school wanted to achieve these goals. Another common need that came out of the conversations was the need to be trained in **team or people management** as well as the art of **coaching**. The principals further wanted to include a module on **operations** as most of the role of a school principal still is about managing logistics and ensuring the school runs smoothly. Most of the principals also agreed to include a module on **parent and stakeholder management**, as more and more individuals and groups are getting involved in the working of schools and therefore, managing relationships is becoming a crucial part of the school leadership role. One of the unique features as mentioned by one of the principals was to include a module of **self-management**, since the school leadership role was unanimously agreed to be lonely and difficult. One of the principals also recommended a module of **sociology or social instruction** for principals to be aware of the reality of current

societies and be ready to help students get ready for the future to come. She additionally insisted on a six-month **internship** with a successful school leader for a new principal to get inspired and get the clarity for the role, before having to start his own career as a school principal.

The study therefore grounds the exploration of the training and support needs of these school principals in their current reality as well as their personal understanding of the role, responsibilities and motivations that influence how successful these principals feel in their career. The next section uses the Capability Approach to further understand and expand this positioning of the school principals.

8. DISCUSSION

The following section discusses the key findings from the study in relation to the research questions and the existing literature as mentioned in the previous sections. It aims to describe the structures and influences behind school leadership support for the principals using Amartya Sen's Capability Approach. It then focuses on comparing the ideal training program mentioned in the interviews with the National Centre for School Leadership's new training curriculum. The section closes with a comment on the need to focus on social justice trainings for the school leadership community in India.

8.1 Understanding school leadership training and support needs using the Capability Approach

As mentioned in sections 2 *Future of Schools and School Leadership*, 3 *Schools and School Leadership in India* and 4 *Social Justice Leadership*, it is the responsibility of the school principal to ensure all students get access to high-quality education despite their demographics or diverse backgrounds. Directly by influencing school culture and indirectly by influencing student outcomes, the school principals are expected to challenge the status quo, provide students the opportunities to excel and advocate for their rights (Jean-Marie, Normore, & Brooks, 2009). Though many a times, they are overwhelmed by their duties towards the school. From the results section, one can see the different roles and responsibilities a principal must cater to in their daily work. The leadership practice can range from organizational leadership, collaborative leadership, personal leadership to social justice leadership, depending on the situation and needs of the students and the school community. However, what is crucial to note is what are these positioning or functionings that principals in different situations value, how their roles and responsibilities get influenced by their personal choices as well as motivations, challenges and opportunities that have been made available to and for them. It is also important to identify how one creates the support structures and training modules remembering such general and specific needs of these school leaders.

A helpful tool or framework in such a regard is Amartya Sen's Capability Approach (CA), which as per Robeyns (2005, p. 94) helps understand and evaluate varied phenomenon, which impact human development and therefore, can be used to deeply analyse the school leadership space for this study. As per the CA, capabilities are potential functionings which an individual has reason to value, in order to live a good life on their own terms. From the results, one can note that the different roles and responsibilities as mentioned during the interview by the school principals are the functionings that they value. However, the question whether the principals have the resources and support to convert their own capabilities into these desired functionings through the course of their career is of critical importance. Such a conversion is negatively influenced by the short term and long term challenges of the profession, that as per the results have been divided into personal and structural challenges, as well as challenges related with the school leadership training and support provided to the principals. On the other hand, the opportunities made available for the school principals by the state or partner organizations, etc. support the principals in their advent towards valued functionings. According to the CA, these opportunities and challenges, along with underlying mindsets and motivations can be identified as conversion factors which elaborate on whether the school principal's capabilities get converted into their valued functionings. Table 2 further explores the research data and aligns the study findings into personal, social and environmental conversion factors, as available in this context.

