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AN EXPLORATION INTO THE APPLICABILITY OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' TRAINING ON THE PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN FINLAND

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Quality leadership preparation has been shown to have positive influences on leadership practices of graduates. With five formal categories of leadership training programmes in the decentralized Finnish educational system, little is known about the leadership practices of graduates. This study explored the applicability of training on principals' self-assessed leadership practices in Central Finland.

Eight semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with principals from schools in and around the municipality of Jyväskylä. Purposive sampling was used as all participants had taken the advanced educational leadership training at the University of Jyväskylä in addition to other training programmes. An inductive content analysis approach was used for data analysis.

The findings indicated that besides personal experiences, knowledge gained from theory, practice, leadership and networking constitute major sources of principals' leadership practices. Training positively enhances the practices of school principals, as they become more competent and able to practice varied leadership styles with a trend towards visionary, collaborative, shared, visibility and transformational leadership styles in schools.

School diversity, time constraint, poor student behaviours, future uncertainties resulting from the decline of the student population threaten the position of principals. They however strive to remain effective under such circumstances by applying knowledge acquired from organizational theories, leadership models, strategic planning and effective communication. Nevertheless, principals need additional training to better appreciate and manage future challenges, implement modern teaching methods and promote professional development in their schools.

To improve the training, certain programme attributes such as quality and methods of course delivery, management of human and financial resources, creating and sustaining local and international collaborations with other training institutions need to be improved.

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Tiivistelmä – Abstract

Laadukkaalla johtamiskoulutuksella on nähty olevan myönteisiä vaikutuksia osallistujien johtamiskäytänteisiin. Suomessa kasvatusalalla on viisi virallisesti kategorioitua johtamiskoulutusta, mutta silti tiedetään vähän niihin osallistuneiden johtamiskäytänteistä. Tässä tutkimuksessa tarkasteltiin koulutuksen soveltuvuutta osallistujien johtamiskäytänteisiin keskisuomalaisten rehtoreiden itse arvioimina.

Aineisto kerättiin kahdeksalla rehtoreiden puolistrukturoidulla haastattelulla Jyväskylässä ja sen lähikunnissa. Haastateltavat valittiin harkinnanvaraisesti siten että kaikki olivat muiden koulutusten lisäksi suorittaneet aineopintotasoiset opinnot opetustoimen hallinnosta ja johtamisesta Jyväskylän yliopistossa. Aineisto analysoitiin käyttäen induktiivista sisällönanalyysiä.

Tulosten mukaan henkilökohtaisten kokemusten ohella teoriat, tieto käytännöstä ja johtajuudesta sekä verkostoituminen, olivat tärkeimmät lähteet rehtoreiden johtamiskäytänteille. Koulutus vaikutti positiivisesti rehtoreiden johtamiseen, sillä he tulivat pätevimmiksi ja kykenivät käyttämään kouluissaan erilaisia johtamistapoja kuten visiointi, yhteistoiminta, jakaminen, näkyminen ja transformationaalinen johtaminen.

Rehtoreiden asemaa uhkasivat koulun sisäinen erilaisuus, ajankäytön rajallisuus, oppilaiden käyttäytyminen ja tulevaisuuden epävarmuudet, jotka johtuivat oppilasmäärän laskusta. Silti he pyrkivät toimimaan tehokkaasti näissä olosuhteissa käyttäen saamaansa tietoa organisaatioteorioista, johtajuusmalleista, strategisesta suunnittelusta ja tehokkaasta kommunikoinnista. Rehtorit tarvitsevat koulutusta arvioidakseen ja johtaakseen tulevaisuuden haasteita, ottaakseen käyttöön uusia opetusmetodeja ja edistääkseen ammatillista kehittymistä kouluissaan.

Koulutuksessa tulisi kehittää tiettyjä koulutusohjelman tekijöitä kuten laatu ja koulutuksen toteutus, inhimilliset ja taloudelliset resurssit sekä paikallisten ja kansainvälisten verkostojen luominen ja säilyttäminen muiden koulutuksen järjestäjien kanssa.

Asiasanat – Keywords
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1   INTRODUCTION

Studies have confirmed the importance of leadership in the functioning of organisations and there is no denying the fact that worldwide, education is a sector that is morally-grounded and based on values in need of passionate, caring leaders (Hallinger, 2005, p. 1; Drew, 2009, p. 1). As a consequence, the expectations for school leaders have significantly changed and administrators who were at first expected to manage processes of the school are also being held accountable for student academic performance (Busch, O'Brien & Spangler, 2005, p. 95). Busch et al. (2005, p. 95) also hold that school leaders have to have leadership skills to inspire, encourage, and empower individuals to perform at their optimum levels of effectiveness and efficiency. In recent times, both the positions of school principalship and teachers have been placed on enormously increasing challenges. The principals are not only expected to act as the eye of the school in the community as the earlier criticisms suggested, but they are also compelled to have adequate knowledge of all facets of education within the area in which the school is located and beyond. Academic leaders and their colleagues - the teachers are expected to focus their schools on student learning needs. (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, p. 237.)

More so, principals themselves have agreed that they need to be more effectively prepared for their jobs (Hess & Kelly, 2007, p. 3). With all these responsibilities for the principal to handle, existing knowledge on how to best develop these effective leaders is not enough (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe & Meyerson, 2005, p. 1). Levine (2005, p. 66) has also acknowledged that educational leadership training programmes need to address the area of skills and knowledge necessary to lead today's schools, not as it existed in the past. Traditionally, most educational leadership preparation programmes for aspiring principals could best be described as preparing them for the

function of a top-down manager. The knowledge deemed essential for the training of educational leaders has been focused on managerial roles, such as organizing, supervising, planning, budgeting, financing, and scheduling, rather than developing appropriate relationships of caring and commitment, working in collaboration with the environments within schools that foster student learning. Notwithstanding, research has found that much has changed over the past few decades as there is now increased awareness among educational providers and professionals that children have to achieve at new and higher levels. For this dream to be fully realised, training institutions and programmes should have as a goal quality and to produce graduates who can promote the development of good schools in future. Programmes should address the aspiration of the kinds of schools they would like to see in future. (Grogan & Andrews, 2002, pp. 238-241.) DeVita (2005, p. 5) has therefore questioned if principals today and aspiring principals are getting the appropriate preparation that is needed to improve teaching and learning in today's and future schools.

My motivation for this study stems from a number of reasons. Coming from Cameroon where there are no formal principal training institutions, and while studying in Finland, I visited a number of schools during practicum exercises. During these visits, I noticed so much collaboration, teamwork and best educational leadership practices being exhibited by the tutor principals. These kept my mind pre-occupied as to whether these aspects were taught to the principals during their training or it is a coincidence that all had to be practicing almost in the same way. During my teacher training in the University of Buea and also during the two years period that I served as a secondary school science teacher, I knew that there were no formal trainings needed to become a principal. This knowledge was fixed because all principals and vice principals in Cameroonian schools ascend their positions through a ministerial appointment from a pool of long serving teachers. Since there are no formal training institutions for principal preparation, the teacher training is organized in a way that besides the pedagogical and content courses offered, some basic school legislation and administration courses are taught to the teachers in training as well. From this minimal background, they are expected to be able to lead the school and this knowledge usually is inadequate as reflected by the performance of students in end-of-year and public examinations. Furthermore, while undertaking coursework for this degree programme, I was intrigued by the fact that there are formal institutions including universities that train school principals in Finland.

1.1   Statement of the problem

Literature has indicated that school leaders have pivotal roles in setting the vision for schools if they have to be successful. In addition, more than ever, today's schools have great expectations that principals through their leadership should improve teaching and learning. (Davis et al., 2005, pp. 4-5.)   Steyn (2008, p. 891) highlighted the fact that leadership training programmes are essential in the preparation of school leaders if high achievement of learners is expected.

However, according to Levine (2005, p. 23), the curricula of leadership preparation programmes are deficient in considering the real needs of principals in training. Simieou, Decman, Grigsby and Schumacher (2010, p. 2) pointed out that the few training programmes that exist in the USA are usually based on theoretical classroom knowledge rather than practical field experience. They also maintain that lack of practical training may result in graduates leading by trial and error through the early years of their career and only by so doing could they be able to acquire the experience that is needed to function effectively.

In Finland, because there are many training providers offering quite different types of training programmes (as there are different categories of leadership programmes), practically there is no external assessment of the effectiveness of these programmes they offer that have been documented (Johnson, 2007, p. 6). Moreover, university-level principal education is a relatively recent phenomenon in Finland and for a long time, qualification training was provided in the form of short-term training giving competence just to perform the administrative tasks in schools (Ministry of Education, Finland, 2007, p. 48). This was what transpired right up to the year 1998, after this time, the 25ECTS principal preparation programme was instituted which provides eligibility for principalship supported by law (Asetus opetustoimen henkilöstön kelpoisuusvaatimuksista 1998). This programme addresses more issues as students are trained in aspects of leadership, educational administration and legislation combined with a practical field work in the areas of both leadership and management.

The educational system in Finland is so decentralised, and while there are national requirements for selecting principals, municipalities also have the power to set the criteria for choosing whether their school principals should practice managerial or pedagogical leadership. Due to the decentralised educational system, it is possible that

leadership practices may vary from one municipality to another. (Hargreaves, Halász & Pont, 2007, pp. 19-20.)

Hargreaves et al. (2007, p. 23) indicated that, apart from the systemic problems above, Finnish principals also face challenges of increased overload, lack of proper motivation (insufficient incentives), and inadequate leadership training. There is also little or no networking between the different training providers since not only one agency provides training (Ministry of Education, Finland, 2007, p. 45).

Against this backdrop, and because there is no systematic data or indication of the applicability of training on the candidates' practices in schools in Finland (Värri & Alava, 2005, p. 12), this present study addresses the research gaps by investigating the influence of leadership preparation programmes on graduates as principals' self-assessed leadership practices, and suggests how trainings could be improved for current and future principals.

1.2   Significance of the study

This study is useful in the field of education in that it builds upon the available body of knowledge relating to the effect of training on principals' leadership practices. It focuses on the Finnish school system with its unique characteristics and challenges. Hence, it is my hope that the literature generated and recommendations put forward will offer a base for the improvement of educational leadership preparation for all training providers in Finland.

Also, it could be of interest to the Finnish National Board of Education or the different leadership training providers to know how their graduates practise in their various schools and this knowledge could also guide the recruitment of candidates, what the curriculum should address, how the programme should be designed, in an effort to provide continuous professional growth to principals (Kochan & Locke, 2009, p. 500).

In addition, knowing the extent of applicability of training on the practices of the graduates may narrow the gap between theory and practice and this will go a long way to promote the knowledge of future positive school transformations by the well trained educational leaders (Anast-May, Buckner & Geer, 2011, p. 3).

Moreover, since very little literature exists that link principals' training to their practices in Finland (Johnson, 2007, p. 6) and also because there exists limited

knowledge of educational administration in the theoretical sense of it in the Finnish context (Värri & Alava 2005, pp. 17-18), this study would stimulate further research on leadership preparation in Finland.

It is true that this study would not have been realistic to conduct in my home country, Cameroon as principals do not acquire any formal training and this would have been something alien to them. Nevertheless, its findings will also be welcomed back there by the Ministry of Higher Education since this is the body responsible for the training of teachers from a pool of which principals are appointed.

1.3   Organization of the thesis

This thesis is systematically structured and organized into seven chapters. Chapter one gives a general introduction of the study. It also highlights the reasons that prompted my interest to explore the applicability of training on the leadership practices of principals. The chapter ends with the rationale behind my undertaking this research work and the significance of the study. Chapter two provides the geographical context of the research in the form of a brief introduction of Finland, aspects including teacher training, principal's position as well as the selection of principals in Finland are described. The theoretical framework of the study is presented in chapter three and it focused on educational leadership. Major concepts around the topic of the research such as the definition of leadership, some motivational theories that a leader could employ in his/her leadership and leadership styles have been discussed. Other aspects such as practices of effective leaders, leadership roles and practices of principals are extensively explored. Chapter four covers the review of existing literature on principals' training. In this chapter are also presented the definitions of the concept of training, definition of practice and challenges in the sustainability of proper educational practices faced by principals and needed professional development of principals are mentioned. Next are discussed the content of leadership training programmes as well as features of effective educational leadership training programmes. The chapter ends with the sub-topic on evaluation of a leadership training programme. Chapter five on methods focuses on the objectives of the study and research questions, the research paradigm used for this study and reasons of the use of this paradigm (case study). The selection of participants and procedures employed in collecting, analyzing and processing data are explained.

Chapter six presents the findings and discussion. The chapter opens with the demographic characteristics of the schools visited and respondents interviewed. Outcomes of the study with respect to the four research questions which were formulated as the main themes are presented and discussed with particular links made to the theoretical framework of the study and literature review. The conclusions of the study accompanied by a concept map, the review of the research process are presented in chapter seven. Some recommendations and suggestions for future research are also given at the end of this chapter.

2   CONTEXT OF THE RESEARCH

Since this study is conducted in Finland, it suffices to mention something about education in Finland. Of most importance to this study and to the practice of educational leadership is the nation's current level of education. This is further made easy to assess by considering the excellent results of Finnish students in the Programme for International Students' Assessment (PISA) studies. Finland has been able to achieve and maintain this high level of performance for several reasons, but only a few pertaining to teacher and principal training will be discussed in appropriate sections later in this study.

2.1   A brief introduction of Finland

Worldwide, this nation is known for her outstanding performance in the PISA as mentioned above. PISA is jointly developed by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and member countries through the OECD's Directorate for Education: PISA assesses the performance of children who are 15years old in three subject areas; mathematics, science and reading ability. It seeks to find out the extent to which students have gained knowledge and skills deemed necessary for their full integrations into the society and how these skills vary with time. (OECD, 2007.) The review is conducted every three years and Finland has taken part in all four PISA cycles, in 2000, in 2003, in 2006 and, latest, in 2009. The outstanding performance of Finnish students on three successive assessments has been a great joy but at the same time a somewhat puzzling experience to all those key players (primarily the principals) in education in Finland. (Välijärvi, 2005, p. 31.)

Finland's ascent into this top position of educational performance was inevitable, it was a combined benefit of a set of deliberately made and thoughtfully implemented policy decisions that have been upheld over a period of close to four decades now as well as of factors inherent to the country's culture of education and history (OECD, 2010, p. 129). In comparison with other education systems that aim for good results, Finland's high achievement seems to be attributable to a whole network of interrelated factors (from high teacher quality, principal preparation and importance attached to education to name but a few) put together to produce the high level of results recorded in PISA (Välijärvi & Linnakylä, 2002, p. 46).

Geographically, the Republic of Finland is located in the Fennoscandian region of Northern Europe. It is bounded in the West by Sweden, in the East by Norway and Russia while across the Gulf of Finland lies Estonia. It has a population density of about 5.3 Million inhabitants and land surface area of 338,000km sq. The population density is 17 per sq. kilometres with Helsinki as the capital city. (Alava, 2007, p. 5.) There are other cosmopolitan cities like Kuopio, Tampere, Turku, Lahti, Oulu and Jyväskylä. Finland is often described as a country of 'forest and lakes' with approximately 70% of the country covered by forest mainly of birch, spruce, and pine. Some 10% of the country is occupied by water bodies where there are about 187, 888 large lakes and many wetlands. Finland is officially a bilingual country with both the Finnish language (93%) and the Swedish (6%) being spoken. The Sami dialects are also spoken in Sami areas around Lapland. Evangelical-Lutheran (86%) is the main religion, though orthodox (1%) and others (12%) are also practiced. (Symington & Dunford, 2009, pp. 16-63.)

Economically, income is mainly generated from services (60%), industry and construction (35%), and agriculture and forestry (5%). Germany, Sweden, the United States, the United Kingdom, Russia and the Netherlands are Finland's main trading partners. In 2002, science degrees (natural sciences, mathematics and computers, and engineering) accounted for 32.2% of all Bachelor's degrees awarded, while in 2003 it was estimated that 88% of the tertiary age population were enrolled in some type of higher education program; 80% for men and 96% for women. There is complete separation of powers in Finland. The president and the government (prime minister and the different ministers), the parliament and the independent courts of law exercised governmental, legislative and judicial powers respectively. Women are fairly represented in both the executive and legislative branches of government holding about

42.5% (85 seats as of April 2011) of the seats in the 200-member parliament and 9 women served in the 20 cabinet members after March 1st, 2011 elections. Women also hold top leadership positions; where the first female president served from March 1st, 2000 to March 1st 2012 (Inter-Parliamentary Union, 2012; Finnish Government, 2012; Ministry of Justice, Finland, 1999).

2.2   Teacher training in Finland

Teacher quality and teaching are core aspects of Finland's educational success (OECD, 2010, p. 124). Finland has been able to make teaching the prime and most enviable career path among graduating Finns by a combination of raising the entry qualification into the profession and allowing teachers more latitude and autonomy, the trust this profession enjoys from parents and wider community and the control teachers have over their classrooms (OECD, 2010, p. 129; Välijärvi, 2005, p. 47). As a result, teaching has become a highly selective and competitive occupation in Finland, bringing together highly-skilled well trained teachers holding master's degrees spread throughout the country. The quality of the teaching force therefore is much likely the major element that accounts for the excellent level of consistent achievement through all of Finnish schools. Until recently, Finland did not pay a keen attention in recruiting, training, and on-going professional development of principals. Given the situation, it is hard to believe that schools in Finland could perform at this high level without solid educational leadership, also considering the degree of autonomy that Finnish schools enjoy. (OECD, 2010, p. 129.)

In Finland, subject teachers are normally trained in the universities and they teach in the secondary schools upon graduation. In the early 1970s, the training for the teachers of the primary schools was also transferred to the university as well and that of the kindergarten teachers followed suits in the university in the mid 1990s. All teachers both in the polytechnics and universities have their basic and further trainings at the universities. The law on the degrees that the universities offer have a separate section that addresses the teacher education programme that other universities are allowed to provide, they could be operating at the department or faculty level. For candidates to be eligible to pursue teacher training, they are required to first take the Bachelor's degree of 180 ECTS covering a study period of three years and a Master's degree of 120 ECTS

done in two years in their major subjects. (The Trade Union of Education in Finland, 2008, p. 3.) Before assuming the position of a principal, the candidate must have appropriate teacher training for the level of education and a master's degree as a rule (see Table 1) (Johnson, 2007, p. 5).

Table 1. Teacher and school leader qualifications, credits and working area. (Johnson, 2007, p. 5).

