

**Improving teaching and learning  
in selected Mauritian secondary  
schools: an exploration  
of the instructional leadership  
narratives of principals**

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# Abstract

The study explores issues of the quality of teaching and learning and instructional leadership, as experienced by principals in selected state secondary schools in Mauritius. Five principals were purposively chosen, representing a range of variations that can be found in the population of principals of state secondary schools. The narratives collected were analysed in three ways. A narrative portrayal of each participant was first produced. The narratives were also analysed collectively to evidence common structures and themes. Finally, the narratives were analysed using theoretical frameworks describing various dimensions of quality teaching and instructional leadership.

The principals tended to focus on short-term, high-visibility objectives, usually unrelated to academic performance. They appeared to be strongly guided by considerations of risk minimisation, avoidance of conflict and loss of reputation, all of which need to be understood in the context of their professional experiences. They are very careful to avoid situations that they felt could escape their control. Despite this inhibiting factor, they showed concern for quality by using a combination of approaches to improve on academic achievement and various aspects of school life. Direct intervention on teaching is, more often than not, enacted when quality of teaching falls below a threshold. The key indicator is constructed within a quantitative frame, determined by the number of complaints received. The data thus gestures strongly towards leadership as control, risk mitigation and maintenance of routine school activities.

This research contributes to educational policy by indicating that support for the principals should be reviewed to provide them with risk management skills. The support system should also ensure that right from their initial career stages, the instructional leadership practices of principals are better aligned with the official quality of education policies of the Government.

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# List of Acronyms

EHRSP	Education and Human Resources Strategic Plan 2008 -2020	1
ISO 9001	International Standards Organisation: standard 9001	151
MOEHR	Ministry of Education and Human Resources	1
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education	15
PRB	Pay Research Bureau	3
SIDS	Small Island Developing State	16

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## **Author's declaration**

I declare that the research contained in this thesis, unless otherwise formally indicated within the text, is the original work of the researcher. The thesis has not been previously submitted to this or any other university for a degree, and does not incorporate any material already submitted for a degree.

(signature) .....



# Chapter 1 The Research Problem

## 1.1 Introduction

Around the world, there is considerable current policy concern with the improvement of teacher quality (Garm & Karlsen, 2004; Smith, 2008). Simultaneously, there is a marked increase in emphasis on performance measurement and audit cultures in the educational systems of many countries (Apple, 2006; Lynch *et al.*, 2012). Sahlberg (2011) denounces a global trend to adopt certain reforms and policies that might not be beneficial to a particular country's context. While issues of quality of education have always been an important consideration in Mauritius (Juggernaut, 1993), the Mauritian Government appears to have aligned itself with international trends on policy and reform narratives (Tawil *et al.*, 2011; Ah-Teck & Hung, 2014), particularly concerning the emphasis on teacher quality and on student outcomes.

Reflecting this attempt to achieve "World Class Quality Education", in 2008, the Ministry of Education and Human Resource (MOEHR subsequently) issued a policy document called the Education and Human Resource Strategic Plan 2008-2020 (EHRSP thereafter). This policy document contained an analysis of the situation of the educational system and charted out a line of action for the MOEHR for a period of 12 years. A successful secondary student within the Mauritian education system would normally complete up to grade 13 and sit for Higher School Certificate examinations (A-level). According to the MOEHR (2008), there are high repetition rates at grades 10 and 11. Consequently, the retention rate up to the last grade of secondary education is too low, with negative implications for the economic development of Mauritius (Bah-Lalya, 2006).

To explain this relatively low performance, the policy document weaves a meta-narrative of low professionalism of principals and teachers as the main cause of poor student performance. Thus, to improve the quality of teaching and learning, the MOEHR has proposed the adoption of certain prescribed practices by teachers and principals, more training for teachers, better supervision of teaching by heads of schools (MOEHR, 2009a) and closer supervision of schools. While this proposed new policy was in line with the current international trends, it broke away sharply

from the traditional Mauritian perspective (Tawil *et al.*, 2011; Ah-Teck & Hung, 2014). The successful implementation of such a policy is clearly dependent on how the policy narratives are espoused at the school level. Principals are key stakeholders in policy implementation because they contribute to articulating the policy narratives of quality teaching and learning for teachers and for the school community. However, how they do so depend on their own narratives about their instructional leadership roles, quality teaching and how practices are embedded within school contexts.

In the following section, some of the narratives used by the MOEHR, with respect to the quality of teaching and learning, will be considered. Then, the task that principals face, of translating the policy narratives concerning the quality of teaching and leadership into their work context, will be problematised. The influence of the job context in constraining the principals' practice and limiting their ability to be an instructional leader will also be discussed. While there appears a need to support principals to be better instructional leaders, additional knowledge is required on what happens at school level in order to achieve higher levels of quality in teaching and in instructional leadership.

## **1.2 The Problem**

### ***EHRSP and its implementation***

In its situational analysis, the EHRSP (MOEHR, 2008) introduced a number of narratives, concerning the nature of teaching and supervision of teaching, to explain the lack of progress with raising low student achievement at the secondary school level. Among these, two very significant ones relate to teachers and to principals who generally lack commitment to the job, and who need to be made more accountable for the learning that is achieved by students.

Following up on the EHRSP, the MOEHR (2009a) expanded the narrative of quality teaching and of instructional leadership further. According to MOEHR (2009a), successful classroom teaching was essentially about teachers preparing well-structured lesson plans. Thus, principals would improve teaching by visiting classes regularly and guiding teachers towards better planning. The MOEHR also established a Quality Assurance and Inspection Division, which became operational

in 2011, to monitor and ensure the implementation of its policies in state secondary schools. The mandate of this division was to inspect, advise and report on schools. However, there were no significant changes in the recruitment and continuous professional development practices regarding teachers and principals, despite recommendations otherwise from the Pay Research Bureau<sup>1</sup> (PRB thereafter), in 2008, 2013 and 2016 (PRB 2008; PRB 2013; PRB 2016). Teacher candidates can still be recruited without professional qualifications. The training in the pedagogical leadership of principals (MOEHR, 2008) has still not been implemented. Furthermore, principal candidates still do not require qualifications in educational management in order to be eligible for the position.

### ***Principals as interpreters of policy at the school level***

Principals make decisions on how to fulfil their roles according to their knowledge, beliefs, values and personal expectations, the organisational context, and the expectations of various stakeholders (Gergen, 1971; Wenger, 1999; van Oers, 2002; Billett, 2007; Mpungose, 2010; Grodzki, 2011). In Mauritius, secondary school principals are placed in the problematic position of interpreting what constitutes quality in education, as stated in the policy documents of the MOEHR (2008, 2009a).

The School Management Manual (MOEHR, 2009a), issued to principals, focuses their attention on the close monitoring of teachers. Principals are required, through monitoring detailed lesson plans and conducting class visits, to ensure that teachers abide to guidelines for teaching (MOEHR, 2009a). However, the principals do not receive any guidance on how to fit these activities in their practice. Thus, how they interpret their role as instructional leaders is very possibly linked to their life story and purpose, a position that is supported by various researchers (Lessard, 1986; Helena & Abrahão, 2002; Rousseau & Van der Veen, 2005; Grodzki, 2011).

### ***Principals working under pressure***

Constant pressure, and the inability to gain perspective on past or future actions, affect how principals organise their practice. School leaders routinely face a hectic time schedule and role overload, and tend to focus on simply running the

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<sup>1</sup> A body that reviews the conditions of service and salaries of Civil Servants.

administration (Hamre *et al.*, 2008, Hamre *et al.*, 2010; Abu-Nasser, 2011). However, principals also experience pressure from having to constantly attune to the school context (Dimmock, 1999; Leithwood *et al.*, 1999; Maxwell, 2011; Robertson & Timperley, 2011). Indeed, the job of school leader has been described as a delicate balancing act between the conflicting expectations and values of the different school stakeholders (DuFour & Berkey, 1995; Hopkins, 2009; Weast, 2010; Tas, 2011).

Secondly, school leaders have difficulty in assessing the effectiveness of their pedagogical leadership actions (Brewer, 1993; Elmore, 2008). Even if principals make the appropriate choices and take the right actions, they do not necessarily gain experience. Indeed, progress in the quality of teaching is not necessarily immediately measurable by the increase in student attainment (Elmore, 2008). Thus, there is a tendency for principals to rely on their intuition or common sense. However, while talent, intuition, and experience work to a certain extent, they can mislead or not be applicable at certain moments. Indeed, as Bell (2006) suggests, leadership can be counterintuitive.

It has been suggested that the competence of principals lies in being able to assess complex situations, and then to take the required actions (Bush, 2003) decisively. Indeed, principals tend to act on common-sense decisions that are based on their practical experience. However, this may be insufficient to enable them to improve the quality of teaching and learning substantially, because they may lack the time, overall perspective and skills to make informed decisions.

### ***Leading instructional change in schools***

The responsibility of principals to ensure the pedagogical improvement of teachers mentioned in the EHRSP (MOEHR, 2008) is expanded in the School Management Manual (MOEHR, 2009a). However, there are four important issues that do affect the principal's ability to influence teaching practices in their school.

A first consideration is that principals should have adequate skills for understanding a teacher's practice and for making appropriate recommendations. In Mauritian State Secondary Schools, teachers are subject specialists and teach only their subjects of specialisation. Principals, having risen from the rank of teacher by selection, do remain subject specialists, even if they may have extended teaching experience and professional qualifications in pedagogy. However, according to the

MOEHR (2008, 2009a), principals must supervise planning, delivery, and outcome of lessons across a variety of subjects, school context, levels of teacher experience and dispositions, and for students from grade 7 to 13.

A second consideration is that principals do appear to have difficulty in making reliable assessments of teachers and teaching (Weisberg *et al.*, 2009; Hamre *et al.*, 2010). Even if principals may have teaching experience, this may not be sufficient for them to be good pedagogical leaders. Indeed, the ability to teach, to evaluate someone else's teaching, and to remedy to someone else' teaching problems, appear to be conflated by the MOEHR (2008, 2009a) as one competency whereas they are distinct skill sets.

A third consideration is that when principals are, in addition to their traditional responsibilities, attributed the responsibilities of teacher-trainer, role tensions arise. On one hand, the principals are required to exert a "sound pedagogical follow up" (MOEHR, 2008) and help teachers implement good practices. On the other hand, principals must assess the teachers' performance and apply administrative measures to poorly performing teachers. In such a system, a poor teaching performance could be variously attributed to school context, teacher incompetence, poor coaching from the principal, or poor assessment of teaching by the principal.

A fourth consideration is that, apart from national educational policies, how teachers define and practice teaching in the classroom is affected by a number of factors (Malm, 2008; Connell, 2009; James & Pollard, 2011), including teacher characteristics, school leadership, and societal values. Thus, as teachers in the state secondary schools continue to learn about teaching and of quality of teaching through their classroom practice, this understanding is still strongly influenced by the school context.

### ***Helping principals be better instructional leaders***

As discussed above, in Mauritian State Secondary Schools, principals come to school leadership with little preparation. This tradition seems to be based on the premise that experience in teaching is sufficient for principals to be able to be successful school leaders (Stein & Nelson, 2003). This contrasts with the perspective that teaching does not prepare for some inherent and overwhelming difficulties in the role of school leader (Eden, 2001). Moreover, there is also support

for the idea that principals can be shaped beyond their personal shortcomings (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010) and be successful.

However, state secondary schools may offer up to twenty subjects on their curriculum, which represents a wide spectrum of subject-specific pedagogical knowledge (Shulman, 1986). The capacity of any principal to closely supervise the teaching staff, even with training, can be questioned. Indeed, even if state secondary school principals could be provided training in management and pedagogical supervision across the breadth of the school curriculum, this would not necessarily translate directly into improved teaching on the part of teachers.

### ***Understanding an apparent failure***

Unfortunately, the implementation of the policies for quality education has apparently not been successful. One of the important indicators used by the MOEHR (2008) to evaluate the performance of the secondary school system is the percentage pass rate at the School Certificate examinations<sup>2</sup>. After a small increase in the period 2008-2010, the national average pass rate at the School Certificate examinations has declined steadily from the year 2010 to the year 2017 (MOEHR, 2017). This decline is noted in both state and private secondary schools, even if state secondary schools tend to outperform private schools significantly.

This general decline has been abundantly commented by local education stakeholders. However, there is no agreement among them as to what could have possibly caused this decline. Professor Finette, former director of the Mauritius Examination Syndicate (News on Sunday, 2016) has viewed it as insignificant. In contrast, Mr. Obeegadoo, a former education minister of Mauritius (L'Express, 2016), and Mr. Taleb, secretary of the federation of managers of private secondary schools (Le Mauricien, 2016), have described it as worrying. The influence of societal factors has also been noted; indeed, the union of principals and assistant principals of state secondary schools has blamed the intensive use of new technologies by students (Rivet, 2016b). However, Mrs. Dookun, the current education minister (Rivet, 2016a), has declared that students were finding their

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<sup>2</sup> The School Certificate examination is attempted by Grade 11 students.

lessons boring, which explained their indiscipline and the resulting poor academic performance.

If the MOEHR (2008) lays focus on the improvement of teaching and learning by the management of teaching in class, recent public debates have situated the current problems principally in term of students' attitudes, behaviour and culture. It is indeed possible that while the quality of teaching has improved in schools, other social and cultural factors are more negatively affecting the performance of students in the standardised examinations leading to the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate. Thus, an overall decline in student outcomes could give the false impression of declining standards of teaching and learning, and instructional leadership. However, the on-going debate points to a key problem within the Mauritian educational system: there is not enough knowledge to understand the problem of falling standards (L'Express, 2016; Le Mauricien, 2016).