TABLE 2 Conversion Factors influencing school leadership achievement of valued functionings

Personal Conversion factors	Social Conversion factors	Environmental Conversion factors
-Personal values and underlying mindsets (grit, ownership, problem solving, growth mindset) - Motivations from prior experiences (Teaching background; Social work;	- Structural challenges (Lack of qualified teachers; Lack of resources and funds; Policy expectations like excessive documentation & reporting; bureaucratic system)	- Infrastructural challenges (Lack of space, Sharing of resources; Old, ill maintained buildings; Lack of electricity, water; Lack of girls' toilets)

Disgruntled with the education system and own schooling; Prior research and degree studies)	- Challenges with school leadership training and support (Lack of respect and appreciation; Lack of individual and consistent support and training; Lack of accreditation; High pressure and high expectations)
- Motivations to help teachers and students (Against standardization; Build equitable spaces; Support student and teacher identity; Create change makers)	- Opportunities provided by the state (State and regional trainings; NUEPA; NCSL; Raise in pay)
- Motivations to help society and country (Social justice, nation building; Redefining workforce; Challenge status quo)	- Opportunities provided by partner organisations and other NGOs (Regular trainings and individual support; Coaching; Conferences; Networking opportunities; Expertise)
- Personal challenges (Lonely job; Lack of confidence; Slow gratification; Disconnect between personal and organisational values; Lack of support and training)	
- Self-made opportunities (National and international conferences; Networking; Communities of practice)	

Such an illustrative practice is crucial as the conversion factors have both enabling and/or restricting impact on the work, decisions and choices of school leaders and therefore, people involved in supporting school leaders need to pay attention to these factors. For example, despite lack of resources, funding and support structures from the state, the interviewed principals used their personal and professional network to get access to resources. This is a positive example of how these interviewed participants used their agency and power of choice to reach their valued functionings and well-being goals as school principals.

Conclusively, the third research question which brings focus to the needs of school principals and ways to support their development while being grounded in the contextual reality of the schools and communities as well as that of the school

leadership, is of key significance for trainers and training institutions. The role of school leadership training, like any other educational provision, is to expand on a school principal's capabilities and provide support structures to enable them to make relevant choices that help them reach their well-being goals and valued functionings. The authorities can furthermore use tools like the Capability Approach to analyse macro and micro influences and build on school leadership capabilities, as many a times changing the conversion factors is a time-consuming task. Through the results section, it was also found that it is fairly easy to come up with a list of ideas that school principals need to learn and be trained upon. However, how one achieves functionings depends on both the personal and contextual reality of the school principal. Therefore, the training should promote building of capabilities and promoting a sense of agency rather than building support programs which only look at equality of outcomes or access to resources.

In the next section, the National Centre of School Leadership's framework for school leadership training is compared to the recommendations made by the interviewed principals to explore whether NCSL's training framework can be seen as a tool to promote Indian school principal functioning and success.

8.2 Analysing whether NCSLs training recommendations can help Indian school principals succeed?

The data acquired from the interviewed school principals provide an understanding of the challenges and overall situation of school principals in a specific context. The common features amongst the situations of the interviewed principals bring out the probability of transferability as mentioned in section 6.5 *Reliability*. Though a small subsection, the school principals agreed on many aspects as they designed an ideal school leadership training program. These commonalities gave way to the support and training needs as mentioned in Section 7.5 *Support and Training Need of School Leaders*. When studied for connections, it comes as a pleasant surprise that all the recommendations made by the school principals aligns to a certain extent with the Indian National Centre for School Leadership's (NCSL) recommendations (See Table

3).

TABLE 3: NCSL vs. Interviewed principal's recommendations on SL training and support (National Centre for School Leadership, 2014)

NCSL's School Leadership Development Framework: Key Areas	Units under each Key Area (as per curriculum guide)	Aligned category (from the research data)
Perspective on School Leadership	- School as a Learning Organization - School Leadership: Multiple roles and Identities - Developing a Vision for school - Understanding transformation - Child First - Transforming the work ethos	Vision and Goals of Education and Pedagogy (Internship)
Developing Self	- Understanding Self - Self in relation to Others - Self in the Context of School - Developing Professional Self	Managing Self
Transforming Teaching-Learning Process	- School & Purpose of Education - Understanding Child-Centred Pedagogy - Creating Conducive Teacher- Learning Conditions - Enhancing the Effectiveness of Classroom Processes - Developing Teacher as a Professional - Enriching Teaching-Learning process: looking beyond the classroom	Vision and Goals of Education and Pedagogy