Qualification	Degree	ECTS credits/ (yrs)	Working area
Pre-school teachers	Bachelor of Arts	180 (3 yrs)	Pre-school (age 6)
Classroom teachers (Primary level)	Master of Education	300 (5 yrs)	A classroom teacher and as a pre-school teacher. Qualified to teach grades 1-6, possible also in some cases to teach grades 7-9)
Subject teachers (Primary and Secondary level)	Master of Arts, Master of Science (Master of Education) and teachers´ pedagogical studies	300 (5 yrs)	Qualified to teach the subject in question in comprehensive school (usually grades 7-9/ or 1-9) (Upper secondary, age 17-19 yrs)
Special education teachers	Master's degree in education or special education	300 (5 yrs)	A special education teacher in comprehensive school
School leader (Headmaster, Principal)	Teacher's qualification	+ 25 (administrative studies)	According to the teachers' qualification

2.3   Principal position in Finland

Taipale (2000) as cited in Värri and Alava (2005, p. 6) indicated that the official position of the principal in the comprehensive school was founded not too long ago. It was as a result of uniting the parallel school forms in the 1970s and this merging caused a combined position for the teachers and there was also the issue of status in the ranks of the school heads to be addressed. In 1978, after a long debate, the principal agreement was finally reached. The status of the principal was confirmed in the comprehensive schools and the upper secondary schools but it still left some little

teaching duties for the principals to perform. The school law reform in 1999 was geared towards quality and accountability and it included many corrections from the legislation of the past. Two of these were that the roles and the responsibilities of training providers were to be stronger and the position of the principal saw a shift from that of a 'civil servant' of the 1970s to a leader highly accountable for all results at school. (Alava, 2007, p. 23.)

2.4   Principal selection in Finland

There has been a very long tradition of local governance in Finland. The governing units are the municipalities and at the beginning of 2011, there were 336 municipalities down from 432, this marked reduction was as a result of smaller municipalities being merged to form stronger and larger ones in terms of population and financial sustainability (Association of Finnish Local and Regional Authorities, 2011, p. 18). In 2005, an average of 12,000 inhabitants constituted a municipality but there were ones that were far smaller as well as those that were very large. In practice, what pertains is that all municipalities have an educational committee and this is the decision making organ in the domain of education in Finland. Thus, education administration is also part of the municipal organisation and this includes the political decision makers, the administrators and also the processes involved. (Aho, Pitkänen & Sahlberg, 2006, p.103.) However, it is worth noting that following the legislation of 1983, almost each municipality now has a superintendent who is the director of educational affairs (Alava, 2007, p. 17). In some cases, this position is merged with another position. For instance, 17.6% of superintendents also hold the position as cultural managers and 16.2% of them also perform teaching functions in schools (Kanervio & Risku, 2009, p. 118).

In his thesis, Tihveräinen (2009, p. 15) indicated that there are four different functions of the municipal organization which are the political, the economic, the governance and the service processes. Equally, for the selection of principals, the processes that are heavily involved are of the political and the governance. Notwithstanding, the selection of principals also affects the economic and service domains. Since legislation has given the executive decision making right to the municipal councils in the selection of principals, they have kept the selection processes local. Firstly, the basis on which applicants are selected is on three qualities: their

abilities, skills and citizenship. Once there is a vacancy in the principal position, the municipality advertises and stipulates appropriate deadlines for applicants to submit their applications. This duty of selection is not handled only by a single administrator but there is also the notion of voting. Usually, selection is based on majority votes and this is guided by legislation based on the three afore mentioned properties. Secondly, an aspirant for the post of principal would have successfully completed studies as a teacher as this is a minimum criterion and he/she must demonstrate an appropriate level of language proficiency. There must be no discrimination against age, sexual orientation, ethnic group of origin or health. These constitute the main requirements for the selection of a school principal in most municipalities in Finland. (Tihveräinen, 2009, p. 22.)

In actual fact, the formal qualification emphasizes the teacher degree, a master's degree, qualification of teaching at that particular school level and lastly adequate years of teaching experience. Some knowledge in administrative issues in the school is also needed. Awareness in educational management and leadership is of importance. (Värri, 2006, p. 4). Qualification can be gained in two ways: either by attaining the certificate in educational administration (12 ECTS credits) or by completing university studies in educational administration (25 ECTS credits). It is also possible to take the examination for the certificate in educational administration either directly or by first completing preparation studies for it. (Ministry of Education Finland, 2007, p. 46.) In addition to that, there are other studies and programmes that can be found substitutive or beneficial in appointing the principal (Värri & Alava, 2005, p. 8).

3 EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

This part constitutes the theoretical framework of this study, and provides the structure and the frame of the study. It is unimaginable to conduct any research study without a theoretical framework (Merriam, 1998, p. 45). This theoretical framework has been developed and it begins with definitions of key concepts like leadership. These are followed by some motivational theories for school leaders, and then leadership styles are indicated. The chapter closes with introducing some leadership roles and tasks of principals, and also the challenges in educational leadership have equally been enumerated with particular attention given to accountability in education.

3.1 Definitions of leadership

Keith (2008, p.18) posits that it is often difficult to define and evaluate leadership. However, one definition holds that leadership is regarded as being able to work in collaboration with others in a team to create a common goal for the organization, building a strategy to implement, and motivate others to join in working towards achieving these goals (Hallinger & Snidvongs, 2008, p. 12). Another definition sees "leadership as a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal" (Northouse, 2010, p. 3).

According to Northouse (2010, p. 2), there are many ways that authors have conceptualised leadership, some definitions view leadership as "the focus of group processes", taking this definition into perspective, the leader is at the centre of the group. In addition, some other sets of definitions see leadership as a personality perspective, suggesting that leadership is a collection of traits that some individuals possess that make them good leaders. More to the above, some definitions view

leadership as a transformational process, and this view sees leadership as one where the leader moves followers to accomplish more than is needed from them. (Northouse, 2010, p. 2.)

Considering the trait theories, in the first place, it is assumed that leaders were born to be great leaders. Although much research was conducted to confirm the above assumption, no concrete findings were put forward to support these claims with respect to what particular trait continuously got linked to great leadership. This could be explained by the fact that a personality trait is hard to change but research has supported that leadership is a skill that can be learned and improved. (Elearn, 2007, p. 16.) A second consideration to defining leadership was an attempt to find out what successful leaders do and not how they look, trying to determine the behaviour of leaders that helped to increase organizational effectiveness. The well known and researched Michigan and Ohio studies were some of the research that used this approach to defining leadership. (Horner, 2003, p. 28.)

Furthermore, and in this same line of thought was the widening of the managerial concerns to cater for both the people-oriented and the organizational-oriented tasks. To take this research a little further, Blake and Mouton (1964) designed a two-factor managerial grid that was similar to the Michigan and Ohio studies. This grid was labelled "concern for people" and "concern for task", based on the frequency of each orientation exhibited by the leader, he/she is placed along each of the continua. Lower scores indicate a reduced concern while higher scores represent higher concerns. The Blake and Mouton's Grid postulated five different styles, described as Impoverished, Country Club, Task, Middle-of-the-Road, and Team, and located them in four quadrants (see Figure 1). Based on this grid, 'team management' is the most desirable behaviour with the best concern for people and production. This approach was solely descriptive and it was not certain a leader would behave in the same way given varying circumstances. A third approach was later adopted to define leadership that dealt with a combination of the trait, the behaviour and the situation that presents itself to the leader. This was called the contingency theory and the theorists built the assumption that the influence of one of the three variables listed above were contingent to the other two. (Horner, 2003, pp. 27-28.)

Concern for people (vertical axis)

High

9 — 1,9 ... 9,9

8 — Country Club Management: ... Team Management:

7 — Thoughtful attention to the needs of the people. Friendly organization and work tempo ... High work accomplishment from committed people, Interdependence through a "common stake" Relationship of trust and respect

6

Middle of the Road Management:

5 — 5,5

Organization performance through balancing task and morale of people at a satisfactory level

4

3 — Impoverished Management: ... Authority Compliance Management:

Minimum effort to get work done is appropriate to sustain organization membership ... Operations happen so that conditions of work and human element interfere to a minimum degree

2

1 — 1,1 ... 9,1

Low

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 1

Low   **High**

Concern for production

Figure 1. The Blake and Mouton's managerial grid of leadership. (DuBrin, 2002, p. 29)

Educational leadership on the other hand is a very broad concept. In this study, the concept is limited to who an effective educational leader is and what he/she does to promote student learning. In the views of O'Neill and Bottoms (2001, pp. 7–16), an exemplary educational leader is one who has a good mastery of the school and classroom situations and contributes enormously to student learning. He/she is one who has figured out how to work effectively with teachers and also provides the needed support for staff to function properly. As this is the case, a recent study (Hogan et al., 2007, p. 15) on educational leadership lays emphasis on the need for leadership to pay greater attention on the quality of learning as well as the range of distinctive human characteristics necessary in today's educational leaders. Southworth (2004, p. 4) therefore thinks that learner-centred leadership should also be advocated. For this

author, successful learning-centred leaders keep up to date with curricular developments and assessment needs, are in pace with pedagogical change, focus tirelessly on student learning, support teaching, build and maintain productive professional relationships and aim to build trust, teamwork and collaboration in the school.

3.2   Motivational theories

The concept and theory of motivation have been much discussed topics in management, leadership and supervisory circles for decades but these remain complex and elusive. No matter what level of the management/leadership ladder a person is on, the issues of motivation he/she will probably be most concerned with should be how to apply these theories of motivation to the job to spur up staff to greater efficiency. There have been many definitions put forward for the concept of motivation. (Mackay, Duncan & Wilmshurst, 2007, p. 20.) It derives from the Latin word "*movere*"; which means "*to move*" but just this plain definition in contemporary usage is going to be considered too narrow and not enough (Mbua, 2003, p. 302). Many definitions have therefore been advanced to attempt a fuller meaning of the word. One such definition views motivation as a deliberate or intentional action taken by one person (could be a leader) to cause another (a follower) to direct his/her actions towards the achievement of a particular goal. (Mackay et al., 2007, p. 21.)

Motivational theories aim to predict behaviour, motivation in itself is not behaviour and definitely not performance. However, motivation concerns action, and the implicit and explicit moves that can influence a person's choice of action. The leader has so many choices to make in trying to influence the actions of his followers; using positive reinforcement, coercion, resorting to treat people fairly, satisfying needs of staff, setting goals which are work-related, reframing job allocations and basing rewards on performance. These strategies above are prescribed because usually a gap exists between the staff's actual state and some state desired by the leader and when leaders apply these strategies, they seek to reduce that gap. Motivation is therefore seen as a means of reducing and manipulating this gap while influencing people in a specific way towards a specific direction stated by the motivator. (Mackay et al., 2007, p. 21.)
 Figure 2 illustrates three main models of motivation which are classified more or less according to their historical emergence by Mackay et al. (2007, pp. 21-22) and they

have used Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to explain how they view leadership and motivation and what a leader can do to motivate followers. The *rational-economic model* views motivation as linked to management, and suggests that basically people are motivated by their own financial and material gains while the *social model* considers motivation as influenced by human relations. It suggests that people at work are motivated by recognition, sense of belonging and social integration they enjoy. The *self-actualising model* owes a great deal to the behavioural sciences and functions on the premise that human beings have an in-born need to fulfill their potentials.

However, someone's potential is a very personal issue which is determined by his/her personality. These models could be of use to help leaders to understand the psychological make-up of people in their organisations. (Mackay et al., 2007, p. 22.) This study is limited to Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory to explain how educational leaders can motivate their staff and students to higher student learning and improved school performance.
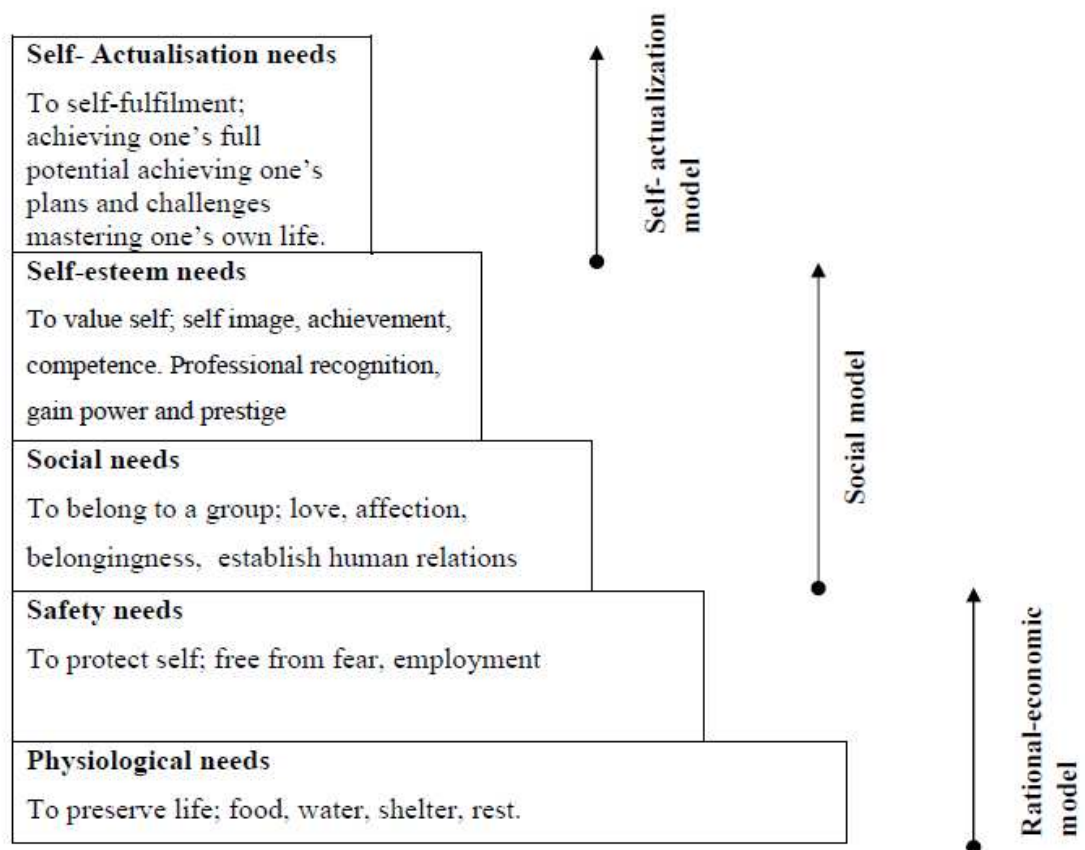
Figure 2. Three main models of motivation arising from Maslow's needs hierarchy. (Mackay et al., 2007, p. 22).

3.3   Leadership styles

Great educational leaders are those who demonstrate a range of useful attributes and behaviours for the school. These behaviours can generally be classified as their leadership styles, many of which have been described in the literature. The old idea of leadership which emphasises a strict division of management and output is no longer valid in the current school system. Schools in the future therefore need a different kind of educational leadership, one that the leader is able to practice in varied styles. (Ryan, 2008, p. 6.) A number of leadership styles appropriate for schools such as visionary leadership, shared leadership, change leadership, transactional and transformational leadership, ethical and authentic leadership (Gamage, Adams & McCormack, 2009, p. 11), have been identified and described below.

3.3.1 Visionary leadership

The visionary style of educational leadership operates on the notion of driving people towards a shared purpose of success. Leaders who espouse this style build a connection with their staff towards a shared dream. They therefore inspire them to embark on the journey to get there one day. In the context of business, visioning is at its best when there is a need for a switch of direction or when it is the starting point of the business. Leaders who practice this style of leadership are often seen to share their thought about the future and think beyond the current problem set. They try to convey thought through effective communication at all levels of the organisation for staff to understand and buy in. The visionary leader then acts as a model to indicate how others should behave for this vision to be reached, and set the pace rather than allow for the pace to be set. (Ryan, 2008, p. 7.)

3.3.2 Shared leadership

This style of leadership has been named differently by different authors. Some synonyms are participative leadership, collaborative, distributive, democratic leadership and leadership of trust. Hale and Moorman (2003, p. 13) insist that good educational leadership is one that is shared. Since the principals of today's schools face the

expectation of high accountability and efficiency as mentioned above, they cannot practice the managerial functions of controlling and commanding all the time, it is imperative for them to include the teachers to lead in areas also outside the classroom.

Democratic leaders build commitment by participation and encouraging all to value and respect the input of others. These leaders are highly empathetic and do not rush to conclusions too quickly. They are of the conviction that everyone has an opinion that counts and should be heard. They are good listeners, ask for people's views and mediate the different opinions effectively while encouraging collaboration and teamwork. They equally allow themselves open to alternative suggestions. This style comes in handy in a situation that a consensus is to be created among widely differing views. A shared leadership style works best with visionary leadership, because when people share the same goal, it gets easier to agree. The main limitation of this style of leadership is that much organizational time gets consumed in the process of arriving at a consensus owing to the amount of concerting, discussions and debate that precede action. However, great commitment exists once the decision is finally arrived at. (Ryan, 2008, p. 9.) It therefore depends on the leaders to find the style that fits the situation in question and stick with that as they will feel more comfortable since they have made their staff know what to expect from them and also trust that the staff will do their own fair share of the work without needing any coercion (ibid, p. 12).

3.3.3 Change leadership

Generally speaking, the rate of change we see today in organizations is more rapid than ever before. Great changes are happening at a faster rate and this pace has influenced employees in organizations to create a new psychological link between themselves and their organizations to meet up with these changes. In the domain of education, some visionaries and futurists have warned that schools and the leaders thereof need to change, otherwise schools will not be able to prepare their students for the world which they will be entering. (Verra, 2009, p. 17) Even though change is part of life in general; we age, society changes, cultures change, people are so resistant to adapt and evolve to the new situation for fear that they might be inadequate for the new demands (ibid, p. 23).

Far too many organizations will fail to navigate themselves safely when change is eminent for the survival of the organization, or do not make the transition fast enough or cleverly enough to be successful in a changing world. Fosdick in Ryan (2008, p. 57) mentioned, "The world is moving so fast these days that the man who says it can't be done is generally interrupted by someone doing it". In this light, we cannot ignore the role of the leader in skilfully leading change for the survival of his/her organization.

Change involves leadership to make a difference; all leaders without exceptions are required to have this skill as an integral part of their competences (National Council for Curriculum and Assessment, 2008, p. 14). In his book, Kotter (1996, p. 60) based the example on his experience while working on change initiatives with several organizations. He puts this forward through an eight-stage change framework and this framework has successfully been used in many change situations in organizations. The stages are: developing a sense of urgency, creating a coalition, visioning and strategising, communication of vision, empowering people for action, accomplishing tasks piece meal, creating even more change and finally, getting the changes embedded into the culture of the organization. Leaders need to consider all the above before embarking on the long journey of change and innovation.

3.3.4 Transactional and transformational leadership

The essence of leadership lies in the interaction between the leader and his/her followers. The interaction can take principally two main forms: transactional and transformational. While on the one hand, transactional leadership is exchange between leader and followers that can have economic, political or psychological impacts, the exchanges between the leader and followers are firmly based on striking a deal and relations do not go beyond this level.

On the other hand, transformational leadership is one that the leader and the followers elevate each other to greater levels of achievement, personality, motivation and morality. (Bass & Avolio, 1994, pp. 553-554.) Primarily, the main influence of transformational leadership has been measured by Bass and Avolio (1994, p. 552). They developed an instrument known as the Multi-factor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) to ascertain this influence and came up with their famous 4Is explained below.

ldealized influence or charisma is explained with respect to the reaction of the followers to the leader and equally as leaders' behaviour towards the followers. Followers associate with these kinds of leaders and copy from them. These leaders have gained much trust from their followers and are considered as having advanced a realistic mission and vision for the institution. They are well respected, enjoy a great deal of referent power, set and maintain high standards with challenging and stimulating goals for their followers.

Inspirational motivation could also be part of the idealized influence type of leadership; it depends on the extent to which followers would like to associate with the leader. The leader seeks to provide symbols which are adequate emotional appeals to foster awareness and improve understanding of goals mutually desired. He/she is known to uplift followers' expectations.