#### ***Addressing the knowledge gap***

Various researchers have proposed that the principal is certainly a key school stakeholder without whom the issues of instructional leadership at school cannot be addressed successfully (Leithwood *et al.*, 2010; Lazaridou, 2009; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Even if Elmore's (2000) recommendation that principals should have more focus on teaching and learning than general management of the school seems sensible, we still do not understand how they exert their action and influence on schools (Lazaridou, 2009). Clearly, more knowledge of instructional leadership and the roles of principals must be gained to inform their practice.

The apparent decline in student outcomes, as discussed above, is problematic. The challenge to Mauritian schools appears to be improving the quality of students' outcomes amidst a number of factors that are strongly affecting the school context. It is thus crucial to understand what principals need to know, and be able to do, to improve teaching and learning in their schools (Salazar, 2007; Weisberg *et al.*, 2009). Indeed, there is insufficient knowledge as to which types of leadership practices are more appropriate to improve student outcomes (Robinson *et al.*, 2008), and what kinds of actions are required to engage effective instructional leadership (Robinson, 2010).

### ***Recognising state secondary schools as a context of high interest***

Principals of state secondary schools have come under a lot of pressure to ensure improvement in the quality of teaching and learning. Indeed, the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division of the MOEHR monitors state secondary schools closely. To uphold the MOEHR's vision of quality, principals must find ways of translating it into their practice and that of teachers. However, the close monitoring of schools, has a significant impact on the relationship that principals entertain with their hierarchy and with teachers, and also how they interpret the Ministry's policy.

Moreover, there are many other interacting factors within a complex ecosystem that have an influence on the practice of principals in a state secondary school. These factors include non-exhaustively, the principals' knowledge, the school environment, the students, the school community, the school culture and the national culture. Moreover, the principals' influence is mediated by narratives, which overlap and interact with each other at different levels. Narratives, therefore, constitute a very promising tool to learn about the instructional leadership of principals and what influences it.

## **1.3 The Research Question**

The main research question to guide the investigation is as follows:

“How does the principals' understanding of quality of teaching inform their instructional leadership practice and affect policy implementation?”

The research question is subdivided into four sub-questions as follows:

- 1) How does the school context affect the principals' understanding of quality of teaching and learning?
- 2) What do principals do to improve or maintain the quality of teaching and learning in their schools?
- 3) How does the instructional leadership practice of principals relate to their pedagogical knowledge and beliefs?
- 4) What are the implications of the principals' instructional leadership for educational policy?

## 1.4 Rationale for research

The proposed research will address the research problem and contribute to the state of knowledge in the following four ways:

(1) It will help understand better how values, beliefs and tacit knowledge of principals shape their understanding of the quality of teaching and learning. In Mauritius, the problem of quality of teaching and learning has been under-researched. Indeed, only two published articles have been found on the topic of quality education (Ah-Teck & Starr, 2012; Ah-Teck & Starr, 2014). These articles paint a picture of the principals fully confident in their ability to improve the quality of education within their schools. However, the overall decline in the performance of students at School Certificate level could indicate that principals might use other indicators than student performance as a measure of the quality of the teaching and learning process.

(2) It will help understand better how the social, cultural and political contexts shape the instructional leadership practice of principals. We still do not understand how principals exert their action and influence on schools (Lazaridou, 2009). While principals are clearly important within the school (Leithwood *et al.*, 1999; Lazaridou, 2009; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012), they tend to focus on general management rather than teaching and learning. They also tend to rely on the common-sense approach (Bush & Oduro, 2006). However, leadership can be counterintuitive (Bell, 2006). While personal experiences and accepted practices can work to a certain extent, they can mislead or be non-applicable at certain moments. Understanding the foundations of the principals' actions can contribute to understanding how they function.

(3) Understanding how principals link their instructional leadership actions to their pedagogical knowledge will give an insight into what can be done to help principals learn to be more effective. It is crucial to understand what principals need to know and what skill they need to have, in order to improve teaching and learning in their schools (Salazar, 2007). Principals need both theoretical and practical knowledge (Bush, 2003). However, there is insufficient knowledge as to which types of instructional leadership practices are more effective to improve student outcomes (Robinson *et al.*, 2008; Robinson, 2010).

4) There is a need to re-evaluate the policies and to review how principals can be better supported. Guthrie & Schuermann (2010) have proposed that leaders can be created and improved through learning and are not simply born to the challenge. Current problems in instructional leadership can be linked to traditional ways of preparing principals for their job. Houchens & Keedy (2009) have linked failure of policy implementation at the school level to principals not being reflective in their practice. By understanding how principals construct their practice, more effective support of principals can be provided.

From my personal experience, I believe that school leadership is a difficult exercise. My personal reason for initiating this research was, as an assistant principal, to get insight into what I could personally do to be better in my job. However, my professional identity evolved during the course of the research. I am now motivated to help principals in schools achieve a better understanding of how they develop their school leadership within the various school contexts. In chapter 2, I consider more comprehensively how my personal background has affected this work (Dunne *et al.*, 2005).

## **1.5 Organisation of the thesis**

Chapter 1 examines the research problem. A policy narrative underlying key policy documents is problematised. The research question and sub-questions are formulated and the expectations for the research are set.

Chapter 2 sets the context that foregrounds the research problem. The geographical, historical and social contexts are briefly presented. The schooling system is considered with particular reference to state secondary schools. The significance of Mauritius as small island developing state is considered. The profile of the researcher, the researcher positionality, and the choice of a narrative approach are also discussed.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature on relevant concepts concerning quality of teaching and learning, leadership, and instructional leadership to inform this study. The concept of quality of teaching is considered. The distinction between “lack of success in teaching” and “failure in teaching”, and how the notion of quality teaching is contextually embedded are considered. Then the concept of leadership and its applicability to schools, in the context of the policy-directed focus on

improving student outcomes, is considered. Finally, a framework is developed to look at how the concept of school leadership that improves instructional outcomes, can be contextualised for Mauritian state secondary schools.

Chapter 4 outlines and discusses the methodological choices for the project, and their implications. The design of the research project is presented. The purposeful sampling strategy of participants is justified, and the different steps of data collection and data analysis are presented. The different methodological issues that arise, including those related to insider research, are then discussed.

Chapter 5 first describes the participants. Then, a narrative portrait is presented for each participant, illustrated with vignettes, and followed by an analytical summary.

Chapter 6 explores the relationship between the individual stories and with the reference models of teaching and instructional leadership. The connection between the participants stories is examined along six themes. Then, the participants' narratives are examined against the reference models of teaching and instructional leadership. Finally, the findings of the various levels of analysis are integrated for a synthetic picture.

Chapter 7 summarises the research findings with respect to the different research sub-questions. I then discuss how the Mauritian state secondary school context sets up a series of factors that creates high risks for the participant principals, which inevitably shapes their professional outlook. The limitations of the study are discussed. I also reflect on the “narrative” of my research project and review my EdD journey. The chapter ends with a highlight on two areas for further study that have been revealed by this research project.

## **1.6 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have problematised a policy narrative carried in key educational policy documents with respect to the issues of student learning outcomes, quality of teaching and instructional leadership. I formulate a research question, and I discuss what I hope to achieve by elucidating the research question and sub-questions. Finally, I lay out the structure of the thesis. In the next chapter, I will discuss some of the contextual factors, in Mauritius, that influence state secondary schools in Mauritius, and that affect the research design.

# Chapter 2 Foregrounding the Research Problem

## 2.1 Introduction

This study is carried out in Mauritius, which is a multi-ethnic small island developing state (Crossley & Sprague, 2014). The organisation of the Mauritian schooling system reflects its rich, long and complex history. Moreover, the educational policy-making process reflects attempts to deal both with pressures created by globalisation, that were discussed in chapter 1, and problems arising from the local context. In the following sections, the political, historical, social and organisational contexts that affect how the Mauritian school system operates are considered. I also discuss my stance as a researcher and my choice of the narrative approach to conducting this study.

## 2.2 The Mauritian context

### *Geographical, social and historical context*

Mauritius is a volcanic island of about 1865 square kilometres in the Indian Ocean, which enjoys a tropical-oceanic climate. Its population has roots in Asia, Africa, and Europe. It is today a melting pot of people of different ethnic origins, cultures, languages, and dialects. Today, Mauritius has one of the highest population densities in the world (Ministry of Health and Quality of Life, 2012). The island has been continuously inhabited since 1710 following the establishment of a French colony. The colony was taken over by the British in 1810. The country achieved independence on 12 March 1968.

The educational system of Mauritius has a long history, closely associated with its status, first as a French colony, then as an English colony. Indeed, a remnant of this history is that both English and French languages are compulsory at primary and secondary school levels up to School Certificate (Juggernaut, 1993). Another feature is that the school system has for a long time comprised of government schools alongside government-aided schools and private schools (Juggernaut, 1993). It is to be noted that state secondary schools have always enjoyed a good reputation compared to private secondary schools (Juggernaut, 1993). This is possibly related to the relatively higher quality of infrastructure, teaching staff in

state secondary schools, and student performance in O-Level and A-Level examinations.

### ***Schooling system and school governance***

In Mauritius, all children should attend primary school as from the age of 5. After successfully completing six years of primary schooling, they join the secondary educational cycle which normally lasts seven years. Access to secondary schools is competitive. The students admitted can either join a fee-paying private school, an aided private school, or a state school.

In 1974, only 5 out of the 125 secondary schools were state-owned. In 2019, 69 out of 180 secondary schools were state owned. Moreover, despite the increase in the provision of secondary schools, the quality of education in state secondary schools is still a reference, as seen from the pass rates for students taking part in O-Level and A-Level examinations (Mauritius Examination Syndicate, 2015; Mauritius Examination Syndicate, 2016). With the on-going trend towards decreased privatisation of secondary education, state secondary schools are poised to remain a reference for quality of education.

There are 69 state secondary schools, which are situated all across the island, some being in urban, and others in rural areas. 63 of these state secondary schools are distributed in 4 administrative zones, with each zone under the administration of a director. The remaining 6 secondary schools are operated under the Mahatma Gandhi Institute (MGI) scheme. There are seven co-education state secondary schools, of which all the six MGI schools. All other state secondary schools are single sex.

Principals of state schools are responsible for the daily running of schools, in line with the procedures, guidelines, and policies of the MOEHR. The Zone Directors oversee the daily functioning of the schools falling under their purview and handle any correspondence between the schools and the MOEHR. The Mahatma Gandhi Institute has the flexibility of selecting its own curriculum and hiring its own teaching staff. However, all state schools must implement government policies concerning the quality of teaching and learning.

In the period 2006 to 2017, state secondary schools were classified as national or regional. National schools would draw among the best students entering secondary

education, whereas regional schools would admit only those students residing in the respective administrative zones. Over the years, an informal ranking of schools has established itself according to the quality of results of students joining them in Grade 7.

### ***Staffing in state secondary schools***

Currently, there are three categories of teaching staff in state secondary schools. First, there are the tenured teachers. Secondly, there are those from private schools who are out of job, and who are relocated to government schools. Thirdly, there are on-contract teachers who are employed on short-term basis.

Most tenured teachers have joined the profession with only a university degree and gained their teaching competence on the job. Some of them have earned a Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE thereafter) while in service. The MOEHR (2008) believes that the lack of pre-teaching training is affecting the ability of teachers to improve their teaching after they have been posted to schools. It can be noted that teacher training and competence is a long-standing problem in the Mauritian education system, already noted in 1964 (UNESCO, 1964).

In state secondary schools, promotion from teacher to principal requires teaching experience, a PGCE, and success at two selection exercises. Principals are appointed, following a selection exercise from assistant principals with more than three years of experience and holding a PGCE. Assistant Principals are selected from teachers having the required qualifications and experience. Unfortunately, this does not correspond to competencies in school leadership, teacher training or identification of best teaching practices at school (MOEHR, 2008).

Principals<sup>3</sup> are appointed whenever the MOEHR declares vacancies. A copy of their scheme of service is at appendix A. Every year, some principals are posted to other state secondary schools as part of the normal transfer program. The duration of the tenure of a principal in a school may vary from three months to ten years. Principals come from a well-varied background of subject-specialist teachers. All the different ethnic or religious groups are represented.

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<sup>3</sup> In Mauritius, principals of secondary schools are called Rectors. Assistant principals are called Deputy Rectors

As part of the performance management system, introduced in 2006 at the level of the school, the principal conducts the annual evaluation of teachers across a series of areas, including but not limited to teaching. As part of the management of the system, teachers may challenge the principal's evaluation and ask a review by a board chaired by the Zone Director. The annual salary increase of teachers is attached to the evaluation exercise, and there is considerable pressure on principals not to score teachers below a critical rating.

### ***Policy***

A significant landmark for the educational sector is the implementation of free secondary education in 1976 (Juggernaut, 1993). In the 1990s, Mauritius made two major attempts at reforms (Bah-Lalya, 2006): the Master Plan of Education (MOEHR, 1991) and the Action Plan of Mauritius (MOEHR, 1998). This led, among other things, to the review of the primary school curriculum, and the redesigning of the end-of-primary cycle examination. During the period 2001 to 2006, the MOEHR focused its efforts on increasing its provision of secondary education (Bah-Lalya, 2006).

However, even if Mauritius was doing well in terms of access to education, more was to be done in the field of equity with respect to issues of socio-economic backgrounds, ethnicity, and disabilities (Bah-Lalya, 2006). In 2008, the EHRSP (MOEHR, 2008) was initiated. Then, a School Management Manual (MOEHR, 2009a) and a National Curriculum Framework (MOEHR, 2009b) were published for the secondary sector. In 2016, the MOEHR engaged in a new round of reform involving the primary and the lower secondary sectors, under a policy of nine-years of continuous basic education (MOEHR, 2016).