Building and Leading Teams	- Building Teams - Promoting Teamwork - Being a Team Leader	Operations Team/People Management and Coaching
Leading Innovations	- Innovations: Heart of a Learning Organisation - Building a Culture of Innovation in the School - Reimagining the school through innovations	Operations
Leading partnerships	- Home-School Partnership - Working with the community - Working with the system	Parent and Stakeholder Management Social Instruction or Sociology

However, for this discussion, the recommendation of *Internship* is considered to execute the training rather than be a module on its own. From the data, it is noted that the Internship module is for an aspiring principal to set a strong vision and goals for her school, while working and learning from a successful school leader in the form of a six month internship. Though the first key area of *Perspectives on School Leadership* may not include the entirety of what the *Internship* module prescribes, it does lead to similar goals. Interestingly, as per Darling-Hammond et al. (2007, p. 145), "well designed and supervised administrative internships under the guidance of expert veterans" are seen as a strong characteristic of exemplar school leadership development programs. Therefore, the *Internship* module can further be looked as a potential way of implementing such a curriculum since the state and local authorities have been given the freedom to contextualize the NCSL's SLD Framework

Overall, the NCSL appears successful in meeting the needs of at least the school principals interviewed for the study as all the features important to the interviewed principals fit into one of the six key areas recommended in the NCSL's School Leadership Development (SLD) Framework. Though as mentioned in Section 3.2.1 *School Leadership Development Framework by NCSL,* the context of India brings out its

own set of enabling and restraining conversion factors like lack of coordination, administrative apathy, community commitment to action, etc., which need to be considered at all levels of execution.

8.3 Encouraging an additional perspective of leadership for social justice

While examining the results an added ideology came out from the answers of the interviewed school principals. The underlying mindset of activism for the benefit of students and fighting for child rights as well as against the status quo was prominent across the data. Despite not being an important feature to be explored at the beginning of the study, leadership for social justice has emerged as a crucial perspective to consider in the works of Indian school principals, especially for those working with economically backward or marginalized communities.

As mentioned in section 3 *Schooling and School Leadership in India*, Indian educational system faces many layers of challenges: societal, environmental, economic and political. Irrespective of the amount of respect given to Indian school principals, schooling and education is highly valued by Indian families and therefore, the school principals leading thousands of students and teachers have the responsibility to be the face of social justice, equality and equity. In the study, the word leadership for social justice was never mentioned, but the pride and importance of their work came out in the opinions of the interviewed school principals. The data brought focus to their work on expanding capabilities of the nation by working on the future of the country's workforce, for nation building causes, and for challenging the status quo, all by providing solid, holistic education to students from hard backgrounds.

This however, can't be expected automatically from all the school principals across the country. It should be the responsibility of the school leadership training institutions to introduce the concept of social justice and equity, especially for a country like India where division can be seen across caste, income, religion, skin color, gender, sexuality and many more factors.

With the aim to introduce the concept of social justice to school principals, it can be initially presented to the works of school leadership training institutes. The three dimensions of social justice (Fraser, 1997), as mentioned in Section 4 *Social Justice Leadership*, can be used to analyze how the school leadership institutes like NCSL and other such state bodies are practicing equitable support to the school principals. For example, under *recognition*, one can assess if the institutes are recognizing the differences in school principals and their backgrounds including conversion factors as mentioned in earlier sections. Under *redistribution*, one can assess if the institutes are distributing resources equitably, especially when it comes to private and public schools, or urban and rural schools, or schools which cater to economically diverse sections of society. Finally, under *participation or participatory justice*, it is crucial to assess if all school principals are given an opportunity to share their struggles, successes as well as ask for support openly. If successful in providing socially just and equitable opportunities, the school leadership institute can then encourage the school principals to opt for a similar approach in their schools with their students, teachers and other stakeholders.