Intellectual stimulation is the practice where leaders encourage followers to question their former ways of leadership. Followers are also encouraged to question their own values and beliefs, as well as those of the organization. Followers here are challenged to think on their own, face challenges, and figure out innovative ways to self-development.

Individualized consideration takes place when the leader treats all followers differently but equally, mostly on an individual basis. In followers' interaction with leaders, their needs are not only recognised but their tools of effectively addressing goals and challenges are sharpened. With this kind of consideration, assignments given out to followers are to provide learning opportunities.

3.3.5 Authentic and ethical leadership

Since the 1960s, a number of definitions of authentic leadership have been described by different authors (Gardner, Cogliser, Davis & Dickens, 2011, p. 1123). Though the different definitions of authentic leadership differ in some respects, they tend to have some similarities. Two definitions which are pertinent to the topic of this thesis are considered here.

Bhindi and Duignan (1997, p. 206) argue that leadership is authentic to the extent to which it is ethical, sincere, genuine and, trustworthy in action and interaction. Authentic leadership draws heavily on ethical, transformational leadership, stewardship,

and leadership of spirituality. Authentic leaders are those who stand for honesty and integrity in their organizations and daily interactions. Leadership is also authentic if it constantly searches for the transformation of the self into a higher ethical and moral standing. This kind of leadership is non-dependent upon the position, status or authority of the leader but on what is recognised, credible and of integrity over a period of time. More recently, Whitehead (2009, p. 850) defined "an authentic leader as one who is self-aware, humble, always seeking improvement, aware of those being led and looks out for the welfare of others; fosters high degrees of trust by building an ethical and moral framework, and is committed to organizational success within the construct of social values." In short, authentic leaders match their words with values and actions. Followers also bear witness to the extent to which their leader is authentic.

3.4 Practices of effective leaders

In the past, significant research was conducted and reviewed to isolate the effects of leadership practices on school effectiveness and performance and to identify those practices that are most efficacious (Leithwood & Jantzi, 2008, p. 507). Such research analyses have yielded similar conclusions: that principal leadership practices contribute significantly to school effectiveness and performance but primarily indirectly through the teacher and organizational conditions. Much of the research has mostly been based on the leadership practices of how principals establish a focus and vision, address organizational conditions, and develop the capacity of others to be effective in teaching and fostering student learning. (Orr, 2010, p. 5.)

While conducting research that spans more than twenty years on the leadership practices and skills common to effective leaders of different professions, Kouzes and Posner (2007, p. 14) claimed that leadership is an assemblage of behaviours and practices and not a position. Through this landmark study, they identified five practices and 10 corresponding commitments of effective leaders (see Table 2). These practices which include modelling the way, inspiring a shared vision, challenging the process, enabling others to act, and encouraging the heart are described below with reference to the practices of school principals.

Table 2. The five practices and 10 commitments of leadership. (Kouzes & Posner (2007, p. 26).

Ten Commitments of Leadership		
Practices	**Commitments**	
Model the Way	1	Find your voice by clarifying your personal values.
	2	Set the example by aligning actions with shared values.
Inspire a Shared Vision	3	Envision the future by imagining exciting and enabling possibilities.
	4	Enlist others in a common vision by appealing to shared aspirations.
Challenge the Process	5	Search for opportunities by seeking innovative ways to change, grow, and improve.
	6	Experiment and take risks by constantly generating small wins and learning from mistakes.
Enable Others to Act	7	Foster collaboration by promoting cooperative goals and building trust.
	8	Strengthen others by sharing power and discretion.
Encourage the Heart	9	Recognize contributions by showing appreciation for individual excellence.
	10	Regularly celebrate the values and victories by creating a spirit of community.

3.4.1 Model the way

In modelling the way, leaders are the first to go, leading by example. They set examples and live by the rules they advocate by matching words with actions and building commitment as they perform their daily leadership roles hence laying the ground for progress to be attained in the organization. In addition to matching their words with action, effective leaders implement programmes of excellence, install a working culture in which people are loyal and also take pride in the work of the organization. Effective leaders strongly know that consistency in words and actions are very vital for their credibility to be built and maintained. They therefore do all these by employing their leadership philosophies. At the level of the schools, principals who model the way show great commitment to their school's vision and goals. They are therefore visibly present

in their schools, pay attention to teachers and students and strive to meet their needs. Such actions convey to the staff and students that they are interested in what goes on in the classrooms. (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, pp. 15-16; O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, p. 11.)

3.4.2 Inspire the shared vision or dream

Effective leaders are committed to developing and fostering a shared future among all stakeholders in their organizations. They achieve this by painting the whole picture of their dream for their followers to see and emulate instead of releasing only patches of the entire vision. By so doing they effectively communicate and encourage their colleagues to envision where they would like to be in future. Effective leaders hold that they can make a great difference in their organization and this process usually begins when they express their passion, concern, inspiration, feeling, and desire that the task is worth investing resources in. They instill the vision in their followers with a very positive roadmap, thus generating a lot of enthusiasm and excitement. (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, pp. 16-18.)

In the educational domain, Balcerek (1999, p. 21) recommends that school principals could employ their leadership practices and skills to inspire stakeholders (i.e. administrators, educators, staff, students, parents, community members), committing them to the goals and dreams he/she has for the school in the years to come, while at the same time, "connecting school goals with internal motivators" thereby "energizing and positively harnessing a wide variety of emotional resources embodied" in the members of the school community. Effective school leaders have also learnt properly to use the tool of effective and open communication, this they use to get all involved and make parents and community partners of the school to understand that the school cannot do it all alone (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, p. 11).

3.4.3 Challenge the process

Challenging the process is a way of life for leaders who want to succeed. They are proactive and they actively search for chances for upgrade and innovation as they do not want to maintain the status quo. They therefore welcome new ideas and always seek to

convert their ideas to get a novel product in the market, service or piece of legislation implemented. They therefore conduct a number of trials through pilot experiments most of which often fail but they learn from their mistakes and do not shift blames to others. Some of these failures open doors for them in many regards and they seize the opportunities to become famous. (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, pp. 18 – 20.)

As leaders take risks, their followers are supposed to do the same. Leaders therefore set high expectations while assisting followers in the process to reach the goals. In the course of the process, if mistakes are made, leaders also help them learn from the mistakes they made. The school leader creates a mission to foster student learning and a vision of what education stands for in the lives of the kids. He/she sets high standards for the kids to achieve at higher levels, helps teachers to believe that students can learn what schools had originally taught only to the so-called 'gifted kids'. (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, p. 9.)

3.4.4 Enable others to act

By enabling others to act, effective leaders create a strong sense of collaboration and empowerment among their staff. This requires great competence and high confidence and interaction (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 19). These authors also noted that "teamwork, trust and empowerment are therefore essential elements of leader's effort" (ibid, p. 21). Furthermore, the same authors declared that "collaboration is critical for achieving and sustaining high performance" (p. 242).

Enabling others to act means allowing them to execute their functions freely and hence achieve their full potentials. This also implies involving them in the planning and decision-making process of the organization. Successful leaders therefore strive to make the working environment conducive where trust and the respect for human dignity prevail. Finally, enabling others to act also requires giving the chance for interactions through which individuals could network with others, sharing their ideas and experiences while also benefiting from others. (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, pp. 20-21.)

One leading role of the principal is to support staff development by seeking to provide teachers with skills, materials, knowledge and resources needed for them to engage in learning activities. For this to happen, principals create an enabling environment in schools and recognize the needs of their teachers, strengthen them to

share in the dreams they have for the school. (Kelley, Thornton & Daugherty, 2005, p. 23.)

3.4.5 Encouraging the heart

Leaders aiming at high success rates need to motivate and encourage their personnel as they perform their duties all aiming at achieving the organization's shared vision and goals. They do this by taking a keen interest in the work of others, offering listening to them or employing other strategies. Through such employee motivation, leaders attach great recognition to job performance, which has a positive influence on the leader's achievement records. (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 21.)

To encourage the heart, successful leaders recognise employees' individual contributions, values and victories resulting from such contributions, and they are celebrated together. By so doing, the employees are confident that they belong and are part of the organization. These memories last longer in their hearts; hence this improves their sense of belonging and inspires them to work harder towards greater achievements. In a school community made up of teachers, staff, students, and parents, recognizing each actor's contributions to the achievements recorded especially with respect to the school's vision and goals, is very essential. By doing this, the principal pumps into the system more energy, which encourages the actors to work harder towards achieving the goals of the school. (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, pp. 22-23.)

3.5   Leadership roles and tasks of the principal

The roles of principals which are many and varied have great contributions to create more highly achieving schools (Gamage, Adams & McCormack, 2009, p. 3). Some of the roles include guiding the attainment of the goals of the organization (Leithwood & Mascall, 2008, p. 532). Equally important are decision making, strategic thinking, leading the change process, team building, organizing school resources, building an ethical school culture, as well as being results-oriented and collaborative, supporting professional development of staff, and supporting teachers as instructional leaders

(Tucker & Codding, 2002, p. 2, pp. 32-36), and developing a system of organizational learning (Senge, 1990, pp. 129-216).

In his book Mbua (2003, pp. 391-402) holds that the leader who is the head of the school has the responsibility to provide good and quality learning for all students and job satisfaction to his colleagues - the teachers. Likewise, Mäkelä (2007, p. 218) also reported a new task in addition to some basic tasks and roles of the principals in schools in Finland. The principal provides leadership, which is considered a series of functions aimed at influencing, maintaining, building the organization, developing members and getting the aims of the school met. Mbua classified these different functions under pedagogic, administrative, financial and social functions, in the same vain that Mäkelä (p. 220) did but his own classification being of slightly different profiles; instructional leadership, administrative-economic management, and staff leadership. These have been described in more details below. The examples of roles of principal have focused greatly on Cameroon since this is my home context.

Pedagogical leadership is one of the main functions of the principal in a school. This function requires for the principal to be intelligent, dynamic, competent and open-minded, and to have a high sense of team spirit. Principals are aware that improved teacher performance takes place only when there are basic materials for instruction. To achieve the goal of education which is student learning, the principal must stimulate pedagogic activities, help children to become creative in an effort to promoting their school's effectiveness. Therefore, from time to time, the principal is required to convene pedagogical meetings with the staff during which there is some kind of stock taking in the school. They could also compare teaching methods, evaluate performance, and the principal should also make frequent checks of how teaching is going on by paying visits to classrooms not to evaluate the teaching process but to be visible to the teachers and students and to support them. This helps to foster the level of achievement of students.

The principal should work in collaboration with the vice in setting up the pedagogic structure of the school and the timetable. It is advantageous to draw up a time table as this helps to facilitate the job of the teachers and students. The principal must ensure that teaching or pedagogic materials are made available for effective teaching. (Mbua, 2003, pp. 392-394.) In Finland, the roles of the school principal changed dramatically in the 1990s. They are not only the financial managers, personnel managers or managers of the results of their schools but are also expected to be educational leaders of their schools. In the past, a principal was selected from a batch of

teachers based on his/her experience but now the principal has to be well educated in the issues of the school and he/she needs firm technical skills to lead a school. (Aho et al., 2006, p. 119.)

Administrative functions or administrative-economic roles combine activities like the school laws, economic planning and student administration, decision making and arranging work hours for the teachers. All these come to play with other components, together with available resources to enhance the day-to-day operation of the school in order to achieve the goals of the institution. The principal as the head is charged with the execution of all the components of scientific management as stipulated by Taylor (1916). He/she is in charge of planning, organizing, supervising, coordinating, controlling etc. He/she provides effective leadership in all these domains by making the right decisions. The principal also defines the structural line of authorities which stipulates what is to be done and by whom. Most importantly, the principal has to be able to provide necessary coordination of all the tasks of the various departments to make an effective and a holistic whole. (Mbua, 2003, p. 394.)

The financial function is equally important, especially in low income countries like Cameroon where educational finances are generally always scarce. It is important for principals to acquire and manage the limited resources wisely. (Mbua, 2003) This needs great financial skills from the principal, which would include financial planning, budgeting, basic accounting and control. The principal assumes all responsibility for the economic and financial dealings of the school. As an example to drive this point, the school budget in Cameroon is drawn in a way that the revenue comes from varied sources: the finances of the school allocated at the level of the state, registration fees for the number of students who have enrolled to study in the school for that academic year, the Parents Teacher Association (PTA) levies, school fees and subventions and to some schools, there are grants. The principals in schools in Cameroon are expected to work in close collaboration with the bursars of the schools in recording and disbursing of funds. (ibid, pp. 401-402) In Finland, educational funding is provided by both the state and the local authorities but the municipality leaves the financial management of the school in the hands of the principal and teachers since the system is much decentralized (OECD, 2010, p. 127).

Social functions or network management is of importance. The principal of the school is expected to understand the social context in which his/her school is located. He/she should be able to stay in touch and have a cordial relationship with the entities

of the society like the business sector, the civil administration, parents and other stakeholders. A good principal recognises the importance of interpersonal relationships, the formal and informal organisations in his/her school. The influence of all these groupings cannot be overemphasised in the proper functioning of the school. This influence can affect the goals of the school either positively or negatively, a principal engaged in public relations will be able to illicit the appropriate responses from these sub-groups that would work for the better of the school. (Mbua, 2003, p. 402.)

In his classification, Mäkelä (2007, p. 220) mentioned one of the roles of the principal to be staff leadership which encompasses staff training, recruitment, staff wellbeing and renewing leadership. These roles are very well practiced by the Finnish principals since there have been structures put in place to support that, unlike in the case of their Cameroonian counterparts, who do not take any part in the training, neither do they in the recruitment of staff but could support the on-going professional development of staff and foster their wellbeing at school.

3.6   Challenges in educational leadership

Issues of school effectiveness and quality of leadership remain fundamental challenges to school leadership practices (Mbua, 2003, 472). To support this fact, Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008, p. 31) hold that the position of principal remains an essential feature of schools, but this position is facing a number of challenges. These authors are also of the opinion that the expectations of what schools should achieve have changed over the years and nations need to develop new forms of leadership required to meet their educational challenges. To achieve this, the authors further highlight the fact that nations first need to offer support and retrain their current school principals as most of them were hired into schools with challenges different from what pertains today.

More so, countries need to prepare and train future school leaders to ensure sustainable leadership. In addition, principals have reported challenges that the policies in place in their schools do not allow room for maneuver. Depending on the different context in which school principals work, they face varied challenges. In addition to the above, for Gamage (2006, p. 32), the main challenge that is faced by principals nowadays is to appreciate the changing contexts of educational leadership and improve

their ability to communicate with the knowledge that they are no longer the sole authority but are in partnership with other stakeholders.

To be accountable is more than just letting the public know that resources are properly acquired and reported and that expenditures are geared for what they were meant to address (Ammons, 2007, p. 2). In his writing, Sahlberg (2009, p. 2) discusses the Global Educational Reform Movement (GERM) and the Alternative Reform Movement (ARM) that came up in the 1980s that emphasised a better conceptual understanding for all pupils in problem solving, interpersonal skills, multiple intelligences as opposed to route memorisation or teaching for predetermined results. The next aspects of this reform were to guarantee effective learning and not just teaching for each pupil to pass an examination. Then was the accountability system in education used as a means to raise school performance (Sahlberg, 2009, p. 3).

Today, principals are highly accountable for what goes on in their schools and the application of accountability is an opportunity for the educator to acquire a powerful technology to serve the ends of his enterprise - the learner (Xiaorong, 2001, p. 9). The outputs from schools are a measure of the actions and interactions, structure, human resources, the politics, the culture that reigns in the school as well as the environment that the school is situated in. Although proper leadership is imperative for successful school, it requires much more than the lone effort of the leader to make a difference as multiple factors come to play to influence the output. Some of these factors rarely lie exclusively in the domain or competency of the school leader. For instance, the human, instructional and material resources provided to the school, pupils' readiness and willingness to learn and their alertness also can be related to their overall academic achievement, which does not fall exclusively in the competency area of the educational leader. (Ibukun 1991, p. 103) Catano and Stronge (2007, p. 394) believe that with the over pressure of high accountability, this requires principals to be able to improve instruction in order for students to achieve maximally while maintaining good facilities, checking the students' conduct and managing other resources.

4 PRINCIPAL TRAINING

This chapter opens with the definitions of the concepts of principal training and practice, followed by challenges faced by principals in sustaining proper practices, and the needed on-going professional development to help them in sustaining effective practices. Next, the content of the leadership training programme is introduced. Some features of effective educational leadership training programmes are indicated and finally, some evaluation criteria of the effectiveness of leadership training programmes are given as well.

4.1 Definition of training

The definition of 'training' for the purposes of this investigation is that which is seen as a practical activity, designed to enhance skills and to educate about current issues. The concept of training is helpful in describing how capacities for the principal are acquired and sustained. In preparing principals, real-world training should be emphasised. This entails providers have to give priority to make field-based experiences of central focus in the principal preparation programme. (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, p. 3) In addition, most aspiring principal candidates have an understanding of the difficulties that lie ahead of them in carrying out their job and acknowledge the importance of acquiring practical skills and knowledge to meet those challenges. The training institutions must have as their goal to put in place a system that will enable every school, irrespective of the challenges faced. They can achieve this goal by using some strategies that will guarantee that they always draw from a deep pool of highly skilled candidates who know how to lead, collaborate and get results. (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, pp. 16-18.)

Furthermore, they stated that training providers should make moves to incorporate into their programmes learning relationships that are research-based to solve site-based problems. All training providers should give more time for mentoring and internships as these two were factors that were reported being of utmost importance in a survey on a sample of principals that were deemed as 'effective' in the United States. They explained that it is only through interactions like mentoring and internships that novice principals develop and exhibit leadership skills and confidence that their practice demands. (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, p. 24.) These are discussed in detail in section 4.3.

Faced with new roles and high expectations from principals, Lashway (2003, p. 2) asserts that principals require new forms of training, and principal preparation programmes should be increasingly scrutinised. In achieving the above, a training institution that focuses too much on academic knowledge and too little on practical experiences in training candidates is 'self-defeating'. No matter how skilled and efficient professors package the knowledge, their graduates will definitely face a problem in creating a link between theory and practice while in their own schools.

4.2   Definition of practice and challenges of sustainability

Elmore (2008, p. 44) views practice as not being a personal attribute or characteristic of leaders but holds that leadership is a collection of patterned actions that is based on a particular knowledge, skill, and habits of the mind that is concretely defined, taught, and can be learned. Studies of both leadership and school improvement conducted and written have shaped the links among leadership practices, teachers' characteristics, how the school practices as an organization, and students' performances (Orr & Orphanos, 2011, p. 21).

Some authors (e.g. Pont, Nusche & Hopkins, 2008, pp. 265-266) argue that this idea of practice to enhance system-wide improvement of principals is hinged much on the challenge of sustainability of the training that the principals undertake and also on the school laws and reforms governing this domain. For instance, in Austria, a concern was put forward as to whether the Austrian Leadership Academy (training institution) will continue to operate, and whether the training they offer will have effects that are long lasting enough to enhance change in the school as a system. A similar issue raised in Victoria, Australia considers this point equally as a concern. School-wide

improvement can be attained only when a greater number of qualified candidates are admitted into the programmes. Likewise, in England even though there are a number of short term successes registered in the improvement of student learning as a result of training, it is still doubted if these are sustainable for the medium and long term goals of the school. Finally, the authors added that in Finland, while the educational reform had generated some positive results, and was still improving the capacity of leadership training rationalising this to practices, unless support is consistent, the long term dream is uncertain.