However, the policy narrative with respect to quality of teaching and learning, and the roles of teachers and school leaders, is the same as that developed in the earlier EHRSP (MOEHR, 2008). This policy narrative was explicated and expanded in the School Management Manual (MOEHR, 2009a) for the use of principals of state secondary schools. This study is quite relevant, since it comes with findings that are very significant for the successful implementation of new policy.

## **2.3 Mauritius as a small island developing state**

Mauritius is a small island developing state (or SIDS thereafter) (Crossley & Sprague, 2014). The country has a population of less than 1.5 million people, and it has special vulnerabilities arising from its remoteness and susceptibilities. A particular social characteristic that is relevant to this dissertation is the “multiplex” nature of social relationships (Bray, 1992; Bacchus, 2008). Individuals interact with each other at various levels, and these interpersonal relationships become an important basis for various decisions and choices. Impersonal standards of efficiency, performance, and integrity are affected by the many relationships connecting them (Bray, 1992). There is also a phenomenon of “managed intimacy” (Bray, 1992), whereby individuals, understanding that they have to get along with the same people in different contexts, learn to avoid confrontations in order to minimise conflicts in the community.

Thus, within a SIDS, contextual factors are very significant and generally deserve more attention when formulating policies and adopting international best practices (Crossley & Sprague, 2012). Furthermore, in contrast to larger states, multi-ethnicity is more often a source of tensions or conflicts because people tend to identify more with their particular ethnic subgroups (Bacchus, 2008). The mitigation of overt conflict has resulted in bitter and prolonged factionalism, which tends to make the Mauritian society conservative and resistant to change (Martin & Bray, 2011).

## **2.4 Myself as a researcher**

Understanding that my worldview as a researcher (Crotty, 1998) is a critical factor that affects the inquiry process (Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Creamer, 2003; Mack, 2010), in this sub-section, I consider how my biography may have influenced this research (Sikes, 2004; Dunne *et al.*, 2005). During my graduate studies in Physics, I was socialised into the approach that everything could be scientifically explained and modelled in a simple and beautiful way. I learnt about creating models to describe situations in the physical world with simple and elegant rules. I enjoyed applying my conceptualising skills to practical situations.

After an early experience as a physics teacher in a private secondary school, I became a quality manager in a textile factory. and having my management skills

stretched and developed. I also completed a number of courses in quality and systems management to develop myself professionally. However, I left my job as factory manager to go back to teaching physics, out of passion for the subject. This time, I joined the state secondary school system as a teacher. After 11 years as a teacher, I was appointed assistant principal. As an assistant principal, I was interested in understanding what other assistant principals in state secondary schools developed as their school leadership model. During that period, I decided to start my professional doctorate journey with a focus on how assistant principals learn about school leadership.

After two years and a half as assistant principal, I was appointed principal in a regional school, and discovered the job responsibility of improving the quality of teaching and learning. As I moved to Stage 2 of the doctorate, my focus naturally became the leadership of the principal. I was appointed administrator after nearly five years as principal. As an administrator, I contribute to the management of the school system, seeing schools from a distance. As a former principal, I understand that the job of a principal can be very difficult on many accounts. Because of my own experiential commitment to leadership, I believe that it is a role and position that comes with its opportunities for improving the quality of education. I am therefore keen on generating contextually relevant knowledge on how leadership can be leveraged.

My early exploration into school leadership had left me dissatisfied with the ability of a positivist stance to explain different phenomena that I had encountered as a teacher, as an assistant principal and as a principal. I was thus tempted to espouse a narrative approach for my doctoral research. I immersed myself into the literature describing the subtleties of narrative research, and developed a scholastic understanding of the various nuances of using narrative in research. I sincerely believed that I developed a methodologically sound dissertation along a narrative approach. My experience of the Viva was quite disruptive.

The examiners' observations drew my attention to a serious methodological shortcoming in my work. I had obscured the voice of the participants to the benefit of producing, from my insider position, what I considered to be a higher truth. This had caused an impression, which I could not see at that time, of disrespect to the participants, even if that had certainly not been my intention.

Another important issue was that, at that point, I had not gone back to my participants to have them validate the pen portraits that I had made of them, and take on their feedback. I had been afraid that the participants might withdraw segments of their stories which I considered important to be released to the world. However, I had treated the data collected as something that I had harvested from the participants and which now had become my property. This was a position that violated ethical principles which underpin narrative research.

I realised that this oversight was an indication that I had not successfully completed the paradigmatic shift as I had thought. My learning and epistemological transformation was yet incomplete. After I picked myself up from the experience of the Viva, it took some time and reading of other writings for me to renegotiate my relationship with the participants through the way I represented their stories. My experience has led me to understand, in a vicarious way, the importance of *my own story* on my practices as a researcher. It opened my understanding on what I had noted about my participants as well. It allowed me to understand each story against a context rather than judge the participants against a model.

Interacting with my participants during the fieldwork period has also brought my attention to my cultural identity. As a person of mixed descent and a Roman Catholic, I am considered part of the 'Creole' community. Reflecting back on my experiences in the field, I realised that my participants must have interacted with me and elaborated their stories according to their ethnic sentiment and their perception of my ethnic belonging, even if some have been less explicit than others.

Another dynamic I became aware of, through interacting with my participants, is power. From my personal experience in secondary schools, I have noted that in the Mauritian context, age commands respect and experience on the job is associated with expertise. At the time of the contact and interaction with the participants, I was in my late 40's whereas all my participants were in their late 50's or early 60's. The difference in age and experience on the job must have been significant in my interaction with my participants, even if I was not aware of that, at the time of the fieldwork.

Moreover, I am aware that I still need to complete my intellectually journey toward a more deliberate research practice. I will discuss further my ontological and epistemological perspectives for this research in chapter 4.

## **2.5 Working with narratives**

My early review of research on school leadership, conducted in the Mauritian context, revealed that a significant proportion of them had been conducted using quantitative approaches. Moreover, they appeared to have yielded results that did not correspond to my experience of being a teacher or a principal. This drove me to look for ways of capturing rich data that would account for the complexity of the school environment and provide meaningful explanations of what was happening.

The human experience is extensively organised in terms of narratives (Fisher, 1984, Bruner, 1996; Hart, 2002; Flick, 2009; Harari, 2015). However, there is no universally agreed definition of narrative (Hyvärinen, 2008; Andrews *et al.*, 2008). Narratives represent accumulated experiences (Doyle, 1990; Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001; Goodson *et al.*, 2010), a way of telling about them (Connelly and Clandinin, 1990; Hart, 2002; Hyvärinen, 2008; Goodson, 2013), and a way of making sense of them (Bruner, 1986; Bruner, 1990; Sikes, 2006). From my personal experience of interacting with principals of state secondary schools, I do believe that they abundantly use “narrative logic” when they conduct their daily business.

My study is thus framed around capturing stories and larger narratives that principals of state schools use in relation to quality of teaching and instructional leadership. I believe that a study using narratives can uncover in what ways social and personal knowledge shape the practices of principals. I further believe that this approach can both identify intended and emergent instructional leadership effects.

## **2.6 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have looked at the geographical, historical and social contexts that affect the schooling system. I have considered some elements of the organisation of the schooling system in Mauritius. I have also given a particular focus on state secondary schools, as a particular context, where there has been special pressure to implement measures based on a new policy narrative. As a researcher, in an educational context, I also consider my own biography as a source of influence on the research. I also reviewed the reasons why I believe a narrative approach holds promise for the research project. In Chapter 3, I examine the important debates over quality of teaching and instructional leadership.

# Chapter 3 Literature Review

## 3.1 Introduction

In chapter 1, it was argued that understanding the relation between instructional leadership and pedagogical knowledge is crucial. Indeed, this understanding is expected to give insights on how to improve the daily instructional leadership practice of school principals. In section 3.2, the concepts of teaching and learning are first examined. The difficulties of conceptualising teaching and measuring the quality of teaching are considered. In section 3.3, the concepts of leadership in the school context are reviewed. Section 3.4 focuses on the concept of instructional leadership. The possibility of identifying an instructional leadership framework, contextually sensitive to the Mauritian state secondary schools, is considered. Context is discussed as a source of complication when conceptualising teaching and learning, as well as instructional leadership practices. The notion that teaching and instructional leadership are practices that mutually affect each other is also explored.

In section 3.5, a framework of teaching and learning, that is sensitive to the Mauritian context, is formulated. In section 3.6, an instructional leadership framework, suitable for Mauritian state secondary schools, is developed in four steps. First, three models of instructional leadership are selected. Generic dimensions of instructional leadership are identified. Second, these three models are compared to the reference framework of teaching developed at section 3.5. The dimensions of instructional leadership that appear significant to improve the practice of teaching and learning are noted. Third, the dimensions of instructional leadership identified at the step three are validated. They are examined in the light of existing literature on instructional leadership, and procedures prescribed for monitoring of teaching and learning by the MOEHR (2009a). Fourth, the framework for instructional leadership in Mauritian state secondary schools is formulated, and the theoretical assumptions that underpin it are considered.

In section 3.7, six important issues noted in the literature reviewed are discussed. To conclude this review, the key themes and concepts are summed up in section 3.8.

### **3.2 The nature of quality teaching and learning**

A key concept underlying the main research question is quality of teaching and learning. Teaching and learning remain elusive concepts (Fox, 1983) even if they are intricately connected to each other (Dessus *et al.*, 2008). To date, there is still no universal agreement of the concept of "quality" in the field of education (Tawil *et al.*, 2011) or how this "quality" can be assessed (James & Pollard 2011; Norman 2010). While student-learning outcomes are still used as a measure of the quality of teaching, accumulated evidence appears to indicate that this is inappropriate.

It is generally held that teaching, an activity carried out by teachers, is intimately linked to learning, a corresponding desired result in students. This has led to arguments that failure in producing the desired learning is necessarily a failure in the teaching (Kilpatrick, 1925; Dewey, 1938; Prichett *et al.*, 2013). Indeed, the teachers' contribution to a student's success (Pipho, 1998) has been recognised as very most significant. Yet, the eventual success of students at schools has been shown to depend on both school (Wendell, 2000), and non-school contextual factors (Sergiovanni, 1995; Creemers, 1996). Thus, even if it appears to be common sense, measuring the success of the teacher by occurrences happening in the student, and over which the teacher might have no influence is clearly problematic (Ozoliņš, 2013). However, this conceptual difficulty can be removed by adopting a process approach to teaching.

Instead of considering teaching as an act that necessarily brings learning, some researchers have argued that teaching is more of a performance (Hirst & Peters, 1970; Freeman, 1973, Bengtsson, 2001), or a goal-directed activity (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1989). In that perspective, teaching is a process conducted with the intention of providing learning, and that is progressively adjusted to get nearer to the intended goal. However, a teacher is responsible for selecting teaching actions that are more likely to bring learning to his students (Pitkäniemi, 2010). This relates to contrasting conceptions of teaching as an art (Eisner, 1979) or as a science (Bain, 1881). To date, the "teaching as science" approach has not yielded any formula for effective teaching in all contexts (Willms, 1992; Marzano, 2007), with little hope that it will ever be achieved. Inspired by the practicalities of teaching, researchers have suggested that effective teaching is part art and part science. (Berliner, 1986; Singh, 2006).

Comparatively speaking, quality teaching produces better learning than its alternatives (Pitkäniemi, 2010). This allows a distinction between “lack of success in teaching” and “failure in teaching”. Indeed, good teaching is not always successful, and this cannot be considered as the teacher’s fault. However, poor teaching occurs when the teacher chooses inappropriate teaching approaches, and this is their responsibility (Ericson & Ellett, 1987, 1990, 2002). “Failure in teaching” also occurs when the teacher has insufficient content or pedagogical knowledge (Macmillan & Garisson, 1987; Stewart, 1993) to assist the students in learning.

Attempts to create models of good teaching and learning generally tend to focus on better instructional strategies. However, such approaches are not realistic because they do not reflect the realities of the classroom and the school. Teaching, as it occurs at school, is more than merely leading instruction in class (Smith & Ennis, 1961; Jackson, 1962; Green, 1971; Freeman, 1973; Smith, 2008). Other roles of the teacher, such as giving instructions or handling discipline problems, while unrelated to instruction, can contribute to making teaching more effective (Farrant, 1980). Collaborating with peers (Scheerens, 1992) and with parents of students (Sergiovanni, 1995), and aligning the ethos and climate of the class to that of the school (Scheerens, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1995; Creemers, 1996) have also been shown to increase the quality of student learning outcomes.

In contrast with educational systems where there are strictly enforced and centralised frameworks for didactics (Alexander, 2004; Beere, 2010), the Mauritian educational system leaves much leeway to teachers. Under such conditions, the propensity of a teacher to choose any particular mode of teaching may ultimately depend on the cultural context (Bruner, 1996; Ripley, 2013). This was evidenced in a comparative study of the teaching of mathematics in the United States, Germany, and Japan, by Stigler & Hiebert (1999). They found that teachers of these countries adopted strikingly different approaches, apparently directly linked to their cultural background. Teachers, it appears, are quite unaware of such a process. They learn how to teach from observing their own teachers (Lortie, 1975; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). In the Mauritian education system, teachers tend to prefer traditionally used teacher-centred practices (Allybokus, 2015, unpublished).