As a summary to this study, it must be noted that for complicated systems like the Indian education space, tools like the Capability Approach can be used to break down and understand the various factors that play a role in providing individuals (for example, school leaders) with the freedom to be and do what they value. In the space of school leadership training, the capabilities and valued functionings are defined by how school leaders look at their role, which is influenced by the challenges, opportunities and other conversion factors associated with the job. Though school leaders can convert their capabilities into functionings with the help of relevant and meaningful training and support, a school principal's agency can be positively influenced by trainings that stay cognizant of a principal's personal and socio-environmental reality. With respect to the school leadership community in India, though recent, the National Centre for School Leadership seems to be on the right track in supporting the needs of school principals and should additionally encourage a perspective of social justice in school leadership as it is a relevant need of the country.

9. LIMITATIONS & FURTHER RECOMMENDATIONS

The study was initiated to explore the current reality of Indian school principals and their training and support needs, though it entered the space of leadership for social justice, which is rather academically unexplored in India. A limitation therefore that stems from this understanding that this study wasn't initially designed to explore leadership for social justice. However, the need is critical and therefore can be considered a recommendation for future studies. Additionally, a limitation for this study was the small number of study participants, which can be curtailed for future research by inviting more participants, for example, by partnering with school leadership institutes like the NCSL, to further validate the generalizability of such studies.

10.   REFERENCES

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11.   APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Masters Thesis Interview Questions
Date
xx minutes xx seconds

Intro/Warm-up Questions:
Pseudo-Name: P1
School: S1

No. of total work experience (in years):
No. of work experience as a School Principal/Head Master:
Description of Leadership-related Work Experience (Year- School Name) *(Start with present):*

Do you have an assistant school principal or vice principal?:
How many students does your school cater to?
How many teachers do you have in your school?
Which grades does your school cover?
Who are your students? Student Background.

In which year did you first receive school leadership training? What was it on?
In which year did you receive your most recent school leadership training? What was it on?

As a School principal, what are your main duties and responsibilities:

Main Interview Questions:
Part 1: Personal Journey
1. How do you define School Leadership?
2. Did you want to be a school principal? Briefly explain your journey in the education sector.
3. What has been your biggest success as a school principal?
4. What has been the biggest failure or struggle as a school principal?
5. In your opinion, how has school leadership changed over the years?
6. What is your personal motivation to be a school principal?

Part 2: Training
7. How do you keep yourself updated and informed as a school principal?
8. What kind of school leadership training have you received so far? Please give details.
9. What has been the most meaningful learning from such school leadership trainings? Why?

10. What has been aspects of the same training that have not been that useful? Why?

Part 3: Future Aspects
11. What would be your advice for a new school principal?
12. If you had to formulate a new school leadership training program, name five crucial components for the same.

Appendix 2: (Part of the) Coding Framework

Role and Responsibilities of a SL	**Leader (Organizational Leadership)**	To take ownership, captain of the ship To lead people Be in charge of adventure and freedom To problem solve, hard decision making To build culture and tone for the school To owning motivation and productivity of the staff To expand impact, focus on data and end goals ….
	Manager (Operational Leadership)	To set up and manage operations; logistics To recruit new, qualified teachers To retain teachers To grow staff Build capacity in staff, planning their PD Allocating resources for utmost benefit ….
	Teacher (Instructional Leadership)	To teach, To be responsible for pedagogy & student learning; academic excellence Role model To ensure teacher quality Student growth and Development Curriculum changes Classroom observations ….
	Supporter (Coach)	To make connections To empower staff towards outcomes Feeling of family, on a mission. Coaching teacher Creating authentic experiences for growth Drive investment over consensus ….
	Relationship Builder (Collaborative Leadership)	To manage relationships with the government Build strategic partnerships to get resources for school and learning opportunities Active participation in formal and informal network Parental investment Stakeholder management Interpersonal skills ….
	Reflector (Personal Leadership)	To draw connections with prior experiences Constantly reflecting on practice Thinking about educational philosophies Reflect on personal beliefs & practices Taking feedback from the students ….
	Activist (Social Justice Leadership)	Fight the system Define what happens and doesnt happen in school Building a movement Connecting resources to causes Break the bad system, no one is watching.