More so, for sustainability to be enhanced, some conditions are necessary: there should be the drive within the school to uphold high student learning, networking between the schools which is a binding force for schools to work effectively, linking associations that are flexible enough should be in place to help the schools develop internal capacities and collaborate effectively (Pont et al., 2008, p. 267). This current research is not interested in practice in general, but in the practices of principals that are influenced by the training they got and how they manage to sustain proper educational leadership practices in their various schools.

4.3   Professional development for school principals

In their study, Davies et al. (2005, p. 21) pointed that almost all practicing principals hold that professional development which often takes the form of in-service training, short courses, mentoring, leading change, revised and coherent curriculum or organizational design as indicated earlier, should be reinforced during all periods of their leadership. Cheney and Davis (2011, p. 11) proposed that in their quest for effective school leadership, graduates could be tracked and necessary on-the-job training identified and administered. Some forms of professional development are briefly described below.

4.3.1 Mentoring principals

According to Pont, Nusche and Moorman (2008, p. 137), mentoring is used to indicate a situation where someone more experienced seeks to assist another less experienced. It has been reported to be the most influential in the on-going professional development of

principals as many processes are involved such as personal relationships, active guidance, teaching and learning, administration and curriculum implementation. As adult learners respond more to demonstration, modelling and learning by doing, mentoring is quite in place to meet these needs. (Mulford, 2003, p. 38.)

In the United States and Britain, mentoring is a standard element in principal preparation programmes. Some graduates who were mentored in the course of formal development programmes rated mentoring as the most important part of the programme. (Hobson, 2003, p. 19; Pont et al., 2008, p. 137) It is highly essential for principals in training to have the opportunity to shadow principals in practice. This kind of mentoring would enable them to learn first hand what the challenges of the core are and how the practising principals address them (O'Neill, Fry, Gary, Walker & Bottoms, 2007, p. 28; Mulford, 2003, p. 38.)

4.3.2 In-service training

School leaders understand that changes in schools are imminent and have to master how to drive the change process effectively. In-service trainings therefore keep them abreast with the changes in the school system. On their part, they could also assist the change stages in their staff by organising meaningful on-the-job or in-service training for the staff that will make a difference in the learning of the students. (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, p. 16)

In Finland, when the school reforms commenced in 1972, teachers generally accepted in the bargaining contract that three days of compulsory in-service be reserved for them each year. In the same light, there was a Parliamentary Act that mandated additional two days of in-service training for every teacher with less than three years' teaching experience. This means the new teachers have five days in total every year for professional development training. During these trainings, there are national level instructors who help to mentor these new teachers and assist them adapt faster into the Finnish school culture. (Aho et al., 2006, p. 49.) Thus as it was, when the comprehensive education system was put in place, and because of the increased interaction between teachers in the vocational and general education sections, this kind of integration also warranted teachers to advance professionally. This has a boomerang effect as the attention that the Finnish education system has gained is as a result not

from the most recent educational reforms but mainly from a history which based so much importance on reconstructing the educational system, as well as encouraging teacher and leader professionalism. (Tihveräinen, 2009, p. 17)

4.4   Content of leadership training programmes

The leadership preparation programmes generally address issues such as the management of human and financial resources, budget management, leadership skills, legal issues, curriculum development and planning, problem-solving skills, decision making, ethical reasoning, ICT, school-family partnership, learning evaluation and programme evaluation (Beyer, 2009, p. 3).

In Finland, school leadership programmes are divided into five different categories: (i) Principal preparation - qualification programmes, (ii) Specialist Qualification in Management programmes, (iii) Professional Development (PD) programmes, (iv) Advanced studies in universities, and (v) other courses and studies (Värri & Alava, 2005, p. 8). These programmes differ in aspects like the content of the curriculum, duration of training, recruitment and selection of candidates, consistency of the training, as well as course fees (Värri & Alava, 2005; Ministry of Education Finland, 2007). In principle, school leadership education can be divided into preparatory and continuing professional education.

In general, irrespective of the country or the training provider, great emphasis should be laid on providing principals in training with some basic knowledge that includes skills to develop and guide educational programmes geared to serve the specific needs of students in a given community (Beyer, 2009, pp. 6-10). It is also necessary that university leadership preparation programmes ensure that all education leaders should act ethically in the planning of programmes, allocation of resources, development of the curriculum, proper management of human resources, providing a safe and conducive school environment, and offering special and inclusive programmes and services that will go a long way to encourage the academic, moral and social success of all students. In Finland, the National Qualification programme for principals offers training in planning, budgeting, self-evaluation and other leadership matters to foster the school - family relationships. (Hargreaves et al., 2007, p. 23.)

4.5   Features of effective educational leadership training programmes

Standards are used as guides to training organizations, leadership programmes, and individuals in training on what is needed. Great emphasis is placed on the building and maintenance of leadership standards which promote educational leadership policy and development, and also the performance need for school principals (Beyer, 2009, p. 4). These standards could be implemented to improve school leadership practices and policies (Council of Chief State School Officers, 2008, p. 6).

Cheney and Davis (2011, p. 22) propose that policies should be implemented that set high standards and emphasise quality for the school leader accreditation that encompasses the way principals are trained, their early career mentoring and tutoring and most especially on-going professional development and support. They also suggest that formal partnerships are essential between school communities and preparation programmes to indicate what aspects the community would wish for the training to address in preparing principals. Further, refocusing principal preparation programmes that ensure they develop and constantly evaluate that aspiring principals demonstrate the capabilities that are needed to improve student learning.

Following extensive reviews of research, Orr and Orphanos (2011, p. 22; Bottoms, O'Neill, Fry & Hill 2003, p. 3) have identified a number of features of exemplary leadership training programmes as follows.

Successful training programmes should have a well-defined leadership theory for school that brings together the programme features and a set of values, beliefs, and knowledge. A coherent curriculum needs to be adopted that incorporates effective pedagogy, school improvement, change management and should match the professional standards in place. The programmes should utilise an active learning strategy that merges theory, practice and encourages reflection.

Rigorous internships to provide quality field opportunities to practice the theories of leadership learnt and acquired skills under the guiding eyes of a veteran practitioner (mentor) should be included. The programmes should provide both social and professional support, students could be organized into cohorts to take common courses together in a sequence that is formalized under a mentor or expert principal. Highly qualified staff is needed and the programmes should utilise standardized methods of

assessments for students along with programme feedback, and continuously improve aspects related to the vision and objectives of the programmes.

High-performers should be singled out rather than relying on interested persons who may have administrative credentials but lack leadership talents. To achieve this, the above mentioned authors put forward criteria and strategies that could be implemented to choose high-quality candidates for leadership preparation, and people with adequate knowledge of curriculum and instruction who also have the passion for helping students meet high standards. Leadership preparation programmes should be redesigned and should lay more emphasis on curriculum, instruction and student achievement, which are consistent with high-achieving schools. Training programmes should consider field-based experiences a central focus and a high priority area.

There should be the creation of a two-phase system of certifying school principals. During the first phase, candidates could be required to successfully complete a programme that focuses on the core functions of successful schools. In the second phase, graduates with their initial diplomas could earn a professional certification following demonstration that they can lead improvements in school and classroom practices and in student achievement.

An alternative certification system should be put in place to provide high level support to successful teachers who could be interested in becoming principals. This route could enable teachers with master's degrees, demonstrated leadership skills and proven records of increasing student achievement bypass the traditional preparation. Also, instead of a single leader, schools should be run by leadership teams as this is most likely to improve student learning and train future principals. There should be the creation of leadership academies which could implement school-based leadership teams and hence would assist leaders in the team to develop the skills and knowledge required to promote student achievement through effective practices.

4.6   Evaluation of leadership training programmes

Beyer (2009, p. 10) laid emphasis on the point that it is necessary that training institutions regularly review the structure and content of leadership preparation programmes to ascertain if there are any gaps in the training offered to candidates. The question that should be asked regularly by training institutions is, whether candidates in

training get sufficient preparation in the knowledge, skills and attitude they need to develop and put into effect school level programmes that will ensure quality education for every student. The main goal of the preparatory programmes should ensure that graduates are adequately equipped with knowledge to meet the needs of the learners by performing good practices.

In order to constantly improve training programmes, to foster learning and ensure that trainees are practicing effective leadership, Cheney and Davis (2011, p. 11) recommend that programmes could be evaluated by frequently collecting data on students' academic performance and the school's internal and external efficiency over time. With this information, programmes would monitor the practices of their graduates - the young school principals.

Earley and Evans (2004, p. 327) have, however, advanced a number of reasons why they think it is not an easy task to assess the impact of any leadership training programme as follows.

Outcomes are complex and relatively difficult to quantify in simple terms as unexpected and unintended results are also likely to emerge. Most desired effects are indirect and occur through the leaders' relationship with others who, in turn, have a means of influencing the desired outcomes. Schools' outcomes are also influenced by many variables, and based on experiences and exposure, persons will respond differently in different contexts. Influences do not come up at once. It takes some time for what is learnt to become embedded in behaviour, for influences of the leadership to be of effect on others, and for these effects in turn to impact on teaching and learning, and further on learners' outcomes. Hence, figuring out the impact of leadership training would mean separating out the specific influences of training programmes to more general effects.

In relation to the above, Leithwood and Levin (2005, p. 10) argue that many evaluations done do not focus on the main goal of schools - student learning but rather base their conclusions on assessing graduates' level of satisfaction with the training programmes. Other evaluators sometimes assess graduates' perceptions on the influence of the training on participants' practices. To be able to carry out a proper evaluation of the effects of training on leadership practices, Simkins, Coldwell, Close and Morgan (2009, p. 35) suggest modelling of certain variables.

Programme interventions address the experience itself involving both taught components and personal learning in leadership programmes. *Antecedents* are the

participant's pre-knowledge of the factors that influence the programme experience, most specifically his/her personal characteristics. The *intermediate outcomes* are effects of training programmes considered to be of a lower order as compared to the desired end point but are pre-requisites for the final outcomes to be attained.

Moderating factors are those that dictate whether, and how, the interventions affect the achievement of intermediate variables, which in turn affect the final outcomes to be produced. Moderating factors can offer some explanations why similar actions might have different outcomes for different programmes. Lastly, the *final outcomes* are intended results of the training, particularly looking at student learning and the whole school improvement. For these authors, the relationships between these variables and how each influences the attainment of the other, could be of valuable insight to the training institutions.

Relatively recent studies have investigated the relationship between quality programme features and initial graduate outcomes; what graduates learned about leadership, their beliefs about principalship as a career, and their actual career advancement (Orr, 2010, p. 116). For example, Orr and Barber (2006, p. 709) reported that some programme features such as supportive programme structures, a complete and standardized curriculum, and more rigorous intensive internships highly influenced different types of outcomes, namely the graduates' leadership knowledge and skills, their leadership career plans and actual career growth. Beyer (2009, pp. 2-3) holds that it is imperative for leadership preparation programmes to be instrumental. They should act as a practical tool in integrating programmes, courses, and content (curriculum) that combines topical issues in the educational, business, public sector, social service, and non-profit leadership. Furthermore, bringing together these aspects in leadership preparation programmes facilitates the effectiveness of school leaders to work collaboratively toward the improvement of educational and related services for the students. Finally, a few studies now include measures of leadership preparation quality as influential to leadership outcomes, such as leadership self-efficacy and leadership practices. For example, Tschannen-Moran and Gareis (2005, p. 13), in their study of 558 principals, found that the perceived quality and utility of leadership preparation significantly contributed to principals' sense of leadership self-efficacy.

5   RESEARCH METHODS

This chapter deals with the research methodology chosen for the study. It opens by highlighting the objectives of the study and the research questions, followed by the research paradigms, and reasons given why I finally settled on the qualitative (case study) research design. The latter parts of this chapter dwell on framing and pilot testing the interview questions and methods of data collection and analysis.

5.1   Objectives of the study and research questions

The objectives of the study were to identify the main sources of school principals' leadership practices. It also investigated the elements of principals' preparation programmes that were the most useful in their career, and identified the areas where additional training or support may be needed.

In addition, it elucidates the leadership practices of school principals and explores the ways in which training supports or challenges their leadership practices in their schools and finally, the study identifies the possible difficulties faced by principals while translating the theory from training institutions into practice in their schools and how the challenges are resolved. Steyn (2008, p. 892) questions if at all educational leadership training makes any difference. Notwithstanding, training has shown to have a positive impact on principals' practices. For instance, a study conducted in Scotland which was a national survey on the influence of qualification programmes to headship provides a very positive image of the influence of educational leadership preparation programmes. Some of the positive responses are indicated in the following statements in the studies of Menter, Holligan and Mthenjwa (2005, p. 11). The influences indicated

were that the programme "enhanced my ability to support others, it also increased my effectiveness as a leader, made me a more reflective practitioner, and was effective in developing my professional values". The graduates interviewed were of the opinion that the programme influenced them in implementing change and improving team work in their schools.

To achieve the purpose of this study, the following research questions were formulated as guides:

1. Where do the key features of school principals' leadership practices arise more from?
2. Which areas of training should the training providers lay more emphasis on in preparing future principals?
3. What are the leadership practices of school principals and how has training influenced these practices?
4. What challenges do principals face in their day-to-day practices and how are they overcome?

5.2   Research paradigms

In this section, three research paradigms that can be used in educational research are described. Qualitative research deals with an understanding of the meaning of phenomena, which are created through study participants and their subjective views. As participants provide their views of a research topic under investigation, they also speak from their own personal experiences. By employing this research approach, research findings are shaped from the individual views to broad patterns and, ultimately to theory. (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007, p. 22.) Qualitative researchers are therefore particularly concerned about the richness, texture and feeling of raw data because their inductive approach demands developing insights from the collected data (Neuman, 2006, p. 149). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 6) state that quantitative research is designed to achieve standardization because the researcher uses the same sequence and procedure to ask the same questions from all respondents, hence placing a restriction on the kind of responses expected. Neuman (2006, p. 149) claims that quantitative researchers deal more on issues of research design, sampling techniques and

measurement, as interpretation of data requires detailed planning prior to collecting and analyzing of research data.

Creswell and Plano Clark (2007, p. 6) advocate for a mixed research method approach in which both the quantitative and qualitative research methods are employed to collect and analyse data in the same study. They indicate that quantitative data includes closed-ended information such as that obtained from behaviour or practice, which may require statistical analyzing of collected scores to be able to answer research questions or test hypotheses. On the other side, they state that qualitative data is made up of open-ended information collected through interviews (individual in-depth interviews and focus groups) with participants, allowing study participants to provide answers in their own words. Combining the two paradigms in a single project would therefore benefit from the strengths of each approach while avoiding their limitations to generate meaningful research data.

As already highlighted above, the different types of research approaches have their merits and demerits. Therefore, to attempt answers to my research questions, I chose the qualitative research approach for this study as it is exploratory and flexible (Hartley, 2004, p. 326), and hence would enable me to obtain adequate information on the subject of this research. This research utilises the qualitative research method, precisely the semi-structured interview. The quantitative methodology would not have been appropriate in this study because it employs highly structured data collection techniques, which often do not allow much manoeuvring during the interview phase. The reason for the choice of this method was also reinforced because when talking of an experience or influence as is the case in this study, it is better to keep the questions semi-structured or open to let participants air their views. (Creswell, Plano Clark, Gutmann & Hanson, 2003, p. 254)

5.3   Case study

In case study research, it is useful to decide whether the case study would take the form of an exploratory, descriptive or explanatory study, and key decisions have to be taken whether or not the research will be focused on a single case study or on multiple cases (Hartley, 2004, p. 326). This exploratory study uses the multiple case study design

involving eight participants who are all graduates of one institution, the Institute of Educational Leadership of the University of Jyväskylä.

Yin (1988, pp. 23, 82) defines a case study as an empirical research which investigates a concurrent phenomenon in its real-life context when the distinction between the phenomenon and context are not fully understood and in which multiple data sources are employed. He further highlights the fact that case studies allow researchers to identify the relationships between factors that have interacted to influence the behaviour of participant(s) under study.

Burns (1990, p. 366) lists six reasons for carrying out case studies. Firstly, he asserts that case studies are necessary as initial steps to major investigations as they produce rich data which could identify these for further in-depth investigation. Secondly, he maintains that as case studies "have as aims to probe deeply and analyse intensively" the numerous phenomena which constitute the activities of the unit or group under study, generalizations of results to the wider population could be possible. Thirdly, he proclaims that case studies could generate evidence from anecdotes which may illustrate general findings. Fourthly, he claims that case studies can serve to disprove certain generalizations. Fifthly, he equally claims that a case study is preferred in certain circumstances where pertinent behaviours cannot be manipulated, and finally, a case study could provide the best possible description of a unique historical event.

The findings from this study have a direct impact on the future training of school leaders. It identifies the areas of school leadership training that would have profound influence on the leadership practice of graduates. It also provides new knowledge and enriches existing literature on theories and principles of school leadership training. The data would assist the training institutions to plan, organize and provide quality leadership training for school leaders and prospective leaders. Additionally, findings would enable graduates to break out of their traditional practices by incorporating contemporary approaches in their practices. Furthermore, the practices of principals could not be manipulated as it may happen during an experimental research study. Hence, this multiple case study research fits so well Burns's (1990) postulated reasons for conducting a case study research. The case study design therefore was more appropriate for this research as it investigated the "what", "how" and "why" of the leadership practices of school principals, with the main focus on contemporary issues in educational leadership.

5.4 Data collection

To collect data for this study, a number of steps were followed. This section begins with the introduction of the research methods employed. This is followed by a description of how the research questions were formulated, pilot tested and the interviews conducted. Yin (2003, pp. 83, 85-96) identified six sources of information for case studies which include interviews, direct observation, participant observation, documents, archival records, and physical artifacts. In my case study, the main data collection techniques were in-depth interviews (semi-structured interviews) and a questionnaire. I also took down some notes during the interviews.

5.4.1 Selection of participants

As the research topic had to do with principals who had acquired educational leadership preparation, the samples were chosen in a deliberate manner. The purposive sampling technique was used with the aim of selecting mostly participants through whom relevant and plentiful data would be generated considering the topic under investigation (see Yin, 2011, p. 88).

From the study population, potential participants were identified and selected as described below. Initially, my supervisors made contacts with potential study participants, who had undergone the advanced leadership training programme offered by the Institute of Educational Leadership, University of Jyväskylä. Later, I obtained a letter from the institute introducing me to the contacted principals (Appendix 1) and together with my Research permit request (Appendix 2), these were posted to the principals in mid-May 2011 before the summer vacation. Upon my resumption for the autumn term, I re-established contacts with the principals via emails. In all, out of the 12 principals that had been contacted in May 2011 by postal mail and re-contacted in September 2011 via email, eight (66.7%) accepted to be participants of the study. We then made appointments for the interviews at a time most convenient for the participants.

5.4.2 Framing and pilot testing the interview questions

Devising the questions for the interview was done after a thorough literature review on the research topic. The questions were discussed with my supervisors and a list of selected questions was formulated that would enable the researcher to obtain data to answer the research questions.