In section 1.2, it was discussed how the EHRSP (MOEHR, 2008) introduced some policy narratives into the education system. One of these policy narratives is that quality teaching is directly measurable by the level of student outcomes. In this section, this policy narrative is challenged. The process model of teaching appears to provide better ways to understand and appreciate the different possible outcomes of teaching. However, even the understanding of what constitutes a good teaching process may be influenced by cultural perspectives. Nonetheless, comparison with other educational systems can help understand how teaching and learning is embedded within any particular context. In section 3.4, this principle will be used when looking at contextual situatedness of good teaching. In section 3.5, the same principle will be applied to derive a contextually sensitive model of instructional leadership.

### **3.3 The nature of school leadership that improves student outcomes**

A second key concept underlying the main research question is quality of instructional leadership. Today, one of the most pressing concerns of the principal is to deliver results where it matters most: improvement in student learning (Fullan, 2001a; Cardno, 2008; Lunenburg, 2010). However, it is not clear how the different roles and responsibilities of the principals respectively contribute to student learning (Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). The situation seems to be manifesting across a number of educational systems, where there appears to be a paucity of research and a knowledge gap on the relation between principal leadership and student outcomes (Marks & Printy, 2003; Prestine & Nelson, 2005; Robinson, 2010; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012; Hansen & Lárusdóttir, 2014).

Even if the manifestations of leadership tend to be recognisable (Bennis, 1989), a universally agreed definition of the phenomenon remains elusive (Cronin, 1993; Duignan & Hurley, 2007). As a result, a very large number of definitions of leadership (Stogdill, 1974; Buffie, 1989) have been formulated over the years. The scope of leadership definitions has evolved and enlarged (Avolio *et al.*, 2009) to consider a wide diversity of factors ranging from the leader-follower interaction to culture. Goal setting and motivating followers are visible (Burns, 1978) and significant (Peters, T. J. & Peters, T., 1987; Seashore *et al.*, 2010) functions of

leaders. These two functions of leadership are also mentioned in many definitions of the phenomenon (Rauch & Behling, 1984; Hersey & Blanchard, 1971; Buffie, 1989; Chemers, 1997; Hersey *et al.*, 2001; Murphy, 2004; Northouse, 2018). Yet, when leadership is deployed to boost organisational and individual performance (Reeve, 2002), as in making followers value the goals that the organisation needs to achieve (Burns, 1978), it may be less visible.

The quality of the relationship established between the leader and the followers is significant in the manifestation of leadership. By being receptive to their followers, leaders can respond more effectively to the evolving organizational context (Hallinger, 2003). Bolman & Deal (2008) note that mutual influence between a leader and a follower leads to co-operative effort. The leader can also inspire the followers to take leadership roles. When the aptitudes and skills of followers are developed, they are transformed into leaders in their own right and they become agents of change (Hersey & Blanchard, 1971; Buffie, 1989). Klenke (2008) has suggested that a significant part of leadership lies in the common purpose that joins the leader and the followers.

There is also a moral relationship between a leader and the followers based on trust, commitment and emotions (Ciulla, 2008). An unusual image proposed, by Schön (1971), is that the function of leadership is to diffuse ideas throughout a group, rather than deciding for the group. Such approaches have contributed to the development of the notion that leadership is not solely owned by the leader. Indeed, leadership has been investigated as roles distributed between a leader and followers (Spillane *et al.*, 2004), and also as a property of the organisation (Smylie & Hart, 1999). Social, cultural and individual factors can equally determine (Bolden, 2007) who becomes a leader, how a leader behaves, and what kinds of actions a leader can take.

The leadership of principals has been explored through the lens of leadership styles or approaches. The democratic, autocratic and laissez-faire leadership styles have been described by Lewin *et al.* (1939). Authoritarian or autocratic leaders provide clear expectations for what needs to be done, when it should be done, and how it should be done. They make decisions independently with little or no input from the rest of the group. Delegative or laissez-faire leaders offer little or no guidance to group members and leave decision-making to them. Participative or democratic

leaders allow team members to participate to some extent, but retain the final say in the decision-making process. Situational leaders (Hersey & Blanchard, 1971), decide on the leadership style to adopt according to the task at hand and their relationship with the followers.

The transformational leadership model, formulated by Burns (1978) for the business world, has received a lot of attention in schools. Transformational leaders seek to develop a relationship with their followers. They establish a common and valued goal, and then work toward the achievement of that goal (Burns, 1978; Bennis & Nanus, 1997; Shriberg *et al.*, 2002). Transformational leadership seeks to build a high level of commitment (Jantzi & Leithwood, 1996, Bennis & Nanus, 1997, Shriberg *et al.*, 2002; Marks & Printy, 2003), and thus draw resources so as to overcome the challenges identified.

In Burns's (1978) model, "transformational leaders" are opposed to "transactional leaders". Transactional leaders and their followers engage in a relationship of mutual dependence and mutual benefit with both sides receiving recognition and rewards for their contributions (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985; Bass, 1990; Hoy & Miskel, 2001; Shriberg *et al.*, 2002). Transactional leaders integrate the expectations of the organisation with the personal needs of the people who work in that organisation. However, an inherent weakness of transactional leadership is that it can lead to mediocrity if the leader intervenes only when standards are not being met (Bass, 1990).

More recently, the paternalistic style (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008; Hafeez & Hayat, 2017) has received significant attention. The propensity for individuals to use this leadership style is a cultural trait that prevails in conventional eastern societies such as China and India (Rehman & Afsar, 2012). Paternalistic leadership is an approach in which leaders demonstrate a fatherly governing authority. Paternalistic leaders (Farh & Cheng, 2000) treat their followership with discipline, fatherly authority and morality. Such leaders treat their employees or team members as a family. In return, they expect trust, devotion and respect (Hafeez & Hayat, 2017). Paternalistic leadership comprises three distinct leadership styles: the autocratic leadership style, the benevolent leadership style and the moral leadership style. Selflessness, self-discipline, and leading the subordinates with care and concern for their well-being, are key components of this approach.

Another framework that has been used to look at the principal's leadership is the legislative and executive styles described by Collins (2005). The legislative style relies on a subtle use of diffuse power. It involves a repertoire of communication and emotional intelligence strategies such as focussing on inclusion language, shared interests and coalition to negotiate outcomes. The executive style is characterised by the use of concentrated power to make important decisions individually. School leaders have little structural power to make important decisions individually (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004). The notion of the principal sharing leadership with teachers has been explored in various approaches such as teacher leadership, democratic leadership and distributed leadership. This corresponds to a push towards more democracy at school, and also an effort to get more support for school transformation initiatives (Brown & Anfar, 2003; Crowther *et al.*, 2009; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Leithwood, 1992; Sagor, 1992; Riordan, 2003; Woods, 2004; Lazaridou, 2009).

It is easy to ignore culture in education because of its pervasiveness (Stephens, 2007). Yet, it affects activities related to teaching and learning, and instructional leadership in ways in which practitioners are not necessarily aware of (Bruner, 1996). National culture influences the choice of strategies used by teachers (Bruner, 1996; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999) and students' expectation about class and attitudes to learning. It also determines what principals expect from teachers and students in class (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Ripley, 2013). Distinct from the national culture, the professional culture of teaching also has a strong influence on how teachers do their job (Keedy & Achilles, 1997; Keedy, 2005; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Houchens & Keedy, 2009; Wallace, 2009; Stewart, 2012). The cultural perspective suggests that school leaders should make better use of diffuse leadership and focus their attention on transforming the culture of their schools (Barth, 2002; Marks and Printy, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Gurr, 2008).

The education sector is quite different from the business sector because it is primarily a social enterprise (Cohen, 2005). As noted by Stigler & Hiebert (1999) in the United States context, attempting to transform teaching, a culturally learnt activity, by issuing documents specifying standards or guidelines for teaching is simply ineffectual. Thus, the approaches that would be appropriate for the business world may miserably fail in the school context. The high complexity of intergroup

relations amounts to schools being a rich and “messy” environment (Jackson & Sherriff, 2013). Thus, change should be approached with the proper mix of tools (Christensen *et al.*, 2006). While generic theories of leadership are abundant (Waters *et al.*, 2003), school leaders would need to be sceptical about their real impact on student learning (Marzano *et al.*, 2005; Robinson, 2006; Louis *et al.*, 2010). Nonetheless, they could inform their practice with different perspectives of leadership because of their usefulness and ability to reveal blind spots in knowledge and practice (Bush, 2003; Heck & Hallinger, 2005).

### **3.4 Focusing on instructional leadership**

The ‘accountability movement’ (Apple, 2006; Lynch *et al.*, 2012), a current global educational policy focus that started early in the twenty-first century, has placed the responsibility for student learning outcomes on the shoulders of principals (Bush & Glover, 2003; Schoen & Fusarelli, 2008; Walker & Ko, 2011). As a result, the ‘instructional leadership’ paradigm has gained the attention of policy makers across the world (Hallinger *et al.*, 2015), and in Mauritius (Tawil *et al.*, 2011; Ah-Teck & Hung, 2014).

Since the instruction leadership paradigm was discussed by Bridges (1967), much research has been conducted on competing leadership models for school principals, in an effort to determine which one would produce the greatest impact on student learning (Hallinger *et al.*, 2015). Some recent syntheses of the global literature on educational leadership seem to point that instructional leadership models produce the greatest impact on student learning outcomes (e.g., Bell *et al.*, 2003; Leithwood *et al.*, 2006; Robinson *et al.*, 2008; Hallinger, 2011).

However, from the early discussions on instructional leadership until now the tension, between what is expected from principals and the apparent impossibility of the job, has remained (Bridges, 1967; Murphy *et al.*, 1987; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012; Hallinger *et al.*, 2015). Critics of the instructional leadership paradigm have noted that it apparently requires principals to be heroic figures (Meindl, 1995). Indeed, many researchers have noted that the workdays of principals allow little time to focus on improving instruction (Martin & Willower, 1981; Horng *et al.*, 2010; Lee *et al.*, 2012).

A second criticism is that it is potentially very difficult to implement similar instructional leadership practices over a wide range of different school contexts (Cuban, 1988). The school, the social and the cultural contexts dynamically influence the teaching, learning, and the instructional leadership through interactions at various levels (Schatzki, 2002; Kemmis, 2007; Kemmis, 2009; Kemmis *et al.*, 2014). Thus, researchers have taken note of many forces in the school context, that tend to get into the way of the instructional leadership actions of the principals (Cuban, 1988; Goldring *et al.*, 2008; May *et al.*, 2012).

One cause of the mismatch between expectations and practice is the gap between the level of accountability expected from the principals and the authority that they actually wield (Ferrandino & Tirozzi, 2000; Schmidt, 2010). Another one is the absence of commonly agreed definition of instructional leadership (Bridges, 1967; Buffie, 1989; Hallinger *et al.*, 2015). Moreover, specifying standards, procedures and guidelines for teaching have proven ineffectual in different contexts (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999; Stone, 2002). Nonetheless, the gap between prescription and practice (Cuban, 1984) is putting principals under considerable role stress (Bridges, 1967; Barth, 1990; Donaldson, 2001; Hallinger & Murphy, 2012). A policy-driven effort to foster sustainable instructional leadership should take this into account (Hallinger *et al.*, 2015).

As principals continue to be hard-pressed for delivering improved educational outcomes (Fullan, 2001a; Cardno, 2008; Lunenburg, 2010), they resort to various models to guide their instructional leadership (Marzano *et al.*, 2005; Harris, 2007). Nonetheless, there appears to be a number of commonly agreed elements in the various descriptions of instructional leadership. Four significant ones are conveying to teachers a vision of quality classroom instruction, mentoring of teachers (Boris-Schacter & Langer, 2006), effective planning (Nelson & Sassi, 2005; Kitchen *et al.*, 2007), and ensuring a conducive learning climate where teachers hold high expectations for students (Edmonds, 1979; Bossert *et al.*, 1982).

In chapter 1, it was pointed out how the MOEHR (2008; 2009a) had expectations that principals of state secondary schools would be able to comply to set procedures diligently. In the Mauritian context, Congo-Poottaren (2015) looked at the instructional leadership practices of six principals who were engaged in an educational leadership course. It was found that these principals were not confident

about their effectiveness in improving class instruction. The principals felt that their daily reality was such that they could not implement the model of instructional leadership that they had learnt in their course. Furthermore, another study pointed to principals of Mauritian state secondary schools finding it difficult to transform teaching practice, because of a firmly established culture of teacher-centred classrooms (Allybokus, 2015, unpublished). These findings contrast sharply with the findings of Ah-Teck & Starr (2012, 2014), which appear to confirm the expectation that secondary school principals (MOEHR, 2008) are strongly in control of teaching and learning in their schools.

It appears that the instructional leadership model adopted by the MOEHR (2009a) might have not been well adapted to the Mauritian context. It clearly ignores the dynamic interaction between the principal and the teachers indicated by Congo-Poottaren's (2015) findings or more generally by Kemmis *et al.* (2014). Thus, depending on their culture, training, and dispositions, principals can hold different models of teaching, which necessarily affects their appraisal of teaching. The rigid approach proposed by the MOEHR (2009a) can lead principals to be prescriptive, rather than avail themselves the opportunity to learn new ways and change (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002). It can also lead principals to ignore the importance of changing the norms of behaviour and relationships (Houchens & Keedy, 2009).

Conceptualising instructional leadership and teaching as activities that mutually affect each other allows us to gain perspective. As a result, better options to assist in the transformation of teaching and learning can be envisaged. There are three significant consequences for such an approach. First, teachers are not passive recipients of the principal's leadership, despite the principal's position of formal authority. Second, the principal's instructional leadership action and effectiveness are also affected by the concepts that the teachers hold about a principal's instructional leadership roles. Third, principals and teachers are not traditionally involved in the production of academic knowledge concerning school functioning (Houchens & Keedy, 2009). Thus, they may find it difficult to contextualise and apply approaches and strategies created by outsiders who do not grasp the intricacies of the school.