		Advocate for child rights ….
Challenges in the SL Role	**Personal Challenges**	Frustrations with the system; disgruntled with the system Time management/Time crunch "Its handful": packed SL schedule; hectic role Difference in regular school principals and self role Wish to have done more Not knowing how to help Lack of knowledge/skills; lack of confidence Lonely job. Lack of support. Need soundboard ….
	Structural and Infrastructural challenges	Lack of secondary schools; need of society Catering to poorest communities; kids come from hard home backgrounds; single parents households, economically lower strata of society; parents with lower pay jobs Health and sanitation issues Reality of student demographic and academic gap Lack of good teachers, inconsistency; magic happens in few classrooms ….
	Challenges within the SL role	Slow and partial success Not enough SL training and support given No training for administrative part of the role Distribution of resources Relationship building with other vernacular medium schools (and school leaders) Sharing school space/lack of infrastructure/ space crunch ….
Underlying mindsets and motivations	**Personal values and mindsets**	Applying previous learning to current job Supporting role , Empathy Taking responsibility for others Problem solving mindset Personal role as an entrepreneur/CEO/leader of school Personal faith/ownership/belief/confidence Big picture impact Independence/autonomy ….
	Motivation from prior experiences	No need to reinvent the wheel. Collaborate. Power of the network Work with kids from difficult backgrounds, special needs schools Informed practice Teaches while leading school; want personal practice to be a strong example of solid instruction Prior educational background (masters study) ….
	Motivation to help teachers & students	Empower and enable staff to reach outcomes Owning motivation of "my people" Seeing the change in attitudes, mindsets and habits in students

		"The kids need us man" Ed system is failing our kids; hear the kids outs High student drop out Inspired by the grit and motivation of students haven gone through hard life experiences. ….
	Motivation to help society & country	Need to increase access to secondary schools Catering to the poorest community Start now than later Trying to solve a societal issue Frustrated with the system Seeing potential in a system criticized often Untapped potential No faith in others leadership. Taking responsibility on self Working "for India"; service to the nation ….
Opportunities to and for SLs	**Self-made**	Active participation in informal, social networks Use of technology and the internet to find resources Staying connected and forming collaborative relationships with teaching fellowship Reading SL related books, magazines, articles, government reports Visit schools, shadow SLs based on own interest ….
	Government/ State	Free education for students until 7th grade Start schools to fill the gaps in secondary English medium schools; Govt. schools taken over by NGOs Local networking, SL community Workshops NUEPA and state level trainings NCSL established for the such training provisions ….
	Partner NGOs	Outside India experience (visit schools) Community of practice for aspiring SLs Global communities for SL organised by NGOs; international conference participation; meeting international SLs Local SL accelerator program Connection with Teaching Fellowship (staff, alumni, resources) NGO support: Teacher training, classroom basics, instructional practices, ongoing support, student need identification School leadership studio: Regular PD Sessions ….
	Within schools	No competition, no labeling Shared ownership and support Dialogue based decision making Open school culture; no closed door policy Flattening the org structure ….

Support and Training Needs	**Vision and Goals of Education & Pedagogy**	Visit excellent mainstream and alternative schools, shadow strong SLs, Observe strong classrooms and teachers Connecting personal and school vision: personal leadership training leading to student outcomes Freedom for school pedagogy and methods Proper planning for school: A personal coach; sustainable schools ….
	Team/People Management & Coaching	Training on how to change in mindsets, attitudes, Provide community to brainstorm, network, collaborate; troubleshooting; sense making Right team; able to distribute leadership Culture that inspires action ….
	Operations	Team building activities and exercises: towards school culture Training on organisational/managerial tasks (institutional management): Hiring and recruitment, sharing leadership, following up, holding accountable, professional development, capacity building, External, strategic partnerships and resources. Funds. Expertise and guidance. ….
	Parent & Stakeholder Management	Collective problem solving community, which is "responsive and relevant" Asking for support from the government. Awareness of government policies and practices. Acts and provisions for Schools and students. Needs of students to thrive in society and life. Where, what and how for collaboration. Network opportunities ….
	Internship; Social Instruction	Understanding how society works, social issues Inspirations: Get inspired to keep working in role How to use technology to support learning, funds and resources to promote technology; Sessions on what's new, how world is changing ….
	Managing Self	Mindset training: how to keep self-motivated, time management Connecting personal and school vision: personal leadership training leading to student outcomes Need a soundboard Proper planning for school: A personal coach; ….