With that set of questions, a pilot interview was conducted as proposed by Yin (2003, pp. 78-80). The pilot interview helped to refine the content, structure and the procedures to be followed while in the field. This was an excellent learning process for me given that I had never conducted an interview before, so this gave me the opportunity of trying out the data collection techniques and methods to see how they actually work in practice. This pilot interview was immediately followed by a discussion with the interviewee which led to some modifications and additions to the original set of interview questions.

The interviewee was chosen because he had undertaken the formal and advanced university principal training programme offered by the Institute of Educational Leadership. Also, he has been a former principal of a secondary and high school in the municipality of Jyväskylä. By these, it was reasoned that he would have had the same qualities and would have exhibited the same thinking or reasoning as the current principals who were interviewed in the schools.

5.4.3 The individual interviews

Originally, the researcher planned three focus group discussions involving five participants each. This was to be followed by in-depth interviews where emerging themes were to be discussed with a few selected participants. However, due to logistic constraints (differing appointment times, distant school locations, etc.), it was not feasible to conduct focus group interviews. Hence, individual interviews were carried out with the participants, who accepted to take part in the study. The researcher met each participant principal in their schools.

Merriam (1998, p. 20) points to the fact that in every qualitative study the researcher serves as the primary instrument for collection and analysis of data. This being the case, the investigator can increase the chances of collecting and producing meaningful results. On the other hand, as a result of the researcher serving as the

instrument for data collection, certain mistakes could be made, opportunities missed, or personal biases could be introduced. However, just like any other research instrument, human instruments could also be considered fallible, the reason why it was used in this study.

Prior to the interview proper, the interview questions were emailed to the participants so that they could better prepare their responses, especially as the interviews were conducted in English, which is not their first language. Eight semi-structured face-to-face interview sessions were conducted with individual principals to allow the researcher to have a dialogue with each participant so as to gain insight into the "how" and "why" of their leadership practices. All eight interviews were spread over a three week period in the month of October 2011. Each interview session which lasted for about fifty minutes started with the informed consent process during which each participant read and had the opportunity to ask questions to be clarified before signing the informed consent form which was also signed by the researcher (Appendix 3), and each of whom retained a copy of the signed form. The participant then completed a simple questionnaire aimed at enabling the researcher to gather information about the career life of the participants and school characteristics, and was followed by the interview (Appendix 4).

At the initial stage of making the appointment, the interviewees were told that one-hour was required. This was to provide for questions or discussions that might have arisen that were important for the research. The general expectation was that the interview sessions would be beneficial in providing thoughts and preferences on concerns related to the influence the leadership preparation has on their practices. The technique was also employed to assess the needs and feelings of the participants. The use of this technique provided spontaneous reactions and ideas relating to the topic of the discussion were observed and noted by the researcher as proposed by Patton (1987, p. 13). He indicates that in practice, every face-to face interview requires and also involves observation and that the interviewer should be well skilled to observe well. He also holds that the main aim of interviewing is to enable the researcher to get into the interviewee's thoughts. In this respect, the semi-structured interview approach was employed and the interviews were tape-recorded.

Kvale (1997) mentions that using a tape-recorder makes it possible to record laughs, pauses and intonation, thereby making it possible to recall easily all these feelings during the transcription of the interviews, which makes the interpretation of

data more valid. However, during the interview session, I noted down as much of what was said as possible as a backup in the event of technology failure. Also I chose to transcribe the interviews word for word since I believed this would enhance the accuracy in interpreting and subsequently boost the validity of my analysis and conclusions drawn. The transcriptions were carried out shortly after conducting the interviews as they were still fresh on my mind; this was also done to meet the criteria of the time constraint. I conducted all the interviews in English.

All interviews were conducted in the principals' offices, which ensured minimum disturbance although we were interrupted once during two of these interviews. I started by briefly introducing myself and outlining my study. Then we went through the questions in the simple questionnaire (Section A, Appendix 4), to get a general background of the person interviewed. Vital information here included age range, teaching and leadership qualifications and experiences. Once these were established, we preceded to the interview questions. A fixed set of interview questions (Section B, Appendix 4) was used so as to be able to classify the answers easily.

5.5   Data analysis

Data analysis as defined by Hitchcock and Hughes (1995, p. 295) is a step-by-step process aimed to discover and identify patterns, to search for themes and categories, and to make some sense from collected data sets. This activity involves consolidating, reducing and interpreting what the interviewees said and what the researcher saw and heard – it is the period of bringing out meanings (Merriam, 1998, p. 178). Data collected from the individual interviews were largely in the form of field notes and tape-recorded interviews. The analysis began with a careful transcription of the interviews. During this process, the names of the participants and locations were changed to protect the participants' identities. After transcription, the data was then organised and interpreted by three concurrent flows of activity as suggested by Miles and Huberman (1994, p. 10); reduction of data, display of data, conclusion drawing and verification as illustrated in Figure 3 below.
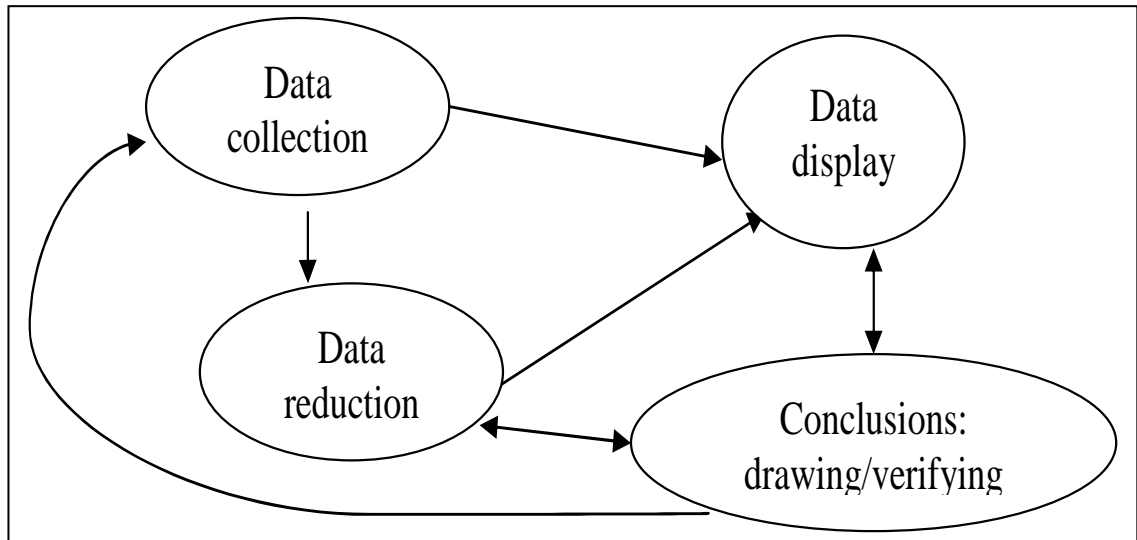
Figure 3. Components of data analysis: Interactive model. (Miles & Huberman, 1994, p.12).

After the data transcription, I first checked the responses given by each participant to be sure that they provided answers to each interview item as it could have happened that a respondent failed to appropriately answer a question asked during the interview. By so doing, I determined whether or not the provided responses were in line with the interview questions asked or also useful for providing additional data, thereby excluding data which was not related to the topic of my research. Following this checking step, the preliminary analysis was done first by tallying the responses of the eight principals to the seven interview items. That means, for interview item one; all eight principals' responses have been pulled together, the same with interview item two, and so on. After this step, similarities and differences in the responses were identified. This step was followed by the reduction of the data into categories to avoid redundancy.

The analysis was approached in the light of my research questions and based on the themes that emerged following the reduction of data. An inductive approach was employed where categories and themes emerge from the data instead of being dictated prior to the collection of data. Some of the themes were common to all the eight participants and other themes only to few participants. However, all the themes which emerged were included in the analysis so that no useful data was left out or lost. The data obtained from the seven interview items was pulled together in order to answer the four research questions of this study as follows: the responses obtained from interview item one answered research question one; data from interview items two and four

answered research question two; research question three by items three and five, and also the additional information on the difficulty in translating theory to practice; and finally, research question four was answered by items six and 7a and b.

Following the step above, the results from the interviews were finally grouped into four themes, each of which answers one of the four research questions. The themes are as follows: (**i**) features where school principals' leadership practices arise more from; (**ii**) areas of training where emphasis is needed; (**iii**) leadership practices of school principals and effect of training on principals' practices; and (**iv**) challenges principals encounter in their schools and aspects of training used to tackle the challenges. Appendices 6-9, which represent tables 5-8, illustrate the categorized responses of the themes above.

The categorization of the data was not easy to achieve as responses were varied and difficult to be allocated appropriately. However, after several attempts and following consultations with my supervisors, the final themes and categories were arrived at and are presented and discussed according to the four research questions in chapter 6.

6   FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

In this chapter the findings obtained following the data analysis and categorization are presented and discussed. The four main themes resulting from this investigation are: key sources of school principals' leadership practices, the most useful elements of principal training programme, influence of training on principals' leadership practices (styles), challenges faced by principals, and how training has helped them overcome these challenges. The framework and literature reviewed for the study have been taken into consideration in the course of writing this discussion.

6.1   Basic characteristics of schools and career profiles of principals

Appendix 5 summarises the basic characteristics of the schools visited and the professional background of the eight principals interviewed. The youngest and oldest schools were 16 and 137 years old respectively. All schools had between 15 and 50 teachers responsible for teaching about 32 to 480 students. The majority of the principals were males (75 %) while 25 % were females. Most of these respondents were between the age group of 50-59. The eight principals had all undertaken training to become teachers. They have all also attended the advanced leadership training offered at the Institute of Educational Leadership of Jyväskylä University with only two of them moving directly to this level without the bridging basic leadership training. Also, seven of the respondents have taken some form of professional development while serving as school principals. This professional development has mainly taken the form of in-service training, short courses lasting 1- 3 days, coaching and mentoring.

When asked about their motivation for undertaking these leadership trainings, four of the interviewees shared the same motivation for returning to the university to acquire the advanced leadership training qualification. These were their desire to work and their love for the job of a school principal. They also wanted to acquire some theories on leadership and how to lead people. However, the other principals gave varied responses. For instance, two wanted to make education better for the kids in school, while another saw this as an opportunity for career advancement. Yet another respondent had the desire to become a principal a long time ago, and when she was promoted from a teacher to a deputy head teacher, she then finally decided to pursue the advanced leadership course at the university. This served as a motivation as she feels self-actualised. Another principal said she needed organizational skills and thought further training would enable her to acquire them.

6.2   Key sources of school principals' leadership practices

The principals reported to the first research question that besides personal experiences, knowledge gained from theory, practice, leadership and networking constitute major sources of their leadership practices (see appendix 6) as discussed below.

Theory
Theory emerged as one of the main areas from where a greater majority of principals derive their leadership practices. Since some of the principals need more theories of leadership and guidelines to lead a school, this is in agreement to what Gamage et al. (2009, p. 5) mentioned that in response to the changing roles of principals, training and on-going professional development are crucial to enhance effective leadership practices. Some principals mentioned that during training, candidates could be better prepared for the challenges that are inherent in the core of school leadership. Also, in the course of training, candidates shared their difficulties and experiences with colleagues and could also benefit from them. By so doing, this could create a connection between visioning to practical problems faced by principals. This is true given that principalship in today's and future schools is plagued with a paradigm shift in the expectations of the roles of principals (Hemmen, Edmonson & Slate, 2009, p. 6).

Equally, it is mostly through the theories taught to principals in training that these changing expectations could be made known to them. Orr and Orphanos (2011, p. 22) therefore suggest that successful leadership training programmes should have a well-defined leadership theory for schools that brings together the programme features, including a set of knowledge, beliefs and values. However, Murphy (2005, pp. 5-6) claims that although adequate theories would make the educational world a better place, as well as the leadership training programmes which implies the production of more effective graduates, theory without practice is like a "bridge to nowhere" (p. 6).

Practice

Five principals mentioned that practice is equally of paramount importance to candidates in principal training institutions. For instance, principal D said that the training should emphasise *"more on practice"*, further explaining that during his advanced training, theory and practice had comparable weighting which to him was good as one actually learns to be a successful principal mostly through practice and no short cuts. Simieou et al. (2010, p. 2) pointed out that a lack of practical training may result in graduates leading by trial and error through the early years of their career and only by so doing could they be able to acquire the experience that is needed to function effectively. Another respondent emphasized the importance of practice by mentioning that a principal could be well read but still have problems translating theory into practice. To address this concern, some authors have proposed that training programmes could adopt field-based experiences as a central focus and high priority area in the training of principals (Bottoms et al., 2003, p. 3). The types of practices that principals could be offered during training as indicated by principals in this study are mentoring, coaching, practicum and internships. Many studies have revealed the benefits these forms of practice could have to principals in training (Hobson, 2003, p. 6; Davis et al., 2005, p. 17). This therefore goes to support the claims the respondents of this study made that the mentoring and practicum exercises that they had during their training have been beneficial to them. Like the personal trainer, the mentor helps the candidate in training to maintain a consistent and confident focus on the state-of-the-art in the profession and managing shortcomings. Mentoring and practicum have the potential for continuous learning because it offers ongoing support and feedback to the novice as well as helping the mentor to challenge his/her own potential and to confront resistance to change that usually comes with practice as time goes on. (Hobson, 2003, p. 3.)

During leadership training in Finland, apart from the teachings on aspects of leadership, educational administration and legislation, etc. practical field work sessions are also organized, thus exposing students to real life realities (Ministry of Education, Finland, 2007, p. 48).

Leadership

Beyer (2009, p. 3) pointed out that leadership preparation programmes generally cover aspects such as leadership skills, management of human resources, problem-solving skills, decision making, ethical reasoning etc. through which participants gain a lot and it is translated to their practices. In this research, studies on different aspects of leadership were considered key sources of four principals' leadership practices in their schools. Some principals exemplified this by saying that training has made them to become good listeners as they now practice increased team work and collaboration, and are able to manage human resources better than they did before training. All four principals shared this latter view and some indicated that they have mastered this aspect by treating each staff as individuals and equitably. Hargreaves et al. (2007, p. 7) are in support of collaboration and team work, these authors challenged school leaders to develop and raise high level students' performance by working with, learning from and influencing the behaviours of others in and out of their schools. Harris (2004, p. 11) has also pointed out that even though there are many benefits to team work and collaboration, leaders should watch out for barriers in order not to lose organizational energy and time in the process.

Networking

Interviewees expressed the need for principals in training to create and maintain their professional network to enable them to keep in touch with other practitioners of the core. In the same vain, Busch et al. (2005, p. 6) pointed in their study that during the period of mentoring, peer learning and group discussions that principals in training engage in, this marks the best time for them to create networks that could be of positive use in the future. One principal in this study indicated that he belongs to a strong network of practicing principals in the Nordic region in Europe and that through networking, they keep in constant touch with one another, render advice to anyone in need in that group and also share leadership blogs through the twitter social media platform. He said that through this forum, members are aware of the current

developments in the field of educational leadership. Other principals in this study have used the networks they created especially during mentoring to save serious situations in their schools. These findings reflect that in principle, school leadership education in Finland is divided into preparatory and continuing professional education (Ministry of Education Finland, 2007, p. 46; Värri & Alava, 2005, p. 8). Orr and Orphanos (2011, p. 22) also support the accession that programmes should continue to provide both social and professional support to their graduates. In line with the social model of motivation by Mackay et al. (2007, p. 22), principals' sense of belonging, social integration and recognition will increase through such interactions.

Other sources of leadership practices

All participants interviewed in this study were highly qualified as they had been teaching for at least five years and were all holders of a master degree and even a few of them being doctorate degree holders. They have therefore accumulated a lot of experiences over the years. However, principal F is still of the opinion that aspiring candidates must demonstrate curiosity, motivation and have some years of teaching experience. Lashway (2003, p. 3) agrees that admission into most educational leadership preparation programmes is usually based on self-selection by the candidates, "half-hearted" screening and little outreach to talented individuals. Johnson (2007, p. 5) recommends that before assuming the position of a principal, the candidate must have appropriate teacher training for the level of education and a master's degree as a rule.

Considering the advanced educational leadership training that all the participants of this study had taken, some confirmed that the admission requirements into this programme might not have been very strict. To this, principal E indicated that they had some inexperienced university graduates, vice-principals, and practicing principals in their cohort. This finding is contrary to what Alava (2007, p. 34) mentioned that practically most of the candidates admitted into this programme are already school principals and the recruitment is quite selective. Bottoms et al. (2003, p. 3) therefore suggest that training institutions single out only high-quality candidates who have adequate knowledge of the curriculum and instruction with also the passion for helping students meet high standards rather than admitting all interested persons who may have administrative credentials but lack leadership talents. On the contrary, Pont et al. (2008, p. 11) still support the idea that initial leadership training be encouraged irrespective of whether it is voluntary or mandatory.

The participants of this study equally explained that they acquired their leadership practices based on the manner in which their training was delivered, assessed and the length of time they spent in training. Apart from attending class sessions, participants identified a number of other course delivery methods such as group discussions, practicum sessions, and seminar presentations during which they shared their knowledge with other principals and colleagues and in turn benefited from these interactions. In the course of their training which lasted on average 1.5 years, standardized methods of assessing the student principals were adopted mainly through individualized report and essay writing along with feedbacks as also reported by Orr and Orphanos (2011, p. 22). However, principal E expressed the desire that he would have loved to be assessed by writing examinations, which is contrary to what pertains in the Finnish educational system.

6.3   Need for future training

The second research question sought responses from participants on areas of leadership training where they thought more emphasis is needed. Though one participant said the programme was quite balanced making it difficult for him to identify an area where more emphasis should be laid, other respondents identified some areas for improvement described and discussed below.

6.3.1 Needs for further training by principals

All respondents were of the opinion that the society is changing so fast, and they face challenges staying abreast with these changes. They acknowledged that training in certain domains to improve their skills/practices is needed. Appendix 7 highlights the reasons behind their need for further training.

Keeping pace with current trends
The field of education is changing due to advances in technology, changing societal expectations and the forces of globalization. Hence, the expectations of what schools should achieve keep changing over the years and new forms of leadership to meet the

educational challenges are required (Pont et al., 2008, p. 31; Gamage, 2003, p. 8). Though the main goal of the university-level principal preparation programmes in Finland is to meet the current challenges facing educational leadership in schools (Alava, 2007, p. 34), all the principals interviewed still expressed the desire to attend further training to develop their skills to stay abreast with contemporary changes in education. Gamage (2006, p. 32) also reported that the major challenge faced by principals today is to appreciate the changing contexts of educational leadership. Levine (2005, p. 66) further acknowledged that it is the duty for educational leadership training programmes to address the area of skills and knowledge necessary to lead today's schools. One study participant made reference to the fact that he is not perfect, while another described himself as a lifelong learner, both highlighting their needs for additional knowledge especially from different countries to better appreciate global trends in education. Four other respondents acknowledged that more knowledge would help them stay up to date and be able to follow the times. For these aspirations to be fully realized, Grogan and Andrews (2002, pp. 238-241) have called to mind the need that training institutions and programmes have to address the aspirations of future schools and produce graduates who can promote the development of good schools in future.