In the context of a strong policy focus on the concept of instructional leadership, but with a significant gap between prescription and the practice of instructional

leadership, it is important to help principals bridge the gap (Cuban, 1984). While there appears to be some common aspects in the various definitions of instructional leadership, a framework is required to understand how these different aspects articulate with each other. The framework must both be close enough to the work of principal, so that they can relate to it in their everyday practice, and contextualise instructional leadership tools for them, for use in all schools (Barth 2001; Cuban 1984).

Furthermore, just like teaching, instructional leadership appears culturally embedded. It is also very significant to note that instructional leadership and teaching are deeply entangled and mutually interacting. Thus, a comprehensive and practical conceptualisation of instructional leadership, for any given context, must take into consideration contextually appropriate teaching models, and other factors such as culture of education and regulations governing teaching. This principle is used in section 3.6 to guide the formulation of an instructional leadership model for state secondary schools.

## **3.5 Conceptualising teaching in the Mauritian context**

### **3.5.1 Looking at models of teaching**

In this section, we consider three recent models for teaching that were retained with respect to their applicability to the Mauritian public-school context, after sifting through the various models of good teaching available. The three selected models are compared to see how they can contribute to a reference framework for teaching in the Mauritian state secondary schools.

The first one, developed by Devine *et al.* (2013), looks into what contributes to good teaching for teachers in elementary and secondary schools in the Irish context. The second one, proposed by Danielson (2007), was implemented and evaluated in the USA, and was found to provide reliable assessments of teaching by Danielson (2011). The third one is that developed by Stronge (2007) in a meta-review of teacher effectiveness research. It has been used to evaluate teacher effectiveness with some success in the USA by Muñoz *et al.* (2011) and Muñoz *et al.* (2013) and, with adaptations, in China (Meng *et al.*, 2015). The three models are compared in table 1.

<b><i>Dimension of teaching</i></b>	<b><i>Devine et al. (2013)</i></b>	<b><i>Danielson (2007)</i></b>	<b><i>Stronge (2007)</i></b>
<b><i>1. Teacher qualities</i></b>	<i>(Absent from model)</i>	<i>Teachers need adequate - knowledge of content to be taught, - knowledge of content pedagogy, - knowledge of adolescent development.</i>	<i>Teachers need adequate - communication skills, - knowledge of teaching and learning, - knowledge of content to be taught.</i>
<b><i>2. Inner drive and motivation to teach</i></b>	<i>Teachers need to be passionate about their work.</i>	<i>(Absent from model)</i>	<i>Teachers are dedicated to teaching.</i>
<b><i>3. Learning from experience and practice</i></b>	<i>Teachers to reflect on their practice.</i>	<i>Teachers must reflect on their practice.</i>	<i>Teachers are dedicated to reflective practice.</i>
<b><i>4. Activities before contact with students</i></b>	<i>Teaching is planned.</i>	<i>Teaching is planned. Assessments are designed and guide teaching activities.</i>	<i>Teaching is planned.</i>
<b><i>5. Activities in contact with students</i></b>	<i>(Absent from model)</i>	<i>Managing - classroom procedures, - student behaviour, - space and resources, - questioning skills, - responsiveness to students.</i>	<i>Adequate - classroom management skills. - implementation of planning. - questioning skills. - engagement of students. - monitoring student progress.</i>
<b><i>6. Warmth of communication with children</i></b>	<i>Teachers need to love their students.</i>	<i>Teachers are in service of their students.</i>	<i>Teachers need to care for their students.</i>
<b><i>7. Ethical behaviour</i></b>	<i>Teachers need to model appropriate social and moral values for their students.</i>	<i>Teachers must demonstrate integrity and comply with school regulations.</i>	<i>Teachers need to treat students with fairness and respect.</i>
<b><i>8. Professional responsibilities</i></b>	<i>(Absent from model)</i>	<i>The teacher must be engaged in -professional development -sharing with colleagues.</i>	<i>(Absent from model)</i>

Table 1: Comparison of the Devine *et al.* (2013), Danielson (2007) and Stronge (2007) models of good teaching

Knowledge of content and pedagogy appears important, as part of teacher qualities. However, it is not clear how much and what type of knowledge is required for a teacher to be most effective. While too little content knowledge hinders student learning (Coe *et al.*, 2014), great subject expertise does not ensure better teaching either (Hattie, 2009). In Mauritius, state secondary school teachers are recruited by a selection interview, from suitably qualified applicants. Thus, teachers may join the service without any pedagogical knowledge or communication skills required for class teaching. However, Devine *et al.* (2013)'s model cannot be used to support this practice. Indeed, this model was formulated for Ireland, where teachers need mandatory certification to join the teaching profession.

Teachers need to know how to teach their subject content (Danielson, 2007). It has been proposed that the knowledge of how to teach particular contents is highly specific (Shulman, 1986; 1987). Even if the significance of subject specific pedagogy is still not universally agreed (Carlson, 1990), it has been applied to domains such as science and mathematics (Kuhn *et al.*, 2016). Since, in the Mauritian context, principals are subject specialists, their approach to teacher evaluation may depend on their area of specialisation.

Proper planning of lessons is seen as crucial to the quality of the classroom engagement of students in the three teaching models considered. Indeed, lessons should be well scripted (Arends, 2001; Ohlsson, 1986), pitched at students after a proper diagnosis of learner dispositions and the evaluation of the most appropriate instructional strategies (Ohlsson, 1986). Clearly, expert knowledge is required in all these specific domains of teaching. The teachers' expert knowledge also allows them to depart from earlier plans and improvise effectively when so required (Knight, 2002; Pitkäniemi, 2010) while the class is in progress.

The three models recognise that teachers learn as they teach. Experienced teachers tend to be more efficient in planning their lessons than novice teachers (Tsui, 2003). The former are more resourceful while delivering their lessons, possessing a larger repertoire of routines, and a better integration of different types of knowledge (Hogan *et al.*, 2003). Effective learning in class requires active monitoring and supervision of the general flow of the lesson and individual learners. Learning to teach implies developing the requisite communication skills. Teachers must be able to capture the attention of students and create in them the desire to learn (James,

1977). Learning during teaching necessitates taking time to know the students, adapting to their needs and treating them fairly (Murphy *et al.*, 2004).

All three models refer to a core of four elements. These are: learning from experience, planning of teaching, empathy and caring for students, and ethical behaviour of teachers. It is noted that these elements have already been validated in earlier research (Kane & Temple, 1997). However, the three models diverge significantly on what constitute the core personal motivations of teachers and their sense of professionalism. Danielson's (2007) model refers to professional standards as an intrinsic driver for the teacher, whereas Stronge's (2007) model refers to teaching as a moral enterprise. In contrast, Devine *et al.*'s (2013) model considers passion for teaching as the motivation to teach. The three influences are recognised as significant sources of motivation for the improvement of teaching.

There are many similarities between the models of teaching considered. This may suggest that a reference model of teaching in the Mauritian context should look, to a large extent, very similar to the three models. However, these models carry subtle differences relating to the teaching culture and to the educational system where they are used. This would make it inappropriate to transpose a model directly from one educational system to another. In the next section, we consider the issues arising from transposing the dimensions of good teaching selected to the Mauritian context, for the purpose of formulating a reference teaching framework.

### **3.5.2 Conceptualising a reference teaching framework in the Mauritian context**

Despite the inherent difficulties in formulating a robust and contextualised framework for good teaching, two points are worth noting. Firstly, even if good teaching remains a complex activity, conceptualising it appears possible by looking at the different validated models of teaching. Secondly, some dimensions of teaching appear to be universal characteristics of good teaching.

Although each model presents elements that are important to teaching practice, there is no indication of their relative importance in the overall quality of teaching. Moreover, the three models of teaching selected send some contextual elements that affect teaching quality into the background. For example, one element is the culture that surrounds teaching. In national cultures where teaching has a lot of social

prestige, the profession attracts a large proportion of high calibre candidates (Barber & Mourshed, 2007), which impacts directly on teacher quality. Another element is teacher pre-qualification. Devine *et al.*'s (2013) model appears to overlook this important item. This model was devised for the Irish context where individuals mandatorily need to be certified for academic qualifications and professional teaching in order to be able to teach (Teaching Council, 2016). Instead, Devine *et al.* (2013), focus on other items to distinguish between effectual and ineffectual teachers.

Stronge's (2007) and Danielson's (2007) models require teachers to be reflective practitioners. Schön's (1983) notion of reflection-in-action has been criticised (Brown & McIntyre, 1993; Van Manen, 1995), because it could not possibly reflect the immediacy of decision making in the classroom. However, the ability of teachers to develop a sense of how to handle new situations effectively has been verified by Coyle (2009). Unfortunately, in general, teachers tend to make limited use of reflection-on-practice (Williams and Grudnoff, 2011; Martins *et al.*, 2015), possibly because of an unwillingness to relinquish "what works for me" and look at possible ways to do things better (Moore, 1995; Loughran, 2009). Reports on the Mauritian educational context tend to show that teaching is anchored in tradition (Allybokus, 2015, unpublished; Congo-Poottaren, 2015).

Of the three models of teaching considered, Devine *et al.*'s (2013) appears the weakest for conceptualising good teaching in the Mauritian secondary school system, because of the lack of reference to the various types of knowledge required by teachers. In the Mauritian secondary school system, teachers are subject specialists and need expertise in their area of intervention. Stronge's (2007) and Danielson's (2007) models are similar but both contain unique elements that could reinforce each other.

Admittedly, the elements from these models of teaching may emanate from different theoretical positions. However, in practice they are not mutually incompatible. It is thus proposed to consider a combination of the different dimensions of good teaching noted in these three models. The resulting framework would be comprehensive and robust enough, to encapsulate the different ways teachers and principals might conceptualise teaching in the Mauritian context. The result is presented in table 2 as the "reference teaching framework".

<b><i>Dimension of reference teaching framework</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
<b><i>1. Teacher qualities</i></b>	<i>Teachers need adequate</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>communication skills,</i></li> <li>- <i>knowledge of content to be taught,</i></li> <li>- <i>knowledge of content pedagogy,</i></li> <li>- <i>knowledge of teaching and learning, and</i></li> <li>- <i>knowledge of adolescent development.</i></li> </ul>
<b><i>2. Inner drive and motivation to teach</i></b>	<i>Teachers are dedicated to teaching.</i>
<b><i>3. Learning from experience and practice</i></b>	<i>Teachers are dedicated to reflective practice.</i>
<b><i>4. Activities before contact with students</i></b>	<i>Teaching is planned according to curriculum and curricular objectives.</i>
<b><i>5. Activities in contact with students</i></b>	<i>Teachers manage</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>classroom procedures,</i></li> <li>- <i>student behaviour,</i></li> <li>- <i>space and resources, and</i></li> <li>- <i>lesson/activity plan.</i></li> </ul> <i>Teachers monitor</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>engagement of students and</i></li> <li>- <i>student progress.</i></li> </ul> <i>Teachers display adequate</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>questioning skills,</i></li> <li>- <i>responsiveness to students, and</i></li> <li>- <i>classroom management skills.</i></li> </ul>
<b><i>6. Warmth of communication with children</i></b>	<i>Teachers display care for their students.</i>
<b><i>7. Ethical behaviour</i></b>	<i>Teachers treat students with fairness and respect.</i> <i>Teachers demonstrate integrity and comply with school regulations.</i>
<b><i>8. Professional responsibilities</i></b>	<i>The teacher must be engaged in</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>professional development and</i></li> <li>- <i>sharing with colleagues</i></li> </ul>

Table 2: Reference teaching framework, adapted from Devine *et al.* (2013), Danielson (2007) and Stronge (2007)

In the Mauritian context, the performance of students is still considered as a measure of dimensions 4 and 5 of the reference teaching framework. Furthermore, since initial teacher training is not conducted in state secondary schools, there is the possibility that teachers will be strongly guided by their personal beliefs, values (Fox, 1983; Heimlich & Norland, 2002) and experience (Holmqvist, 2011). Dimensions 3, 4 and 5 of the reference teaching framework might be very strong issues for teachers. While teachers do acquire some competencies of teaching on the job, the effect of experience is not predictable.

To conclude, even if the difficulty of evaluating teaching remains, the ‘reference teaching framework’ provides a starting point for teachers to look at their teaching. It also provides a basis for principals of Mauritian state secondary schools to guide, mentor and evaluate teachers. In the next section, the reference teaching framework is used to evaluate three selected models of instructional leadership. The dimensions of instructional leadership that appear to have the most significant effect on teaching and learning are then used as the basis of a framework for instructional leadership.

## **3.6 Conceptualising instructional leadership in the Mauritian context**

### **3.6.1 Introduction**

In section 3.2, it is argued that the instructional leadership practice of principals is influenced by their concept of good teaching and learning, with the mediating influence of an array of contextual factors. Much of the research on instructional leadership has looked at the effects of principals’ characteristics, type of instructional leadership and school factors on school-level outcomes. Moreover, the focus has often been on particular relationships rather than approaching all of them holistically (Pitner, 1988; Hallinger, 2010; Grobler, 2013).

It is noted that the complexity of instructional leadership is driven by four factors. Firstly, the principals’ instructional leadership is influenced both by the larger educational, and the specific school contexts. Secondly, it is mediated by various variables (Bossert *et al.*, 1982; Grobler, 2013). Indeed, the contribution of the different factors is confirmed by different effective school research studies (Scheerens, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1995; Creemers, 1996; Wendell, 2000).