Modern teaching methods

Today, several user-friendly information and communication technology (ICT) methods and appliances are used as tools for teaching and learning in schools (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, p. 16). In the Finnish context, Alava (2007, p. 35) confirmed that in addition to the classical teaching methods, the advanced leadership training programme whose graduates were sampled in this study also uses a web platform (Optima) and e-learning groups guided by tutors in some instances. However, in this study, the need for intensive ICTs and computer literacy courses for principals in training as well as teachers and students was still expressed by two participants, including the use of social multi media in teaching. A respondent observed that additional training would enable him to "learn to implement more interactive teaching methods" as his pupils are very comfortable with ICTs and this training could help build up his own capacity in this area (principal A). Nicholson (2007, pp. 9-10) also supports the claim that children are more comfortable using these ICTs, calling on all teachers and school leaders to get involved and develop their knowledge, capabilities and working skills of ICTs.

Managing future challenges

The job of the principal is increasingly becoming more challenging and complex (U. S. Department of Education, 2004, p. 2). Hale and Moorman (2003, p. 13) reported that principals require certain leadership skills to lead quality schools in today's complex environments. Results from this research have highlighted the need for school leaders to acquire additional training to be able to adequately handle future challenges. Three principals made reference to the unfortunate likelihood that their schools will either be merged (schools B and C) or have changed ownership from being a municipality to a city school (school H). In the latter case, this implies reduced finances per head of student. These participants envisaged that they might experience challenges adapting to the future school standards. These are in alignment with what is envisaged that due to the massive restructuring programmes at the levels of both the schools and municipalities in Finland, many schools are going to be closed or redesigned as a result of the decreasing student population (Alava, 2007, p. 45).

Poor student behaviours, difficulties in managing the limited resources, and proposing innovations in schools and time scarcity were other concerns addressed that further training is needed for principals to understand how these could be handled. For instance, two respondents complained that it is difficult for them to adequately distribute the limited resources in a manner that does not pose problems. Two more interviewees said they face challenges when trying to propose innovations in their schools. Principal E, for example, faces a challenge of accomplishing his tasks at their appropriate time as he needs more time to concert with teachers before decisions are made while principal H complained of too many small things she has to fit into her day. Some authors have highlighted that new leadership and management skills on strategic planning would enable principals to overcome future challenges and stay on course (Gamage, 2003, p. 8; Alava, 2007, p. 45). Daresh, Gantner, Dunlap and Hvizdak (2000, p. 72) have reported that certain training programmes have employed means such as case studies and simulations to address challenges similar to those faced by principals in today's complex school environments. Amey (2005, p. 701) however advocate that programme developers should tailor principals' training towards addressing future challenges in such complex environments.

Professional development

A number of authors have pointed out that leadership development should be treated as a continuum, involving both formal and informal processes that support all stages of leadership practices (Davis et al., 2005, p. 21; Pont et al., 2008, p. 11). Cheney and Davis (2011, p. 22) also posit that policies be proposed which take into account early career mentoring and tutoring and most especially on-going professional development and support for school principals. In line with these reports, all the principals in this study expressed their desire for more professional development courses which will remind them of their training as they carry out their practices. This confirms the thoughts of Orr and Orphanos (2011, p. 22), who said professional development provides quality field opportunities to practice the theories of leadership learnt and acquired skills under the guiding eyes of a mentor.

This could be more helpful to them as adult learners respond more to demonstration, modeling and learning by doing (Mulford, 2003, p. 38), which justifies why a respondent indicated that the training he would wish to have for professional development does not need to take the form of formal courses to earn more credits. As an example, he indicated that he has got many books to read and do individual studies which he considers as further learning but thinks it would be worthwhile to take some short courses. Another respondent was very positive that the city offers them many updating days which apart from dealing with issues such as school regulations and laws, also constitutes a forum where all principals working at the same level of education share their problems and difficulties, and agree on uniform standards to be implemented in the various schools to enhance uniformity. As a beginner principal, she said positively that these meetings have been very beneficial to her because she gets the needed advice and mentoring from them. This ties well with Cheney and Davis (2011, p. 11) proposing that tracking and administering of any necessary on-the-job training to graduates of training programmes is necessary.

6.3.2 Areas for more emphasis by training institutions

Appendix 7 also contains some areas identified by respondents which they believe have to be emphasized by training institutions and discussed below.

Management of resources

The participants of this study emphasized that the training components on the management of human and financial resources be improved. For instance, principal A said training should lay more emphasis on *"how to lead people since our staff is growing older"*. Another respondent further indicated that principals should be trained to give more power to the teachers and trust them. These would also be useful to them as Finnish municipalities leave the financial management of the school in the hands of the principal and teachers (OECD, 2010, p. 127). Aho et al. (2006, p. 119) also confirmed that apart from being educational leaders, Finnish principals are the financial managers, personnel managers or managers of the results of their schools. Mbua (2003, pp. 401-402) asserted that proper management of human resources and the limited financial resources is essential in the school organization and principals therefore need adequate training in these domains.

Programme quality and teaching methods

Quality takes into consideration some dimensions like resources and inputs, process, content (curriculum), outputs and outcomes (ICICI Centre for Elementary Education, 2010, p. 7). Although school leadership training involves both quantity and quality, there is an increasing demand for high quality principal training programmes (Alava, 2007, p. 47). A principal in this study also confirms this fact indicating that the quality of the advanced leadership training should be improved especially replacing some traditional methods with more modern teaching methods which involve more practical interactions. As evident from the results of this study, the traditional theory-based nature of leadership training programmes has also been heavily criticized in the literature (Hale & Moorman, 2003, p. 19; Levine, 2005, p. 68). This participant further claimed that courses in the basic leadership training programme were good but some needed restructuring to make them more informative. He therefore opined that some improvements need to be done also in the basic leadership training programme. Bottoms et al. (2003, p. 3) recommend re-designing the content of training programmes to lay more emphasis on aspects of high-achieving schools such as curriculum, instruction and student achievement.

Organization of programme and programme structure

As theory is considered an essential component of leadership training, three principals in this study thought that this should be improved. Alava (2007, p. 35) also thinks that the university-level principal preparation programmes in Finland are more theoretical, even though with a broad framework that combines theoretical knowledge and practical skills. Participants in this study also pointed to the fact that Finnish training institutions should equally adopt the use of school leadership literature and theories of Finnish, Nordic as well as of European origin. It was also reiterated by a participant that models and examples from the field of education should be emulated rather than from the business world. The same participant also called on the training providers to uphold the Finnish culture when selecting literature for use in training principals in Finland.

Some of these propositions may be limited by the fact that not much has been written in this field pertaining to Finland, probably because formal educational leadership training for school principals is relatively recent in the country (Alava, 2007, p. 29). Furthermore, Alava (2007, p. 48) states that only a few research studies have been completed on Finnish school leadership, confirming that their main source of literature is from international research. This justifies the need for more home-based literature on various aspects of school leadership as the knowledge that is being generated through this study could equally be of importance. Three other participants mentioned that ample time should be allocated in the course of training for interactions and brainstorming in groups. Orr and Orphanos (2011, p. 22) are in total support of this suggestion as they mentioned programmes should utilize an active learning strategy that merges theory and practice, and encourages reflection.

Networking

Networking is an essential tool used to support principals and teachers at all stages of their professional career, and members involved in professional networks stand to benefit a lot (Strachan, 2003, p. 38) as already described in section 6.2. In this research, though networking with other practitioners of the core is helping principals' leadership practices, they expressed the need that programmes should create and maintain international cooperation with other universities, adding that tutor principals could stay in touch with the principals in training and the training institutions even after the tutoring periods. This is a pertinent issue as it has been reported that very little or no networking exists between the different leadership training providers in Finland,

although the Institute of Educational Leadership has in place firm collaboration contacts with China, Norway and the USA (Ministry of Education, Finland, 2007, pp. 45-50). Both home-based and international collaborations between the training institutions would make a difference in encouraging networking. In this light, principal training institutions in Finland are currently expanding their international collaboration with other institutions worldwide (Alava, 2007, p. 49). However, more is still to be done nationally.

Principals in this study also expressed that training institutions should encourage their candidates to participate in professional learning networks in order to benefit from the newest and latest ideas about leading. This reflects the fact that schools in Finland are known to be very small (Alava, 2007, p. 6), and also supported by data from this present study (section 6.1). This therefore implies the potential size of a principal's network especially within central Finland being relatively small. Though not all members of a principal's network must be teachers or principals, most of them will inevitably belong to this group. Pont et al. (2008, p. 10) encourage the idea that schools should collaborate with others as this could bring benefits to the whole school systems. These authors further encourage school leaders to develop their skills to become involved in matters beyond their school borders.

6.4 Influence of training on leadership practices of principals

The third research objective of this study was to assess the impact of training on the leadership practices of school principals. The responses obtained under this research question are presented and discussed in this section.

6.4.1 Impact of training on principal's effectiveness

The respondents all reported positive improvements in their practices. They expressed pertinent contributions which they have attributed to the trainings they had taken. For instance, one participant indicated how she practices better than her former headmaster with whom she had worked as a teacher as training has enabled her to look beyond the old traditional styles of leadership she observed with her former headmaster. She was

resolute on the fact that after undergoing the training, she developed some new future oriented ideas. Appendix 8 summarises the influence of training on leadership practices.

From principalship to leadership

All of the respondents indicated positive influences of training on their leadership styles and practices in schools. They mentioned that training was kind of a catalyst that helped to transform their practices from that of mere surviving principals to the great school leaders which they are today. This was especially true for those who had no formal educational leadership training before taking up principalship. In this regard, principal B narrated how he had almost no experience when he started his career as a principal mentioning that although he used to observe his bosses work, *"it is virtually a very different ball game when put into it yourself to head a school"*. He added that when he carries out his leadership practices, his staff say that he has changed and he wonders how a programme can have so many positive influences on his practices.

However, he believes that the positive remarks about his practices are true. This confirms informal reports that the programmes have had a positive impact on candidates' career advancement (Alava, 2007, p. 34). Literature for the past decade on educational administration has emphasized a shift of roles for school leaders from that of managing the schools to incorporating activities that would benefit student learning (OECD, 2009, p. 192). Training is capable of providing school leaders with the necessary guidance characteristic of the tasks and responsibilities of an effective school leader, as well as indicating the essence of school leadership as leadership for student learning (Pont et al., 2008, p. 10).

Broader understanding of leadership

Guidance provided to candidates through training also renders the principals in training with a broader understanding of school leadership. This is one theme that emerged as an influence of the training in this study. Four principals mentioned that training was influential to the leadership theories they espouse, and styles they now practice. The respondents of schools D and G said the whole process helped broaden their thinking and granted them a wider background in different situations they encounter in their every day practices. Principal D added that there were many influences but most especially his leadership self esteem grew after the studies and he feels self growth and feelings of accomplishment in himself.

Generally, in Finland where the teacher qualification is quite high, the theories of leadership that the principals studied during the training made them know that they do not have to dictate everything to the kind of professionals that the Finnish teachers are, but instead, they have to involve them into dialogue, decision making and shared leadership. This is what interviewed principals practice in their schools, and the results speak for themselves. They have been able to enable others to participate in leadership by fostering cooperation and building trust (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 42).

Understanding and leading 'self'

Six principals in this study evaluated that they had an increased understanding of themselves after they graduated from their leadership training course, which marked a point of breakthrough for them in their careers. They had to figure out their leadership philosophies and personal values as individuals and leaders during the training and made these known to their staff. This is contributing to enable them to maintain this position as principals up to this time. One of these respondents said that when he took his basic training, it was good but it still did not prepare him adequately to become an effective principal, adding that it was only after the advanced training that he became more aware of himself and knew what to do and what not to do in certain circumstances to avoid problems. It is also in keeping with what Kouzes and Posner (2007, p. 54) put forward that for school leaders to clearly communicate their personal values, makes a significant difference in the behaviour of their followers and of themselves, and this usually marks commitment by all involved. Likewise, the confidence that develops after the training as one is well prepared and better suited for the job of a school leader was also remarkable in the responses of the principals.

6.4.2 Areas of training with profound influence on principals

The informants reported three major areas of training which had profound influences on their leadership as also shown in appendix 8.

Programme structure

One of my research questions was to inquire from the principals into the domain of their training that has influenced them the most in how they carry out their daily duties of

leading the schools. Among other responses the most recurrent were the programme structure, the learning on leadership, and the entire training process. As the trainings they underwent were typically a combination of theory and practice, they thought these two put together have had invaluable influences on their leadership. To cite a few: *"theories on strategic thinking and planning"* were of profound influence to principal C. For principal G *"the theory and the practice"* made much difference. Principal B reported that the take home assignments and courses on research skills and essay writing were of valuable impact to him. He mentioned that his leadership has drawn so much influence from reading the books. He further said, *"I got the inner peace that I wanted more leadership theories to help in my practice and I got it in the advanced training"*. To him, the homework assignments that were given to be completed before the following meeting were good as well, even though he complained that they were hard to complete, but he could not deny the fact that they helped his research and essay writing skills.

Beyer (2009, pp. 2-3) supports that combining these entities in school leadership preparation programmes enhances the ability of school leaders to work more effectively towards the support and improvement of educational systems. Furthermore, he pointed that educational leadership preparation programmes would be well enhanced by integrating theories from educational, government and social organizations together. Also, integrating these components provides present and future school leaders with a better understanding of the range of influences they have as educational leaders, both in their schools and in the society (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson & Orr, 2007, p. 4).

Training on leadership

The leadership theories that training institutions teach also had a greater impact on most of the respondents of this study. Theories of shared leadership, visionary leadership and transformational leadership styles, human resource leadership, pedagogic leadership considered to be the most vital in schools by Hale and Moorman (2003, pp. 13-14) were reported by four study participants to be of profound influence to them. Additionally, one respondent reported that studies on decision making in schools greatly influenced him. An effective school leader as theory holds is one who is able to set a proper direction for his/her school, be willing to develop his/her staff and facilitate the teaching and learning process by ensuring an entire range of organizational conditions that

enhance rather than inhibit learning (DeVita, 2005, p. 3). Most of the respondents of this study have been able to demonstrate the above as this is reflected in the high performance of Finnish school students in internationally administered examinations (Aho et al., 2006, p. 121).

Entire training process

Besides the above mentioned aspects of the leadership training that were of absolute influence to the participants of this study, some equally could not tie down the impact of their training to only one or two aspects but mentioned that the entire training as a whole has had a positive impact on their leadership practices. This implies that when they assess their leadership capacity and competences after the training, they are happy it was worthwhile to have taken such a programme.

6.4.3 Impact of training on leadership styles of principals

The education literature is very rich on descriptions of different leadership styles. Gamage, Adams and McCormack (2009, p. 11) have therefore identified many different leadership styles which are useful for schools such as visionary leadership, shared leadership, change leadership, transactional and transformational leadership, ethical as well as authentic leadership styles. Given that the current research also had as an aim to investigate the influence of training on principals' leadership practices, it was just logical to also find out the impact of the training on their leadership styles considering that practices and styles are two sides of the same coin. The findings of this study revealed that the training has impacted significantly on the leadership styles of all the principals as shown in appendix 8. The varied leadership practices they reported in the interviews have been discussed using the classical leadership styles and also Kouzes and Posner's (2007) five practices and ten commitments of leadership depicted in table 2 (section 3.4)

Visionary leadership

In the interviews, the principals' statements confirmed that visionary leadership (Ryan, 2008, p. 7) or what Kouzes and Posner (2007, pp. 16-17) consider as inspiring the shared vision was reported by four participating principals. For example, two principals

A and D claimed that now they are more future oriented in their leadership practices. Principal A added that he tries to involve his staff to share his leadership dreams, while principal D called himself a *"flexible visionary leader"*. These also confirm the assertion of Balcerek (1999, p. 21) that principals could employ their leadership practices and skills to inspire stakeholders, committing them to the school's strategic plans. Principal F indicated that his approach of visionary leadership centers on speculating on the future and sharing ideas with his staff so that all necessary adjustments could be made in good time to handle future challenges. He also used the metaphor of the airplane pilot who uses a compass for seeking his way to his destination and said *"a pilot who does not know where he is going will end up in a catastrophic situation"*. To him, his compass in this case is visioning in leading the school. This is also in line with the strategic planning reported by Gamage (2003, pp. 8-9) as he said planning enables school leaders to be future oriented so that adjustments could be made in time to suit the circumstances at hand.

Collaborative and shared leadership

Kouzes and Posner (2007, p. 242) mentioned that "collaboration is critical for achieving and sustaining high performance". The same authors added that "teamwork, trust and empowerment are essential elements of a leader's effort" (ibid, p. 21). All these were reflected in the principals' responses, given especially that the notion of hierarchy does not have a place in the educational domain today. All respondents reported practicing collaborative and shared leadership in their schools adding that they give more responsibilities to the teachers in a bid to share their leadership, thereby encouraging teacher leadership. Some principals made reference to the fact that they know they cannot do all on their own, hence involve teachers and students in areas of leadership where they are competent. Respondents mentioned the creation of working groups in their schools with each having a particular task to perform.

In the same light, principal E pointed out that there is no leader who can do everything single handedly, while the respondent of school F said he believed so much on dialogue, interactions and communications for the teams to succeed. Two principals, A and C said their practice of shared leadership is based entirely on trust, knowing that they are working with specialists in their own areas. Principal A further explained, *"I trust the teachers who lead certain areas in our school and so far none of them has betrayed my trust. I do not have to check them even though I have little fears that they*

can take matters into their own hands". Ryan (2008, p. 9) also supports the fact that democratic leaders are good listeners, ask for people's views and mediate the different opinions effectively while encouraging collaboration and teamwork. The findings presented here completely meet the criteria of what Hale and Moorman (2003, p. 13) call features of good educational leadership.

Transformational leadership

Though all principals said they practice shared leadership in their schools, it does not suffice to give added responsibilities to teachers without assisting them to be able to perform the new roles. A leading role of the principal is to support staff development by seeking to provide teachers with skills, materials, knowledge and resources needed for them to engage in learning activities (Kelley et al., 2005, p. 23). As observed in this study, principals made reference to practicing transformational leadership styles. Two of the respondents added that they achieve this by making their schools a community of learners. Principal B helps teachers to get the needed professional development, gives more responsibilities to them, makes their job easier and through discussions, they try to figure out how to modernize their school to meet future needs. By enabling other school stakeholders to act and bring out the best of their competences, these school leaders create a strong sense of empowerment among their staff (Kouzes & Posner, 2007, p. 19).

Leadership practice of visibility

In this study, five principals indicated that the training made them maintain high visibility in school. To illustrate, principals B and D mentioned that they maintain high contact with their colleagues and students, listening and providing them with necessary support. Principal G also articulated that he holds many informal discussions with his staff and pupils. These strategies enable principals to be able to detect and resolve any challenges as soon as possible (Gamage, 2003, pp. 8-9).

6.5   Challenges and how to overcome them

To respond to the fourth research question, all eight interviewees raised one challenge or the other which they currently faced in executing their functions as depicted in appendix 9. These challenges are presented and discussed below.