A third significant element is that the principals have other roles that determine how much time they eventually devote to leading learning. The fourth element, that has been already discussed, is that despite the principals’ formal leadership role, they still need to assert their vision and approach because teachers do not necessarily accept these. Thus, the theoretical lens used to examine the instructional leadership models of principals must be sufficiently broad and sensitive to capture the complexity of principals’ daily instructional leadership practice.

In section 3.6.2, an initial list of instructional leadership dimensions is compiled, based on three selected models of instructional leadership that have strong theoretical foundations, and which have also been validated by research. On the premise that instructional leadership is strongly influenced by the principals' conception of good teaching and learning, this initial list is matched to the dimensions of reference teaching framework already developed in section 3.5.

In section 3.6.3, a correlation is made between the dimensions of instructional leadership listed and the dimensions of the reference teaching framework. This gives an indication of those dimensions of instructional leadership that are the most effective in influencing teaching and learning.

In section 3.6.4, the validation of the dimensions of the instructional leadership is completed by comparison with literature on instructional leadership and the instructional leadership procedures recommended by the MOEHR (2009a). Using the dimensions that have been retained for consideration following the two-step validation process, a framework for the evaluation of instructional leadership in Mauritian state secondary schools is formulated.

In chapter 1, the main research question was formulated as follows:

“How does the principals' understanding of quality of teaching inform their instructional leadership practice and affect policy implementation?”

In order to inform the answer to this question, the principals' conceptions of quality teaching and instructional leadership practice must be evaluated. The process, according to which the “instructional leadership framework” is developed, ensures that it is well correlated to the “reference teaching framework”. By examining the principals' narratives through the lens of this pair of frameworks, the closeness of the relationship between the understanding of good teaching and the instructional leadership practice can be evidenced. However, such a tool may not necessarily give any indication of how the various contexts exert their influence.

### **3.6.2 Looking at models of instructional leadership**

Informed by the discussion in sections 3.2, 3.3 and 3.4, three models for instructional leadership were selected for consideration on the basis of four attributes. Firstly, they allow the possibility of dynamic instructional leadership effects. Secondly, they have been validated by actual research. Thirdly, they arise from educational systems that are very different. Fourthly, they have been developed from ‘western’ models of instructional leadership.

The first model, developed by Qian *et al.* (2017), looks at instructional leadership for Chinese primary school principals. It is an attempt to represent instructional leadership as understood in the Chinese context. Qian *et al.* (2017) found that their model shares common features with the leadership models developed in the western context (e.g. Bossert *et al.*, 1982; Gu, 2011), and has features unique to the Chinese approach of looking at education.

The second model was developed by Hallinger *et al.* (2017), following a study on the instructional leadership of primary school principals in Vietnam. It was developed by grounded research and compared to models of leadership for learning such as developed by Bossert *et al.* (1982) and Walker & Hallinger (2015) for western contexts. Hallinger *et al.* (2017) were able to identify features that are common to all instructional systems, and those that are unique to the Vietnamese context.

The third model by Robinson *et al.* (2009) was initially developed by Robinson *et al.* (2008) based on studies in the USA, Canada, Australia, Israel, United Kingdom, Singapore and Hong Kong, and validated in an extensive study in New Zealand. Robinson *et al.* (2009) were able to evidence eight aspects or dimensions of instructional leadership, that were directly able to improve educational outcomes. The three models are compared in table 3.

<b><i>Dimension of instructional leadership</i></b>	Qian <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Hallinger <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2009)
<i>A. Creating a climate that encourages teacher learning</i>	Nurturing positive and collaborative relationships with and among teachers	Developing school learning climate	Creating educationally powerful connections
<i>B. Creating powerful motivation for school</i>	Defining purpose and direction	Setting targets	Establishing goals and expectations
<i>C. Managing teaching within school</i>	Evaluating and monitoring instruction	Managing curriculum and instruction	Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum
<i>D. Creating a supportive school climate and ethos</i>		Building solidarity	Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment
<i>E. Managing relationships with school stakeholders</i>	Promoting external communication to support learning	Managing external relationships	
<i>F. Aligning curriculum with National policies</i>	Aligning the curriculum		
<i>G. Supporting professional development</i>	Fostering professional development to enhance teacher capacities		Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development
<i>H. Leadership knowledge, skill and disposition</i>			Leadership knowledge, skill, and dispositions
<i>I. Acquiring and managing resources for running the school</i>			Resourcing strategically
<i>J. Solving complex problems at school</i>			Engaging in constructive problem talk
<i>K. Creating contextually meaningful tools to manage school</i>			Selecting, developing and using smart tools

Table 3: Comparison of Qian *et al.* (2017), Hallinger *et al.* (2017) and Robinson *et al.* (2009) models of instructional leadership

After analysing and comparing the Qian *et al.* (2017), Hallinger *et al.* (2017) and Robinson *et al.* (2009) models, eleven distinct dimensions of instructional leadership were identified. These eleven dimensions are used in table 3 to highlight the commonalities and the differences between the three models. Even if the models were developed from or inspired by western models of instructional leadership, at first glance, they do appear to present more differences than commonalities. In the next section, the impact of each of the dimensions of instructional leadership on teaching will be considered.

### **3.6.3 Identifying the dimensions of an effective instructional leadership framework**

In this section, each of the instructional leadership models is matched to the teaching framework developed in section 3.4. The dimensions of instructional leadership that appear to be the most significant in influencing quality of teaching and learning in the Mauritian state secondary school context are identified. The analysis is presented in table 4 below.

It is noted that only the Qian *et al.* (2017) model addresses dimension 1: teacher capacity. Improving teacher capacity is presented as an important part of professional development. All three models, nonetheless, consider dimension 2 of the reference teaching framework, on creating the drive to teach better. However, targets are set in different ways, shared with different ranges of stakeholders, and commitment to these targets is acquired by different strategies. Hallinger *et al.* (2017) discuss the importance of incentive programs to motivate teachers.

Moreover, only Robinson *et al.* (2009) do emphasise dimension 3 of the reference teaching framework. The principal is encouraged to have the teachers discuss their theories of practice and consider improving some aspects of their teaching. In societies where there is a well-established and homogeneous professional culture, the notions of teaching and learning that teachers acquire throughout their schooling can equip them adequately. However, in the Mauritian context, teachers come to teaching having navigated through the heterogeneous social and educational system. The accumulated difference between the teachers' personal theories of practice can be significant.

Dimension of reference teaching framework	Description	Dimension of instructional leadership that corresponds to the dimension of reference teaching framework		
		Qian <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Hallinger <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2009)
<b>1. Teacher qualities</b>	<i>Teachers need adequate - communication skills, - knowledge of content to be taught, - knowledge of content pedagogy, - knowledge of teaching and learning, and - knowledge of adolescent development.</i>	G - Enhancing teacher capacity		
<b>2. Inner drive and motivation to teach</b>	<i>Teachers are dedicated to teaching.</i>	D – Setting annual targets for teachers B – Defining purpose and direction	B –Setting targets D – Developing school learning climate	B – Establishing goals and expectations
<b>3. Learning from experience and practice</b>	<i>Teachers are dedicated to reflective practice.</i>			J – Engaging in constructive problem talk
<b>4. Activities before contact with students</b>	<i>Teaching is planned according to curriculum and curricular objectives.</i>	C – Evaluating and monitoring instruction F – Aligning the curriculum	C – Managing curriculum and instruction	C - Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum

Dimension of reference teaching framework	Description	Dimension of instructional leadership that corresponds to the dimension of reference teaching framework		
		Qian <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Hallinger <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2009)
<b>5. Activities in contact with students</b>	<p><i>Teachers manage</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>classroom procedures,</i></li> <li>- <i>student behaviour,</i></li> <li>- <i>space and resources, and</i></li> <li>- <i>lesson/activity plan</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Teachers monitor</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>engagement of students and</i></li> <li>- <i>student progress.</i></li> </ul> <p><i>Teachers display adequate</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- <i>questioning skills,</i></li> <li>- <i>responsiveness to students, and</i></li> <li>- <i>classroom management skills.</i></li> </ul>	C – Evaluating and monitoring instruction	C – Managing curriculum and instruction	C - Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum
<b>6. Warmth of communication with children</b>	<i>Teachers display care for their students.</i>			
<b>7. Ethical behaviour</b>	<p><i>Teachers treat students with fairness and respect.</i></p> <p><i>Teachers demonstrate integrity and comply with school regulations.</i></p>		D – Building solidarity	

Dimension of reference teaching framework	Description	Dimension of instructional leadership that corresponds to the dimension of reference teaching framework		
		Qian <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Hallinger <i>et al.</i> (2017)	Robinson <i>et al.</i> (2009)
<b>8. Professional responsibilities</b>	<i>The teacher must be engaged in - professional development, and - sharing with colleagues.</i>	A. teachers encouraged to collaborate G. teachers encouraged to participate in professional development activities E. Establishing strategic alliances to identify new teaching strategies	D – Developing school learning climate	G – Promoting and participating in teacher learning and development
<b>9. Other</b>			A – Developing school learning climate D – Building solidarity E – Managing external relationships	A- Creating educationally powerful connections D – Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment H – Leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions I – Resourcing strategically

Table 4: Comparison of the reference teaching framework to Qian *et al.* (2017), Hallinger *et al.* (2017) and Robinson *et al.* (2009) models of instructional leadership

Dimensions 4 and 5 of the reference teaching framework are addressed by all three models of instructional leadership with some differences in emphasis. Under the three models, the principal is expected to have some close monitoring of what is being taught, have regular instructional rounds to see what the teachers are actually doing in class and provide guidance to help them improve. However, none of the three models looked at dimension 6: the quality of the teacher-student relationship and classroom climate. Attending to emotional intelligence (Lombardi, 2008; Allen *et al.*, 2014) does benefit the students. However, the issue of attending to the emotional welfare of the student relates to the concept of education that is upheld at the school. Indeed, the school may choose to focus on academic matters or develop its students more holistically. This can be related to the school culture, or the national culture.

Dimension 7, relating to the ethical behaviour of teachers, was emphasised only by Hallinger *et al.* (2017). The authors consider that contributing to preserve social harmony is crucial for an effective school. The emphasis on ethics and values in the educational system again relates to the concept of education that is upheld in the school. All three models of instructional leadership address dimension 9, which is about professional development. However, a very strong emphasis is noted in the Qian *et al.* (2017) model, where the principal supports teacher professional development, and teachers conduct research. In contrast to the two other models, in Robinson *et al.* (2009)'s model there appears to be less emphasis on organisational learning.

From this comparison, a first issue is immediately noted. Some dimensions of the reference teaching framework receive little attention from the instructional leadership models selected. The significance of this must be understood. A first dimension which appears neglected is learning from experience, which has been associated with reflective practice (dimension 3). In the Chinese (Qian *et al.*, 2017) and Vietnamese (Hallinger *et al.*, 2017) contexts, teachers are expected to engage in collaborative practices of research on teaching. In New Zealand (Robinson *et al.*, 2009), teachers are expected to engage in reflective practice and critically examine their teaching. In the Mauritian context, however, there is neither teacher research organised at school, nor any continuous professional development. The possibility of reflective teaching practice will be discussed at a later stage.

The two other dimensions of the reference teaching framework, receiving no or little attention from the three instructional leadership models, relate to rapport building and inculcating of moral values (dimensions 6 and 7 respectively). While they do not directly relate to instruction, they contribute to creating the ethos and climate conducive to learning in class. In national or regional cultures that promote cohesion and collaboration, such issues might not appear to be relevant. Thus, while these factors do have an effect on the classroom functioning, it is not necessarily seen as the responsibility of the school to enforce them.

The second issue, arising from the comparison between the Qian *et al.* (2017), Hallinger *et al.* (2017) and Robinson *et al.* (2009) models, is that the relative importance of the instructional leadership dimensions must also be understood. This is directly related to supporting the instructional versus the non-instructional aspects of schools. In practice, there is tension between these two aspects (Macneill *et al.*, 2005), which contributes to the challenge of improving instruction. Depending on the practices that the principals engage in, their time might either be more focused on developing teacher instruction or improving the school environment.

### **3.6.4 Validating the dimensions of an effective instructional leadership framework**

In section 3.5.1, by comparing three models of instructional leadership, eleven dimensions of instructional leadership were identified and listed in table 3. From tables 3 and 4 above, it is noted that all three models share three common dimensions, even if with some differences. These are namely: creating the appropriate environment to encourage teacher learning (dimension A), setting standards for learner achievement (dimension B), and controlling what is taught (dimension C). These three dimensions can serve as a basis for conceptualising instructional leadership in the Mauritian context. Indeed, they represent the fundamental premise of instructional leadership, i.e. ensuring quality learning by focusing on teaching and learning.

However, in order to develop a framework that could represent instructional leadership in the Mauritian context, additional dimensions must be included. In this section, the different dimensions of instructional leadership already evaluated in section 3.5.2, for their potential to effectively transform teaching and learning, are

explored further. They are discussed in the light of the literature on instructional leadership and the procedures recommended for the state secondary school principals by the MOEHR (2009).

In delivering on dimension A, which is about being a mentor and a teacher educator at school, principals face an important challenge. They have to translate theoretical knowledge into ways relevant to the teachers, such that the latter are able to apply this to their classes and daily routines (Swennen *et al.*, 2008; Pitkäniemi, 2010). One important difficulty is for principals to provide support to teachers with different levels of experience, needs, and requirements (Drago-Severson, 2007). In Robinson *et al.* (2009)'s model, there is a significant emphasis on principals having the necessary knowledge and skills to function along the other dimensions of instructional leadership.