6.5.1 Challenges faced by principals

Diversity in school and poor students' behaviour

Half of the interviewees had faced certain problems due to large school sizes and multiculturalism. The problems in schools A and F were quite daunting as these principals said their schools are made up of all kinds of students and parents. Principal D mentioned that his main challenges come from people. He explained with regrets that he had real problems proposing innovations. Principal H also had faced the problem of implementing changes and that things were done the old fashioned way in her school as some people were unwilling to accept improvements. With differences in ideas and cultures, there are bound to be many opinions regarding a decision and it becomes incumbent on the principal to be able to blend the various ideas to settle at options that are favourable to all. Henze (2000, p. 2) supports this accession that an effective leader in a school will have as a goal to blend the cultural and linguistic differences for the good of the teachers and students. Only after achieving this goal will a safe and respectful environment that supports high quality teaching and learning be guaranteed in the schools.

Literature is clear on that understanding the challenges in multicultural teams is one step forward in handling and managing them (Behfar, Kern & Brett, 2006, p. 235). A principal in this situation must first be able to understand and lead him/herself, be culturally aware of the differences in his/her team and also develop the interpersonal competences between him/herself and his/her team and among team members. All these take a lot of time and some principals may not even be able to get to that interpersonal level (Belbin, 1993). There were also instances of poor behaviours on the part of some students in some of the schools visited. This was reported to pose a challenge as these students were unwilling to stay with their peers and participate in a task that had been assigned to them.

Declining student population and future uncertainties

The challenge posed by the declining student population has also generated future uncertainties in the leadership of four principals. Schools are constructed to educate children, but in the event that the students who enroll to study are not up to a certain number to get the school running, it is either going to be closed down or merged as reported by 50% of the respondents of this study. With this state of affairs, Aho et al.

(2006, p. 28) reported that in Finland, after the Second World War, there was a massive launch of a school-building programme as well as a total restructuring of the curricula. Also, the number of pupils attending grammar schools increased considerably due to the 'baby boom' after the war (ibid, p. 68). However, as gathered from principal E, the birth rate in Finland today is far less than what was reported back then and this is the main reason why schools that were created then do no longer have adequate student enrolment. This trend has long term repercussions as it leaves principals uncertain if their schools will continue to operate in the long run as separate schools as it is today, or be merged with another in the near future. Furthermore, they are not very sure about their positions as principals in the event that their schools eventually become merged.

Limited resources

In Finland, schools are funded by the state (Aho et al., 2006, p. 104), however, because of the decentralized system; the management of financial resources in the schools is left in the hands of the municipalities (Alava, 2007, p. 7). This decentralization was made possible at the beginning of the 1990s but later there was a global recession that forced education authorities to cut down on the budget (Aho et al., 2006, p. 86). The interviewee of school G mentioned that *"from a very broad perspective, resources are always the problem"*, adding that he faced difficulties on how to distribute the available resources to enhance the best possible education for the students. Two interviewees said that some of the schools in Jyväskylä area lost the status of municipality schools and now belong to the city because of the mergers going on in Finland. Three municipalities from around Jyväskylä were merged, which means reduced funding per head of student that has accompanied this shift. This is supported by the report of Aho et al. (2006, p. 105).

Furthermore, the new act (The Finnish Local Government Act No. 578/2006 of 26 June 2006) limits further subsidies only to the most sparsely populated municipalities; this would force municipalities to adjust their school networks to respond to the dwindling population of school-aged children (Aho et al., p. 104). This change of ownership of their schools and reduced funding per-head of student was of particular concern to principals G and H in this study. To support this, Alava (2007, p. 45) pointed out that not only small schools are being merged but that currently, Finland is faced with a situation where smaller municipalities have also been merged in trying to form larger and financially more sustainable ones.

Time limitation

Three informants also faced challenges posed by time limitation; principals have been reported to perform a variety of roles as highlighted by literature. These different roles and tasks could be in setting and communicating school goals, pedagogic leadership, staying up-to-date, long range planning, providing concrete development plans for the school, creating a good working climate, sharing academic responsibilities, and creating a positive school image among others (Alava, 2007, pp. 27-28). More time is needed in a situation where shared leadership prevails as is the case of all the schools visited to gather data for this research. In this case, there are plenty of discussions before arriving at a decision. This can sometimes leave the principals with some tasks unattended to at the close of the day, which may explain why Pont et al. (2008, p. 28) reported that the leadership roles of the principals have expanded and intensified over the past years and the workload goes beyond what one individual can successfully achieve.

Rapid changes in education

Given that all respondents of this study attested to the rapid changes plaguing the educational domain today, equally due to the increasingly changing school society, the influence of globalization, principals said there is a need to catch up with these changes. To handle these challenges, Gamage et al. (2009, p. 6) hold that principals have to properly understand the magnitude of the changes in order to lead and adjust their leadership practices accordingly. For instance, the challenges posed by inadequate skills of most teachers to use modern multimedia tools to facilitate learning is a domain that principals have to prioritize to handle because the kids of today are more alert to these methods of learning such that if the teachers do not employ them, they will turn to the society to teach them, and this might lead to another concern whether they will be taught pedagogically useful knowledge by non-academics. In a survey conducted in the United States that sought to find out from principals what activities they usually carry out with the use of technology, the researchers found that the most successful school principals are those who have gone beyond just sending emails to compete with the students in facebook or creating and managing 'my space'. They are very comfortable with technology and willing to try out the most advanced manipulations. (O'Neill & Bottoms, 2001, p. 6) This finding is unlike what most respondents of this study reported of their level of use of technology.

6.5.2 Using aspects of training to overcome challenges

The curriculum of the leadership training programme at the University of Jyväskylä incorporates different aspects such as educational leadership, educational policy and decision-making, educational administration, legislation and financing, the evaluation of education, and individual and organizational communication (Alava, 2007, pp. 34-35), which participants in this study said helped them to address certain challenges (see appendix 9).

Theory

Some respondents indicated that the theory gained during training had been of much use in their leadership. By theory here the principals of this study meant all that was learnt in the classroom during their period of training. Most of the respondents of this study were passionate in enumerating the influences that leadership and organizational theories had on them during their training. One interviewee had therefore been able to apply the knowledge gained on school legislation to help him in his school to overcome challenges that came up in this area. Another participant mentioned that certain books he read during training were helping him so much because he now has to look at all the dimensions taking a decision. Beyer (2009, p. 3) argues that the incorporation of school leadership and management theory in the literature taught to school leadership aspirants should be used as a basis for their proper preparation. This equally supports the idea that schools use a shared knowledge based on leadership theory in building and maintaining effective educational leadership practices.

Strategic planning

Many authors have reported that strategic planning which is usually part of the leadership training curriculum has a lot of advantages for the potential principals. Apart from equipping them with knowledge and skills needed to succeed in challenging circumstances (US Department of Education, 2004, p. 5; Alava, 2007, p. 45), knowledge of strategic planning also helps school leaders to be future oriented so that adjustments could be made in time to suit the circumstances at hand, hence overcoming turbulent challenges which confront them every day (Gamage, 2003, pp. 8-9). Time, a very precious commodity in schools would be limited if not properly managed (Good, 2008, p. 46). This could be a compelling reason why the principals in this study all

agreed that in the course of their training they acquired knowledge which is helping them plan adequately and manage their time well. Two respondents said they organized well as certain tasks need to be done at specific times. For instance, respondent G stated that he tries not to accumulate tasks but manages to do the tasks at an appropriate time, sometimes by shutting his door in order to focus on some important tasks or to meet a given deadline.

Leadership models

The programmes which the study participants attended had studies on leadership as one of the main components of their training (Alava, 2007, p. 34). This could justify the reason why participants agreed that these aspects had enabled them with skills of tackling challenges. For example, principal C made reference to courses she offered on strategic planning that were helping her a lot in her practice today. Principals C, D and H all indicated they practiced visionary leadership, open door policy and shared leadership. In addition, C said she shared her leadership with the school's core leader team. Other respondents reported using a variety of leadership approaches in overcoming their professional challenges.

Apart from treating everyone equally and individually (individualized consideration) as mentioned by principals D and H, some also employed documentation skills in filing essential material so that they are easily accessible when needed. Principal E just like D indicated how they maintained high visibility in school. By being there, they held informal meetings with their staff and students, motivating them in the process. By putting into practice the different leadership styles learned during training, principals were able to overcome the challenges faced. Specifically, respondent C said by visioning and working in a team they were able to effectively implement the school's strategic plans as supported by Gamage (2003, p. 9).

Effective communication and networking

Effective communication by the school principals is unavoidable in schools (Gamage, 2003, p. 12). In addition, the same author reported that the main challenge that is faced by principals nowadays is to appreciate the changing contexts of educational leadership and improve their ability to communicate with the knowledge that they are no longer the sole authority but are in partnership with other stakeholders (ibid, p. 32). As such, communication constitutes an essential part of school leadership training in Finland

(Alava, 2007, p. 34). Thus informants outlined how they utilize effective communication skills learned from training to enable them overcome certain leadership challenges. Although achieving perfection in communication is impossible (Gamage, 2003, p. 13), some principals mentioned how they keep regular contact via email and facebook with their colleagues to share ideas, while others use the telephone to get assistance from peers or mentors. By putting in place such an effective communication network, principals are able to exchange information on how to cope with the challenges they face.

6.6   How principals evaluate their effectiveness

The Finnish school system does not have the tradition for high-stakes assessment (OECD, 2010, p. 127), as all forms of inspections in schools were abolished in the late 1990s and self-evaluation introduced and left in the hands of education providers, schools and municipalities (Alava, 2007, pp. 46-47). Though a survey of principals' effectiveness in schools in Finland has not been conducted owing to the relatively short history of principal preparation programmes (Alava, 2007, p. 34), the respondents of this study considered themselves as very effective school leaders. In practical terms, self-evaluations of their effectiveness are a good initiative because apart from letting others know the successes of the principals and their school, priority areas of school improvement plans are also made known (Gamage, 2003, p. 8).

Most principals interviewed view their level of effectiveness using the measuring rods of improved student learning and parents' love to have their kids enrolled in their schools. Principal A has implemented the strategy of staying close to the kids in order to impact on their learning. Two other principals considered that they were effective as parents still continue to send their kids to their schools. Principal H pointed out that the community around their school found them effective and had entered into an excellent working relationship with them. Although a diversity of attitudes, interests, expectations and personalities exists in every school (Gamage, 2003, p. 5), it is evident from these findings that trust, confidence and good working relationships have been built between the internal and external communities of the schools. As echoed by the study participants, it is also clear that they practice both people- and task-oriented behaviours described by Blake and Mouton (1964) in their schools, and all these go a long way to increase the schools' effectiveness and naturally, that of the principals.

7   CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The conclusions drawn in this study are presented in this chapter followed by a review of the research process. Equally, some recommendations are stated and finally, implications for future research given.

7.1   Conclusions

This research assessed the influence of principals' training on their leadership practices in Central Finland. The goal of the study has been achieved through the research questions stated in section 5.1. Based on the findings from this research, the following conclusions have been drawn.

Evidence shows that school principals acquire their leadership practices from four main sources of their training such as theory, practice, leadership and networking with colleagues. Over time, leadership practices are also gained from personal experiences and through interactions with their peers and support from colleagues.

Principals in Finland are highly qualified professionals but nevertheless, they still need additional training in order to lead their schools more effectively. Further training will sharpen their skills to better appreciate the changing contexts of educational leadership and management of future challenges. As career development is a continuous process, principals need additional training to be comfortable working with new technologies and implementing them in teaching and learning in their schools.

Many positive attributes have been identified with the advanced leadership training programme at the University of Jyväskylä. However, some very essential aspects of the programme need to be improved. Apart from upgrading the programme quality and incorporating modern teaching methods, training components on human and financial resources management also need improvement. It would also be important to revamp the programme organization and create more sustainable local and international collaborations with other training institutions which will encourage participation in professional learning networks.

The findings also revealed that training positively impacted on the effectiveness and leadership practices of principals, with programme structure and training on leadership being the most influential aspects of training. Training is considered to be a kind of 'catalyst' necessary for principals' career advancement. Apart from being able to identify their personal values and lead the 'self', training also broadens the understanding of principals on tasks and responsibilities characteristic of effective school leadership. With training, principals are able to foster cooperation and build trust within their colleagues and between themselves and their staff.

As a result of training, principals are competent in practicing varied leadership styles such as visionary, collaborative and shared, visibility and transformational leadership styles in their schools. Principals are more forward looking and inspire other school stakeholders to be involved in realizing their schools' strategic plans. They believe so much on teamwork as they share and entrust in teachers as well as students with positions of responsibility, empowering them in the process. School leaders also exhibit leadership of visibility in schools and as such are able to quickly detect and resolve impending problems.

As in every organization, principals also face a number of challenges in their day to day career. In terms of job related factors, principals find relatively large and highly diverse schools difficult to manage. The decision-making process in school is often lengthy, which consumes an enormous amount of time as many opinions are considered before a compromise is reached. Apart from some students exhibiting recalcitrant behaviours, reductions in school budgets as a result of change of school ownership makes it difficult for a school's strategic plans to be fully implemented. On the other hand, natural factors

such as the dwindling student population requiring merging of smaller schools, causes principals to be uncertain about the future of their positions.

However, principals are able to apply knowledge acquired from their leadership training to address some of the above-mentioned challenges. The programme components related to building and maintaining theoretical knowledge, as well as practical skills is helping them enormously when they are confronted with problems. Knowledge from organizational theories and school leadership models such as visioning, working in teams, strategic planning and effective communication are easily employed by principals to curb certain issues plaguing the smooth functioning of their schools.

On the whole, school principals in Central Finland consider themselves to be very effective in leading their schools to success. They have succeeded to build an atmosphere of trust, confidence and good working relationships with all school partners, hence improving students' learning.

Finally, this whole endeavour has been summarized in a concept map (see Figure 4 below) consisting of three different levels. The programme factors include the different training providers and types of trainings offered in Finland. As a model, the advanced training entry requirements are mentioned. The intervening factors include the training proper, the interaction and transformation that selected principals go through during training and their motivational drives. Some features of a successful training programme are equally stated and how recruitment is conducted after training. The last level constitutes the outcome, challenges faced by principals, how training enables them to address these challenges, their need for further training, and the impact of training on the leadership styles of graduates.

7.2   Review of the research process

Following my motivation detailed in the last paragraph of the introduction of this study and from the time of conception of the study, a number of things came to my mind. Most importantly, the concept of principal training was new to me, and considering the fact that this study was to be conducted in a country culturally different from mine

meant a lot of considerations to be taken on my part. I had to immerse myself in an international literature search including that of Finnish origin. Through the pilot literature searches, the feasibility of this study was weighed.

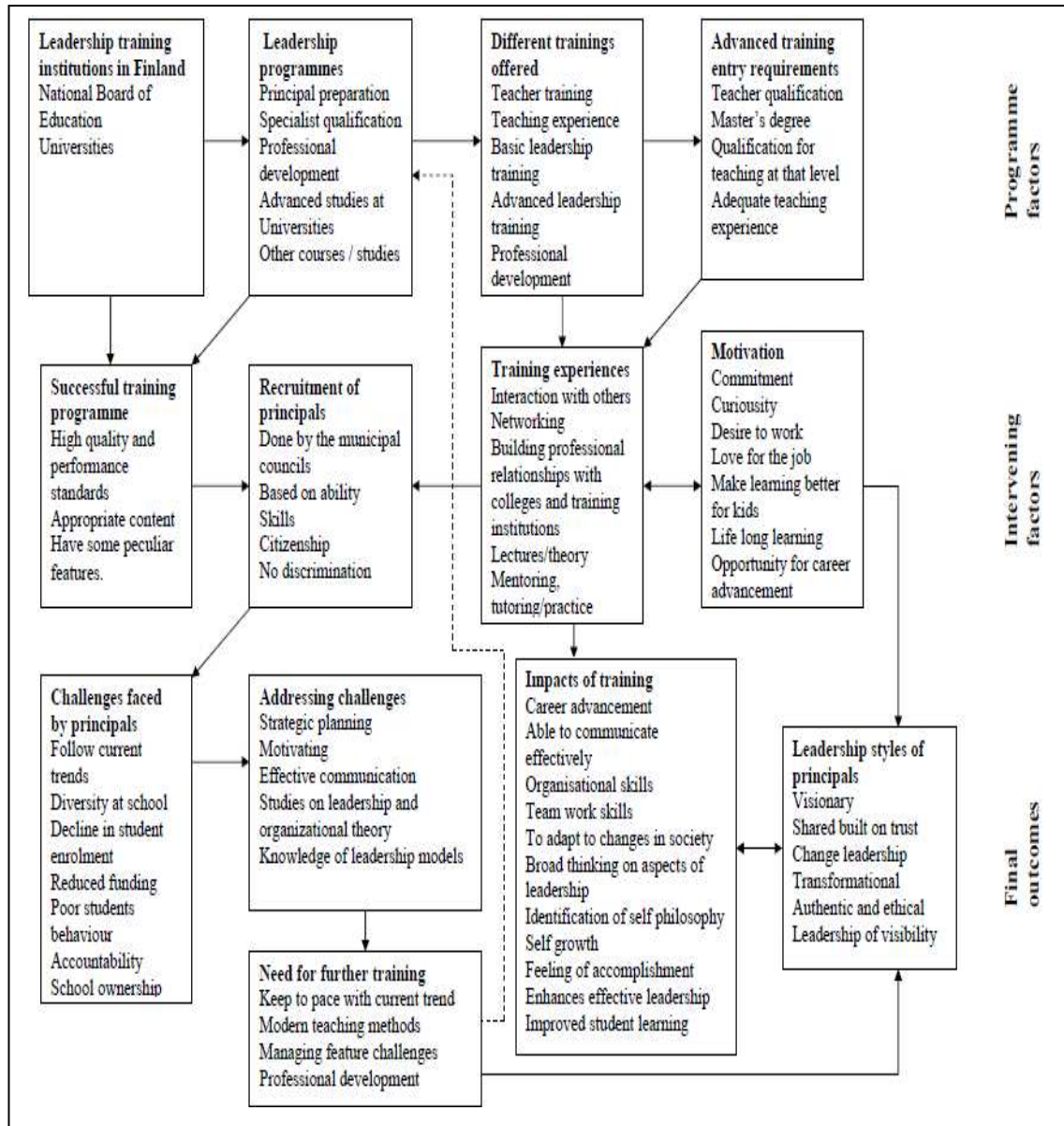Figure 4. Concept map of the study.

Reliability and validity in the research

At an early stage of this study, I considered the validity as pointed out by Whittemore, Chase and Mandle (2001, p. 527), which meant the preliminary searches offered an immediate understanding of the topic under consideration, making it sound well founded before embarking onto it. This was to cater for the question raised by

Whittemore et al. (2001, p. 534) for a proper research to demonstrate evidence of critical appraisal. After being sure of what I needed in this study, I came up with a tentative research topic which underwent complete transformation and was reshaped over time, especially in the course of our research seminars. Next, during combined and interactive sessions organized with home-based principals and also during our school visits, I spoke to a handful of them about the aspiration for my study, telling that the principals were going to be my potential participants. I gained so much encouragement from them especially on the fact that the research was worth conducting since most of them understand and speak good English. Finally, my supervisors assured me that this study would be relevant in the Finnish context and to the training providers as it would shed some light on how their graduates carry out their practices and on areas where more training is desired. This was done to reflect the experiences of the participants and the context in which they practice their leadership - another aspect of primary criteria of validity.