However, in the Mauritian context, as it was discussed in chapter 1, principals acquire experience and know-how on the job. It is possible that they do not develop the necessary knowledge and skills required to discharge their duties and responsibilities effectively. An additional difficulty is that principals are subject specialists, with subject-based opinions (Tas, 2011). They lack the pedagogical content knowledge to support all aspects of teaching. Even if the principals choose to rely on the help of the head of department for a particular subject, they might not necessarily be well advised. Indeed, heads of departments are assigned responsibilities only by virtue of seniority and not competence.

A second problem associated with the development of teachers is that the consequences of some instructional leadership choices might take a long time to be apparent (Elmore, 2008). Principals might actually have little data to inform their decisions. Instead, their choices could be driven by commonly accepted truths and knowledge (Male & Palaiologou, 2012). Examining the practice of teachers is a complex exercise, requiring expert knowledge of the curriculum and teacher education (McChesney, 2010). The competence of principals to act as instructional leaders is, understandably, still a matter of debate.

Dimension B, which is about setting educational goals, establishing visions and formulating expectations for the school, does require from the principal critical understanding of schools and how they evolve (Leithwood *et al.*, 1999; Valentine *et al.*, 1999; Lazaridou, 2009; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012). Moreover, a

principal's mindset should be translated effectively, dynamically and proactively into meaningful actions (Engelking, 2008). Setting targets is not sufficient if the principals cannot get teachers to be committed to achieving them. It has been suggested that, for the school to work effectively, the responsibility of initiatives should be shared between the teachers and the principal (Printy, 2008). This requires the principal to have the necessary skills to create and sustain the commitment of teachers and to handle interpersonal communication effectively (Day & Leithwood, 2007).

Dimension C is about the active monitoring of teaching and learning by the principal. A central activity of the principal is classroom observation. This practice, when done effectively, is believed to have a strong impact on student outcomes. In chapter 1, the inability of principals to make reliable assessments of teacher performance was highlighted (Hamre *et al.*, 2010, Weisberg *et al.*, 2009). This draws attention to the skill set that principals actually need to be effective in their classroom observations, and their subsequent debriefing of teachers (Stein & Nelson, 2003; Printy, 2008).

One of the issues discussed in chapter 1 was the policy focus on quality teaching and learning by the MOEHR (2008). However, in section 3.2, the problem of identifying quality teaching from poor teaching was considered (Ericson & Ellett, 1987; Pitkäniemi, 2010). There is an inherent difficulty in acquiring knowledge of the efficacy of the various teaching strategies in different school contexts. Moreover, once a teaching problem has been diagnosed, it is also problematic for the principal to determine the actual outcomes of the remedial actions (Elmore, 2008; Brewer, 1993).

Given this knowledge and skills gap, it is useful (Lazaridou, 2009) to know what knowledge is actually used by principals to attend to such tasks. Only one, out of the three instructional leadership models examined, considers the competencies of the principal. Yet, the evidence presented shows that the principal's leadership knowledge and skills are important determinants of how instructional leadership is enacted within a school. Dimension H "Leadership knowledge, skill and disposition" should be considered as a core component of instructional leadership.

A significant number of leadership dimensions concerns aspects other than developing teachers and monitoring teaching. This finding confirms the relative

importance of the “indirect effects” that were noted in numerous research reports (Hallinger & Heck, 1996; Leithwood *et al.*, 1999; Witziers *et al.*, 2003) of the actions of principals on student outcomes. However, which of the “indirect” dimensions of instructional leadership are most effective, eventually depends on the way the principals exert their influence (Leithwood *et al.*, 2010). Dimension D is about creating an orderly environment in the school and promoting appropriate social values among students. In the Mauritian context, principals of state secondary schools are expected to effectively manage student behaviour in their school through both disciplinary measures and pastoral care (MOEHR, 2009a; MOEHR, 2011), because it is considered as a requisite to good student performance. Consequently, dimension D is retained for further consideration, Hallinger *et al.* (2017).

Dimension E, significant in Chinese (Qian *et al.*, 2017) and Vietnamese contexts (Hallinger *et al.*, 2017), is noted to have indirect effects in managing relationships with stakeholders. It allows, among other things, to gather the resources required to run the school. Dimension I, in Robinson *et al.* (2009)’s model, represents the substantial autonomy that New Zealand schools have. This autonomy allows principals to influence teacher recruitment and firing decisions. This ability, when it exists, does grant principals a lever of formal power to exercise on teachers and thus affect teaching. While in the Mauritian system, the state secondary schools do have parent-teacher associations, the financial support of the school is already guaranteed by the state (dimension I). Moreover, principals of state schools in Mauritius have little curriculum freedom (relating to dimension F). The subjects to be taught and the teaching time are clearly defined by the MOEHR. Thus, given the lack of relevance of dimensions E, F and I to the Mauritian context, they are not retained for consideration.

Robinson *et al.* (2009)’s model refers to the use of smart tools (dimension K) by the principal to manage the school in a contextually sensitive way. The concept of using “smart tools” is about using the most appropriate tool to do each task or process more efficiently. It calls for the school leader to have a systemic awareness of the contribution of any process, and to care for the followers’ well-being. Such an approach is similar to the process of “servant leadership” (Greenleaf, 1991). Moreover, dimensions B, “setting up of targets and expectations” and C “managing

of teaching within the school”, imply finding effective tools to monitor quality and achievement of targets. Since state secondary schools in Mauritius are expected to “be aiming at reaching standards of higher performance” and to “have systems in place to assess their progress” (MOEHR 2009a), dimension K is retained for consideration.

In Chapter 1, it was discussed how principals are expected to balance between the conflicting expectations of the different school stakeholders (Day & Leithwood, 2007; Hopkins, 2009; Weast, 2010; Tas, 2011), and manage the tensions and dilemmas arising. The tension between principals and teachers has been confirmed in the Mauritian context by Congo-Poottaren (2015). The concept of “constructive problem talk” has been proposed by Robinson *et al.* (2009). This involves principals encouraging the process of change of pedagogy actively, and through dialogue with teachers. This dimension of instructional leadership lays a bridge between the instructional knowledge and competencies of the principal and the practice of individual teachers. The MOEHR (2009a) set school improvement as an imperative for the principal, and this particular dimension of instructional leadership relates directly to improving educational outcomes. Thus, dimension J, solving complex problems, is retained for consideration.

Research suggests that learning to teach is an educative process (Loughran, 2010), and cannot be fixed through enforcing procedures within the school (Stone, 2002). Qian *et al.* (2017) and Robinson *et al.* (2009), in line with current international practice, lay a lot of emphasis on professional development. Enhancing teaching competence through teacher research, that is shared with the school community, is also emphasised and recognised. Strong leadership from the principal has been reported as significant (Sergiovanni, 1995) in building learning communities and renewing professional culture. Thus, even if this aspect of instructional leadership has not been given a lot of attention in the Mauritian context, it is seen as highly desirable. Dimension H is thus retained for further consideration.

In the Mauritian context, the principal of a state secondary school is considered responsible for the progression in student learning (MOEHR, 2009a).

*“As the instructional leader, the Rector should monitor very closely the implementation of the curriculum, ensuring that students are progressing satisfactorily and that standards are maintained. It is important for school management to set up a control mechanism or dashboard to collect feedback on curriculum implementation so that it may make informed decisions regarding corrective measures required.” MOEHR (2009a:49)*

However, evaluating planning before teaching is mostly delegated to the heads of departments (MOEHR, 2009a), who would need to report to the principal. The approach of delegating responsibilities to the heads of departments implicitly recognises the problem of subject specialisation. Principals, as subject specialists, are not in the best position to evaluate teachers of other subject specialities. As per MOEHR (2009a) the heads of departments are selected on the basis of their seniority within the departments, provided they have at least five years of teaching experience. However, despite provisions in MOEHR (2009a), the heads of departments are not provided with any particular arrangements so as to be able to accompany principals to regular class visits. Moreover, the heads of departments are not trained to supervise teaching or mentor teaching (Peerthy, 2018, unpublished), and do not fulfil this responsibility well (Peerthy, 2018, unpublished).

A key observation is that, during their instructional rounds, principals are expected by MOEHR (2009a) to monitor the class ethos and climate of classes. However, the three instructional leadership models understudied appear to give little consideration to this aspect. Instead of posing a new dimension to those already listed in table 3, the meaning ascribed to dimension C will be extended, to look at classroom processes, climate, and ethos. Following the review of Qian *et al.* (2017), Hallinger *et al.* (2017) and Robinson *et al.* (2009) models, the instructional leadership dimensions that have been validated are compiled, to provide a basis for instructional leadership in the Mauritian context. The resulting “instructional leadership framework” is proposed in table 5 below.

<b><i>Dimension of instructional leadership</i></b>	<b><i>Description</i></b>
A. Creating a climate that encourages teacher learning	Building rapport with teachers and between teachers and encourage sharing and collaboration.
B. Creating powerful motivation for school	Defining purpose, establishing goals and expectations.
C. Managing teaching within school	Planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; monitoring of classroom climate and ethos.
D. Creating a supportive school climate and ethos	Ensuring an orderly and supportive environment within the school; advocating values and harmony.
G. Supporting professional development	Creating opportunities for teacher development and promoting teacher development.
H. Leadership knowledge, skills and dispositions	Displaying relevant knowledge, dispositions, and skills.
J. Solving complex problems at school	Engaging in constructive problem talk with the school community to address problems of teaching and learning.
K. Creating contextually meaningful tools to manage school	Selecting, developing the measures and tools to meaningfully guide the school towards improved instructional outcomes.

Table 5: Instructional leadership framework, adapted from Qian *et al.* (2017), Hallinger *et al.* (2017) and Robinson *et al.* (2009)

## **3.7 Discussion**

### **3.7.1 Leading instructional improvement**

An important aspect of the instructional leadership framework described in Table 5 above is that it emphasises the dependence of the effective practice of instructional leadership on knowledge and qualities of the principal (Buffie, 1989; Day *et al.*, 2001; Campbell *et al.*, 2003; Robinson 2010).

According to the instructional leadership framework, presented in table 5, effective instructional leadership depends on principals possessing certain types of educational knowledge, displaying certain personal dispositions such as holding a clear vision and having good communication skills (Kemmis *et al.*, 2014). They should also deploy certain kinds of actions, relate to stakeholders in certain ways, and set up an appropriate system of policies and procedures within their schools (Kemmis *et al.*, 2014).

As discussed in section 3.6.2, the importance of the different leadership dimensions varies according to national contexts. However, even at school level, much contextualising of instructional leadership practice can occur through the choice of procedures and systems implemented.

### **3.7.2 Leading in the school context**

Leadership in schools is a dynamic mutual interaction between the principal, the teachers and other stakeholders (Hallinger 2003; Bolman & Deal, 2008). While policymakers focus on the idea that leadership has a direct influence on learning outcomes (Muijs, 2010), the significant influence of contextual or individual factors remains unacknowledged.

The practices of principals are enacted through a context which may strongly moderate their effectiveness (Schatzki, 2002; Kemmis, 2007; Kemmis, 2009; Kemmis *et al.*, 2014). The perspective that contextual, cultural and societal factors are significant influences, reflects a recent evolution thinking about leadership (Leithwood *et al.*, 1999; Bolden, 2007; Avolio *et al.*, 2009). For instance, school culture has been identified as an issue of serious concern for school leaders (Barth, 2002; Marks and Printy, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Gurr, 2008). Moreover, some forms

of student culture support values other than academic success (Jackson & Sherriff, 2013).

In the Mauritian context, state secondary school principals are expected to make regular class visits to check on the quality of teaching and to assess teachers regularly. Yet, even when principals can squeeze adequate time in their hectic schedules to look at teaching in class (Hamre *et al.*, 2008; Hamre *et al.*, 2010; Abu-Nasser, 2011), they might not be willing to criticise teachers because they prefer to avoid social pressures (Arkin, 1981; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). What would be the best practice for motivating teachers and monitoring their performance, or for creating a positive climate for students, would depend on each school. In order to determine what works best in their particular context, the principals need to address complex problems to which they do not have ready-made answers.

The new performativity culture discussed in chapter 1 has created an intense social pressure on Mauritian state secondary school principals. They need to take actions to be seen as good school leaders (Goffman, 1990) by the MOEHR and the various other school stakeholders. However, how the school stakeholders appreciate the performance of the principal depends on the interpretive stance that these stakeholders take (Shulman, 2017). Thus, how principals create their role of school leader (Goffman, 1990; Shulman, 2017) depends on their understanding of the principalship, their perception of the school context and, possibly, the perceptions of the school stakeholders.

### **3.7.3 The principals' leadership style**

Instructional leadership is often described separate from other aspects of leadership of the school leader. However, in practice for principals, there is a tension between the instructional and non-instructional aspects of the school (Macneill *et al.*, 2005). Research in various contexts has confirmed that principals tend to suffer from role overload (Hamre *et al.*, 2008; Hamre *et al.*, 2010; Young, 2010; Abu-Nasser, 2011). Moreover, they also have to handle constant emotional labour arising from their vulnerability and isolation (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004). Nonetheless, the myth that strong leaders would make good schools continues (Elmore, 2005).