The next step was coming up with a research proposal that was never too easy as my academic writing skills were not so developed then. After many attempts and with the constant guidance from my supervisors and other faculty staff, I picked up slowly and gained speed. This phase laid the foundation for this study to be completed as it was very thorough even though very slow. With the proposal, I had to make formal contacts with the potential participants during which time the secretary of the Institute and my supervisors were very instrumental as they acted as gatekeepers for me, making the initial contacts through phone calls.

Originally, my intention was to conduct three focused group interviews constituting of five principals each but after the low acceptance rate of only eight principals, this aim could not be realised and I fell on my plan 'B', which was individual interviews. The focused group discussions would have been most appropriate here because this would have provided the principals the opportunity to talk and share their experiences freely with one another and I would have gained much richer data in the course of their interaction. This was also made constrained by the long distances between the schools of the principals who accepted to participate in the study. I foresaw that bringing them together to a common place and time for the focus group discussion would have posed great problems. This was because the free time schedules for interviews provided to me by the principals were very contrasting with no two principals sharing the same time slots.

Notwithstanding, through individual interviews and keeping field notes, I did all I could to gain as much information as possible by probing and asking many related questions to get responses for all my interview items. After all interviews, I took time to listen to the tapes many times before beginning the transcription. During this time, a lot of expert advice was sought from my supervisors and some senior students on how to proceed. The transcription process was long and laborious. Then was the task of analysing the transcripts to obtain main themes. After a series of advising sessions with my supervisors on this and with so much reflection and hard work on my part, four main themes were arrived at each representing a research question. After the themes were arrived at, the findings convincingly answered all my research questions as there was data saturation. All the four themes fit nicely together and the process used and the findings are quite in line with each other.

Haven identified these themes, I had to start afresh with writing the theoretical framework and literature review or restructuring previously written sections considering that it was an inductive study. This step was a little less demanding as my research proposal and themes from my data guided my search for new literature. The chapter on the research method was also updated during this time. The findings were next presented and discussed, conclusions written and recommendations for further research in the same area of research advanced. Internal validity was achieved in this study as all the conclusions that have been drawn answer all the research questions. It is also consoling that my findings from the Finnish context (see appendices 6 – 9) were in line with published studies on principals' training and how it impacts on their practices conducted in Scotland, Australia and the United States. This justifies the notion of reliability defined by Golafshani (2003, p. 597) as the extent to which findings are consistent over a period of time and if the results of the study can be reproduced.

This research was generally to enquire from the principals who had undertaken any form of formal training (described in section 6.1) to prepare them for their career in leadership and the influence the training has on their practices and no particular training was considered more important than the other. That said, it is also important to mention that this study never intended to focus on the advanced leadership training, nor was it aimed at evaluating it. This was just one of the many trainings that the principals had undertaken and the most recent for most of them. In fact, at the time of the data collection one respondent was still enrolled in this programme. This being the case, they drew many references and most of their examples and experiences came from this

programme probably because it was the most recent they had completed and their memories were still very fresh and easily remembered. They equally gave examples from different trainings and especially from on-going professional development.

Ethical considerations

In every research work, the researcher is required to take into consideration a number of ethical issues. In qualitative studies, ethical problems that were unintended may likely emerge in the course of data collection and results dissemination. (Merriam, 1998, p. 213.) From the review of literature and writing of the theoretical framework, ethical considerations on scientific writing and referencing were taken into consideration. All material not originally mine has been adequately cited or acknowledged and credits given to where it is due. During the entire research process and before the conducting of the interviews, several ethical issues were considered to ensure that all study participants were free from harm. During the informed consent process, details about the study, research objectives, study design and any potential harm that might endanger the research participants' privacy were disclosed to the participants. Each participant read and had the opportunity to ask questions to be clarified before signing the informed consent form which was also signed by the researcher, and each of whom retained a copy of the signed form. By signing, the participant acknowledged that his/her participation was completely voluntary. (Neuman, 2006, p. 135.)

During the interviews, the informants were encouraged to talk freely, openly and to comment on all aspects of the interview. All the interviews were audio taped upon agreement with the interviewees to obtain a verbatim record of the interview. Special attention was given to confidentiality and anonymity and the study did not encroach into the privacy of participants. Before the interview proper, I told the interviewees that the data would not be disclosed for any other purpose but for that of my research. In the event that I would have to disclose any aspect, I would need to obtain their permission. They were also made to feel safe without fear about the use of names or other identifiers during the interview, data analysis and report writing. (Creswell, 2004, p. 369.) Since it is likely that this research would be submitted to the University of Jyväskylä Library either electronically or other means, and because I intend to publish this study in a peer reviewed academic journal, the names of the participants and schools were coded not to be identified.

Only two people - the researcher and the participant were present in the interview room during the interview, thus eliminating third parties from interfering with the interviews. A pdf version of the final report will be sent to the participants via emails for them to have a look on the material they contributed. There was equally cultural sensitivity in place especially during the time of making contacts and also during the time of the interviews. Coming from an entirely different culture from that of my participants posed a natural challenge to me as I was unsure what I could do to gain their trust. From the time the interview questions were formulated, there were some items that were ambiguous to the Finnish context but after a scrutiny from my supervisors and also the pilot testing, the corrections made rendered clearer meanings. I used formal language during all interviews and only questions that were aimed at enabling me to accomplish the aim of my study were asked and there was as little digression from the research focus as possible.

I contacted my participants after being introduced to them by my supervisors. Those who could participate indicated it and we arranged for an appropriate time that was to their convenience, participation was voluntary and the participants were told that they could discontinue their participation any time they would deem necessary. All interviews were conducted in English and I am aware that English not being the first language in Finland, it is possible that the understanding in certain instances would have been blurred both ways. Notwithstanding, since the study used face-to-face interviews, there was the possibility for immediate clarification as the interview proceeded, and questions were reframed in the event that they were originally not understood. It is equally true that most of the available literature in this domain of principal training in the Finnish context is in Finnish, and given that my level of understanding of this language is very low, I might have missed valuable home based literature to enrich this study. Nevertheless, I was helped a number of times with English translations of some very vital material. This way, I got the most important aspects incorporated and reported.

As a whole this thesis writing process has been a magnificent learning experience for me, each turn along the way coming with new challenges. This has been engaging, intriguing and interesting. It provoked thoughts all along within me so that I could not just stop but wanted to see the end.

7.3   Recommendations

Even though the results of Finnish schools are very good as reflected in the PISA assessments, to sustain or even improve upon these results, a lot has to be done by the training providers in preparing current and future school leaders. Based on the findings, some recommendations and implications for further research are presented.

Most training programmes need to re-design their structure and curriculum to incorporate more interactive teaching methods and curriculum which would better prepare principals to tackle present and future school leadership challenges. In the course of training, candidates' suggestions could be sampled from time to time and the information gathered could assist programmes at implementing timely adjustments to improve the teaching and learning process of candidates. Policies should be implemented to ensure regular provision of leadership training as well as professional development courses for Finnish principals as is currently the case for teachers. This could be the responsibility of a single or a few providers such as the National Board of Education or state universities, as this could ensure standardization of the training offered to candidates. It is also essential for the established networks and cooperation between local as well as international educational institutions to be improved and many more created.

7.4   Implication for further research

The results presented in this thesis have provided answers to all the research questions and serve as a basis for further studies in this area. It is worth mentioning that not all aspects of this topic have been covered in this thesis. Further research could be conducted with a larger sample size of practicing principals to assess the effectiveness of educational leadership training in Finland.

On the long term, a more comprehensive study involving graduates from the different leadership training programmes in Finland could be conducted to assess the individual contributions of the different programmes to the leadership practices of graduates. Such a study would generate more extensive data from which certain features of quality may be identified and promoted.

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Appendix 1. Letter of acknowledgement.

UNIVERSITY OF JYVÄSKYLÄ

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Date: 10/05/2011

Ref. Ms **Kakon Montua Ajua Shantal's** Research Permit Request

LETTER OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This is to certify that **Kakon Montua Ajua Shantal** is a full time student in our Master's Degree Programme of Educational Leadership as of autumn 2010 and has completed all the studies as required, cumulatively circa 60 ECTS by the end of spring term 2011.

Kakon Montua Ajua Shantal is planning to write her Master's thesis on the topic **An exploration into the applicability of school principals' training on the principals' leadership practices in Finland**, for which purpose she is contacting you to gain access to research data in your institution.

The research topic is fully acknowledged by our institution and the thesis is part of the Master's Degree Programme.

Jukka Alava
Director

Tel. +358-14-260 1897/ 358-40-7380134
Email: jukka.alava@edu.jyu.fi

Appendix 2. Research permit request.

RESEARCH PERMIT REQUEST

The Principal,

[--------------------]

Dear Mr. /Mrs. [------------------]

I am a student in the Master's Degree Programme in Educational Leadership, where I am writing my Master's thesis on the topic **An exploration into the applicability of school principals' training on the principals' leadership practices in Finland.** The purpose of the study is to explore/find out the influence principals' training has on their practices.

I am requesting for your kind permission to collect the research data in your institution at the time of your convenience **within this time frame (3rd – 4th week of September 2011) as this is the time recommended by the university for data collection.** The research data to be collected would consist of **either a focus group interview or an individual interview that will run for about one hour thirty minutes.**

The data is collected and used for research purposes only and will be dealt with anonymously.

Please contact director Jukka Alava of the Institute of Educational Leadership in the University of Jyväskylä (tel. 358-14-260 1897/ 358-40-7380134, email: jukka.alava@edu.jyu.fi), if in need for additional information.

Kakon Montua Ajua Shantal
Roninmäentie 6M 5a
Cell; 0417294496
Email shantal.a.kakon-montua@jyu.fi

Appendix 3. Letter of informed consent.

[*Date*]

<u>**Letter of Informed Consent**</u>

The Principal,

[*Name and address of school*],

Dear **Mr. or Mrs.** ------------,

Thank you very much for agreeing to take part in the Individual Interview session on [*date*] at [*Time*]. I appreciate your taking the time from your busy working day to participate in the discussion.

As you have been informed, the purpose of this interview is to enable me to collect data for my Master's Thesis on the topic **An exploration into the applicability of school principals' training on the principals' leadership practices in Finland.**

With your permission, the interview will be audio-recorded as this will enable me to check the accuracy of my note taking. All recorded material will be destroyed after the publication of the study. All discussions will be presented anonymously in the thesis. You may, at any time, withdraw yourself from the study by simply indicating your intention to withdraw. I will email to you a pdf copy of this master thesis when it is ready.

The research findings may be used in presentations and publications as part of the dissemination of the research. If you require any further information or explanation, please contact me (email: ajshkako@student.jyu.fi, tel. 0417294496 or director Jukka Alava of the Institute of Educational Leadership in the University of Jyväskylä (tel. 358-14-260 1897/ 358-40-7380134, email: jukka.alava@edu.jyu.fi).

Research Consent

I have read and understood the conditions under which I will participate in this individual interview and give my consent to be a participant and to have the discussion audio-recorded.

I agree that any data contributed by me may be published according to the above principles.

Signature: _____   Signature: _____
          [Name of principal]   **Montua Kakon Ajua Shantal**
          (*Participant*)   (*Researcher*)

Date: _____   Date: _____

Appendix 4. Checklist / interview questions.

CHECKLIST / INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Topic of Master's Thesis:

AN EXPLORATION INTO THE APPLICABILITY OF SCHOOL PRINCIPALS' TRAINING ON THE PRINCIPALS' LEADERSHIP PRACTICES IN FINLAND.

Career Life of the Principal		**School statistics**
1. Age range:		Age of school_____
30 – 39 _____	40 – 49 _____	Number of teachers_____
50 – 59 _____	60 and above _____	Number of students_____

2. Were you a teacher before you became a principal / assistant principal? Yes /No: _____
3. Number of years teaching before taking on leadership position _____
5. Number of years working as principal _____
4. Where did you do your teacher/leadership training? _____

Interview Questions

1. What are the different educational leadership training programmes you have undertaken?

1b. Are there different kinds of training you have at different stages of your career

2. What do you think are the key features of successful principal training programmes?

3. Do you think the leadership training you underwent has had any influence (positive or negative) on your leadership? If so how? If not, why not?

4. As a graduate, which areas or aspects of leadership training programmes can you identify where more emphasis should be laid?

5 (a). What were the key areas of the training programme that have profound influence on your leadership style(s) or practice(s)?

5 (b). How would you describe your leadership style(s) or practice(s)

6. Do you see any needs for future training to enhance your leadership practice?

7 (a). What challenges do you face in performing your duties?

7 (b). What aspects of training did you use to overcome them?

Appendix 5. Characteristics of schools visited and principals interviewed.

School statistics				Characteristics of principals			
School / Principal	Age of school (years)	No. of teachers	No. of students	Gender	Age range (years)	No. of years as teacher	No. of years as principal
A	137	15	206	Male	50 - 59	07	16
B	16	20	195	Male	50 - 59	20	07
C	39	22	32	Female	50 - 59	05	07
D	16	21	190	Male	40 - 49	12	04
E	60	25	260	Male	30 - 39	08	03
F	17	50	480	Male	50 - 59	16	13
G	38	18	118	Male	40 - 49	07	09
H	51	30	315	Female	40 - 49	20	02

Appendix 6. Key features of school principals' leadership practices.

Theory	• Train on challenges faced by principals • Train to be able to adapt the learning to age of pupils • Probe candidates share the difficulties • Create a connection between visioning to practical problems
Practice	• More on practice • Practicum for longer periods • Guide where to look for solutions to problems • Mentoring and tutoring
Leadership	• Train principals to be good listeners • Train to lead different kinds of people • Train on team work • Learning something about the 'self' • Shared leadership built on trust • To respond to individual needs of candidates (*change leadership*) • Managing human resources
Networking	• International cooperation with other Universities
Other sources	• Personal experiences • Qualifications and motivations of other candidates • Methods of course delivery, assessment and duration of training

Appendix 7. Need for future training and areas for more emphasis.

Needs for further training by principals	
Keeping pace with current trends	- How to follow the times - Stay on top of the rapid changes in education today - The society is changing - Challenges to stay abreast with current changes - More knowledge to appreciate global trends - Modern theories or aspects of leading an organisation
Modern teaching methods	- To learn to implement more interactive teaching methods - The influences and use of social media on teaching - On ICTs and computer literacy for teachers and students
Managing future challenges	- Uncertainty about the future - To make life more meaningful - To continue to read the books
Professional development	- Need for more short courses or mentoring - Courses to address practical issues
Areas for more emphasis by training institutions	
Management of resources	- Management of human resources are to be emphasised - Financial issues of the school - Management of resources, for example "More training on how to lead people since our staff is growing older" (Principal A) - Train principals to give more powers to the teachers
Programme quality and teaching method	- Quality of training programme should be improved - Reduced lecture and more of modern ways of teaching - More practical interactions
Organization of programme	- Theories - Less writing assignments - More time to work in groups - Guidelines on how courses should be structured - Models more from education rather than business sector - Use literature and theories from our own context (Nordic in origin) - More literature of educational leadership from Europe - The Finnish culture should be upheld
Networking	Creation of professional learning network

Appendix 8. Influence of training on leadership practices of principals.

Impact of training on principal's effectiveness	
From principalship to leadership	• Had almost no experience when I started my leadership • This was taken before I was ready to lead a school • Unbelievable the kind of influence a programme could have on me • My staff say I have changed for good after the training
Broader understanding of leadership	• Gave me the needed theories on leadership • Ideas on laws of education has much profound influences • The practice was more beneficial to me • Group discussions with other principals • Broaden my thinking and gave a wider background
Understanding and leading 'self'	• Became more aware of myself only after advanced training • Dimensions of leadership (personal type) • Develop areas where I was weak in • Much profound influence on my leadership philosophy • Made me to appreciate how different people think • Made me know what I should do and what not to • Made me know what I dislike and what can get me angry, these I avoid
Breakthrough in career	• Kind of eye opener to me • 'Open doors' I did not know how to open • Kind of 'wash machine' to me • Was some kind of turning point in my career
Areas of training with profound influence on principals	
Programme structure	• Theory and practice • Theories and the books • The home works
Training on leadership	• Figuring out my own leadership philosophy • Studies of personal values as opposed to organisational values • Studies on decision making in schools • Visionary thinking • Theories on strategic thinking and planning
Entire training process	• All learning connected to leadership • Whole training process that influenced them • Could not tie the influence to a particular area

Appendix 8 [*continuation*]

Impact of training on leadership styles of principals	
Visionary leadership	- More of a visionary - Forward looking - Want to speculate and change ideas (visionary) - Helped me develop visionary thinking
Collaborative and shared leadership	- Aware I cannot do all on my own - Shared leadership through teacher empowerment - Leadership based on trust - Give more responsibilities to the teachers - Participative and democratic leadership styles - Also a team leader - Use and believe in dialogue - Believe in interactions, communication and negotiations
Transformational leadership	- Try to make school a community of learners - Encourage teachers to grow - Help teachers to acquire the professional development they need - Tries to make the job of teachers easier - Resource provider
Leadership practice of visibility	- A good listener - Maintain contact with my colleagues - Try to be informal in my discussions - Have more time for teachers and students now - Respond immediately to threats - Makes me treat every teacher as individuals just as they are

Appendix 9. Challenges and how to overcome them.

Challenges faced by principals	
Diversity in school	• To blend the different ways of reasoning and opinions • Managing different people • Difficult to settle at options that will satisfy all • To find out what motivates my pupils and provide that to them • In proposing an innovation • Our school is highly multicultural • Problems posed by multiculturalism • Fighting racism at school and including ideas of minority groups • To be aware of what is happening in other parts in the world
Students' poor behaviour	• Poor behaviour of students from time to time • To make students learn to live with others and in different places
Declining students' population and future uncertainties	• The declining student population • Our school no longer belong to the municipality • Our school will be merged with another next year • How we should change to meet the future school standard • This merging comes with major changes and problems of adjustment
Limited resources	• Resources are always limited • Difficulty on distributing the available resources
Time limitation	• Scarcity of time • Need enough time to concert with teachers before a decision is made • Some teachers might not do their job the way I would like them to do • Too many small things I have to fit in my day
Rapid changes in education	• Rapid changes in education • Rapid technological changes that cannot be controlled at all

Appendix 9 [*continuation*]

Using aspects of training to overcome challenges	
Theory	- Theory, the classics on seven styles to see things - The idea about basic laws [school legislations] - Learning to master and develop myself [Leading 'self'] - My personality type I found out during training and it is helping [Personality type]
Strategic planning	- To manage to do my tasks at their proper time - Sometimes, I shut my door to focus on some important tasks
Leadership models	- Looking at all dimensions before decision making - Visioning and formation of core leader team - By being there for the teachers and students as much as I can - (leadership of visibility) - To file very important document close at hand to easily get to them - Maintain an open door policy - Informal meetings with staff and students - Listening to the perspectives of other people - Equality of treatment with no exceptions - Shared leadership - Treat all individually - Trust that I can change ideas
Effective communication and Networking	- Communicating in an international language as our school is highly multicultural - To call mentor in times of trouble
Program structure	- The whole process helped me - To see the big picture