Elmore's (2000) criticism, that principals should focus more on teaching and learning, draws attention to a crucial issue. Principals may find it difficult to strike

a proper balance between time spent on instructional leadership and managing other aspects of the school (Macneill *et al.*, 2005). It is noted that the leadership framework formulated in table 5 above does not refer to preferred specific leadership styles (Marks & Printy, 2003; Grobler, 2013). Moreover, the “reference instructional framework” does not give any idea of the relative importance of the selected dimensions, and how much time the principal can or should spend on each. However, principals may also simply lack the skill to help teachers improve their teaching practice (Weisberg *et al.*, 2009; Hamre *et al.* 2010). Nonetheless, even when they do so, working with teachers to improve teaching practice can be difficult in itself. Even if the strong direction of the school leader can be a significant influence for the improvement of pedagogy (Sergiovanni, 1995; Rowland, 2015), teaching in a school cannot be simply fixed by enforcing certain procedures (Stone, 2002). Thus, principals are not necessarily to be blamed for unsuccessful implementation of the policies about good teaching (Ah-Teck & Hung, 2014).

Significantly, in the Mauritian public secondary schools, principals have no direct power to reward a meritorious teacher or reprimand teachers who are failing. This aspect can directly and negatively interfere with the setting of appropriate targets and laying out expectations for performance.

### **3.7.4 The isolation of teaching**

The notion that a teacher can learn through reflective practice has been found, now and again, to hold promise for professional growth (Huberman, 1989; Brown & McIntyre; 1993; Darling-Hammond, 1997; Hoban, 2002; Loughran, 2002; Davidson, 2003). However, this promise has not lived up to expectations because of uncertainties about how reflective inquiry can be fostered in a teacher (Jones & Jones, 2013). Reflection alone is not enough to make teaching more effective, especially if not supported by critical thinking. Moreover, the effectiveness of teachers depends on a number of factors, including their personal attributes (Çimer *et al.*, 2013).

Unfortunately, despite the willingness of teachers to be reflective, there is an inherent difficulty for them to observe their own teaching and seeing its effects. Teachers, being unaware of how they actually teach, remain “stuck” in particular

ways of doing things (Cheng *et al.*, 2010; Devine *et al.*, 2013) and continue to teach as they were taught to by their teachers (Lortie, 1975; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999). Moreover, while instructional leadership models may consider how the principals should monitor classroom practice and encourage reflection, research also indicates that teachers do receive limited feedback from principals on their work (Martins *et al.*, 2015).

### **3.7.5 Workplace learning and the teacher**

The practice of teaching in the classroom is influenced by the teacher's personal characteristics, societal values (Malm, 2008; Connell, 2009; James & Pollard, 2011), and learning on the job process (Loughran, 2010). As teachers "stumble towards competence" (McKenzie, 2004), they move along the competency continuum from being a novice towards being an expert (Huberman, 1989; Marshall *et al.*, 1990; Wonacott, 2002; King Rice, 2003; Boyd *et al.*, 2008).

Each stage carries its challenges (Huberman, 1989), and teachers respond in a personal way to each challenge (Sugrue, 1997; Brante *et al.*, 2015). Even if principals and teachers might have different concepts for quality teaching (Kane & Temple, 1997), there is evidence that effective support from principals can help teachers grow professionally (Blase & Blase, 1999, 2001; Gurr, 2008).

The knowledge and skill of the teacher are tied up to practice, and are highly contextual (Bransford *et al.*, 2000; McTighe & Seif, 2003; Mourshed *et al.*, 2010). What has been learnt and tested in one school may prove inappropriate when applied in a different school. Thus, the movement of both the principals and teachers between schools is expected to affect the learning of teachers, and the support that they receive from principals.

### **3.7.6 Workplace learning and the principal**

Principals should be knowledgeable about teaching in various ways. They are expected to know what good teaching is, to evaluate it reliably and to remediate to problems. However, no approach to managing teaching and learning has yet yielded any formula for effective teaching in all contexts (Willms, 1992; Marzano, 2007). Nonetheless, the possibility of principals developing the understanding and the skills to manage their schools successfully remains appealing. Just as a teacher is expected to learn on the job (Bransford *et al.*, 2000; Loughran, 2009), one could

expect that principals still learn from their practice (Brewer, 1993; Elmore, 2008, Weisberg *et al.*, 2009; Hamre *et al.*, 2010).

Surprisingly, it is noted that the three models of instructional leadership considered in section 3.6.2 do not provide for the reflective learning of principals. Research suggests that the practice of principals is shaped by their limited ability to learn from their professional experience (Brewer, 1993; Elmore, 2008, Houchens & Keedy, 2009). One of the potential causes of this is the mobility of principals. They cannot learn the effectiveness of their leadership actions from observing how teachers improve. A second potential cause is the hectic time schedule and role overload that principals face. As a result, they tend to focus on simply running the administration (Hamre *et al.*, 2008; Hamre *et al.*, 2010; Abu-Nasser, 2011). Since they have little time left to improve teaching within the school (Goldring *et al.*, 2008), there are relatively few instructional leadership actions to learn from.

Moreover, in Mauritius, principals of state secondary schools do not receive any training for the assessment of teaching, and for solving problems of teaching encountered. They rely on their own experience, just as many principals in other educational systems (Lessard, 1986; Rousseau & Van der Veen, 2005; Helena & Abrahão, 2002; Grodzki, 2011). One direct consequence of the principals' limited on-the-job learning, and limited in-service support, is their restricted ability to implement policies (Houchens and Keedy, 2009).

### **3.7.7 How my positionality impacted the literature review**

As an educationalist genuinely inspired to bringing transformation in the Mauritian education system, I am concerned about producing a pragmatic model for improving instructional leadership that principals can relate to and act upon. My experience of successfully applying quality assurance models before entering the world of education led me to consider teaching and leading in terms of systems and processes.

I believe that schools are complex environments and principals need to adapt their leadership to the multiple and conflicting requirements. The key outcomes are possibly influenced by the school context much more powerfully than by what happens within the school itself. In that sense, the status of the principal as leader or manager is in a way more symbolic than practical.

My experience of leadership inside and outside schools is that leadership can be difficult to implement. I am therefore concerned to produce a framework that can speak to policymakers, administrators and to principals alike. According to my experience, the representation of leadership in terms of leadership styles, though legitimate, are not necessarily close to the practical concerns of school principals. Moreover, it does not necessarily translate into actionable items as easily as instructional leadership items.

### **3.8 Chapter Summary**

In chapter 3, I have considered the current state of the debate in the literature concerning quality teaching and instructional leadership. It was noted that the complexity of the principal's work within the school context resists attempts to create simple models to explain it.

Based on the premise that the instructional leadership of principals follows from their understanding of good teaching and learning, a reference framework for teaching was developed from the comparison and evaluation of three validated models of teaching. Then, three models of instructional leadership were considered. The dimensions of instructional leadership, that can be used to characterise and compare the instructional leadership models, were identified.

The suitability of the different dimensions of instructional leadership to the Mauritian state secondary school context was assessed in two steps. They were first correlated with the "reference teaching framework" to assess their effectiveness in eliciting quality teaching and learning. Next, the instructional leadership dimensions were evaluated and validated by reference to existing literature on the topic and procedures recommended by the MOEHR (2009a).

From the validated instructional leadership dimensions, the "instructional leadership framework" was formed. The reference frameworks for teaching and instructional leadership, used together, can give good indication how instructional leadership has been contextualised.

In chapter 4, the methodological foundation of this study is presented and the research design discussed.

# Chapter 4 Methodology

## 4.1 Introduction

Narrative enquiry has been influenced by philosophers, anthropologists, and psychotherapists such as Dewey, Johnson, Geertz, Bateson, Czarniawska, Coles, and Polkinghorne, and accordingly may be approached in different ways (Connelly & Clandinin, 2001). Since methodology is “an enacted philosophy” (Jackson, 2006), working with narratives has methodological commitments and implications. In this chapter, I set out to clarify my position as a researcher when designing and using narrative research (Robert & Shenhav, 2014). The research design is then presented. Finally, the strengths and weaknesses of the research design are considered. Issues relating to insider positioning, and the ethical concerns arising from the research, are also discussed.

## 4.2 My philosophical position

My personal view of social reality (Mack, 2010) can be described as essentially subtle realist (Snape & Spencer, 2003; Maxwell, 2012; Gorski, 2013). While there is a reality that exists independently of us, this reality can only be known through the human mind and socially constructed meanings. Moreover, this reality is not necessarily knowable to an onlooker (Bhaskar, 1978; 1979; 1986).

Following my ontological position, I believe that knowledge of the world can only be gained by engaging the world and that we cannot claim ‘objective’ knowledge of reality. Gaining knowledge about the world would, therefore, imply both gathering experiences and thinking about the world. Meanings could also be attributed to experience, objects or things (Cresswell, 2003). This position is neither purely empiricist nor purely rationalist, and has been identified as constructivist by Crotty (1998). In my research, I look at the world of Mauritian secondary school principals, with which I am familiar. I consider the experiences that the participants have with instructional leadership, especially concerning improving the quality of instruction. To unpack and interpret the stories that I elicit from my participants, I rely on my own experience, my engagement with them, and theoretical frameworks synthesised from literature.

I believe that knowledge is not formed only in individuals but is also situated inside social constructions (Berger & Luckmann, 1966; Pinker 2002), and in the interactions between human beings. This position can be defined as ‘weak constructivism’ (Ernest, 1996; Pinker, 2002; Khalifa, 2010). Individual knowledge and social knowledge are not the same. Even if individuals are embedded in particular social cultures, they construct an understanding of it that is individual and fragmentary. Thus, their interpretation of the world is subjective and personal (Levy, 2007).

When deriving the perceptions of my participants on any phenomena within the school context, I must remember that, despite commonalities, their construction of reality is as personal as mine. Moreover, this construction of social reality is ongoing and was still occurring as my participants were telling their stories to me. Thus, the participants might still not have constructed a meaning to the experience that they shared with me during the interviews. Furthermore, the embeddedness of individuals in social structures leads to layers of personal narratives being nested inside larger societal or cultural narratives. I also believe that schools are complex human systems that possess wholeness (Senge, 1990; Morgan, 1997). Understanding how schools work is not possible by reducing them to processes (Gorski, 2013; Moore, 2013). Both social structure and human agency acting within the school system (Archer, 1995; Horrocks, 2009) can lead to emergent behaviours in schools (Willmott, 2000).

My position concerning social reality has evolved considerably during the course of the EdD. I had never given much thought to it prior to the EdD. Initially, I lacked the reflexivity to understand how my life experiences shaped my outlook. I quickly found myself in a situation where I had to construct a personal stand with respect to social reality and the vast literature on educational leadership and research methodology. I also had to understand the implications of any professed research stance to the whole research process (Sikes, 2004). The journey to my current position has been a long and difficult one. However, I do realise that this position is not final, and that it will evolve with my future research and academic work.

## 4.3 Working with narratives

### 4.3.1 Reviewing commitments towards narrative research

In this sub-section, I further examine the choice of working with narratives from my philosophical position. In chapter 2, I briefly considered what brings me to working with narratives. Moreover, the choice of a qualitative approach was also motivated by two concerns. First, there is the perceived need to explore instructional practices of principals, of which there is insufficient knowledge (Robinson *et al.*, 2008; Robinson, 2010). Second, there is the concern of circumventing difficulties that earlier quantitative questionnaire survey-based research, such as Ah-Teck & Starr (2012; 2014), might have run into. Indeed, apart from the intrinsic difficulty for questionnaire surveys to capture the complex reality of schools, there can also be the weariness of principals accumulated over the years, while participating in many questionnaire-based surveys.

This research claims that tapping into narratives allows to fill in the “know why” gap (Ryan, 1993) when considering the difficulties in implementing policies to improve the quality of teaching. Indeed, narratives collected represent both accumulated knowledge (Doyle, 1990; Jenlink & Kinnucan-Welsch, 2001) and the active making-meaning of people (Bruner, 1986; Bruner, 1990; Smith, 2012). The reconstruction of the factual starts with an assumption that an unprepared, extempore narration is a true recapitulation of past experience. Nonetheless, there is a difference between the actual practice of the principals and what they say about it (Argyris & Schön, 1975).

Doing research engages the values of the researcher. The problem of quality of teaching and learning is sensitive and complex. Moreover, I find that the realities of the field do not correspond to the narratives of teaching and learning and of instructional leadership that have been adopted in the EHRSP (MOEHR, 2008), and sustained since. As an educational professional, I believe that the issue should be discussed and further investigated. By conducting this research, I am also discharging of my social responsibilities (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

Reconstituted life histories reflect subjective, social and cultural constructions (Bruner, 1987; Goodson *et al.*, 2010; Ankiah-Gangadeen & Samuel, 2014) from the contexts they emanate. As a result, narratives have crucial roles to play in

organisational communication (Muehlaman *et al.*, 2011). School leaders are actively involved in reframing these narratives (Nissley & Graham, 2009) at the level of the school. Practically, the research must consider the possibility of the participants being deliberately engaged in rhetoric. Indeed, as we shall discuss in chapter 6, there is indication of the participants being actively engaged in managing their reputation and perceptions of the stakeholders of the school as part of their daily routine.

Two important methodological orientations (Robert & Shenhav, 2014), in narrative research, concern decisions about the nature of narratives, and how they can be used to generate research data. In the next sub-section, I examine some aspects of these two methodological orientations and how they relate to my philosophical positioning and my research project.

### **4.3.2 Methodological implications of commitments concerning narrative research**

#### ***What narratives represent***

The first important conceptualisation relates to the decision that the researcher takes about what narratives mean. I believe that human beings are “story-telling creatures” (MacIntyre, 1981; Fisher, 1984). Narratives affect, in multiple ways, the personal and the social reality of the narrator and those to whom they are narrated (Dunford & Jones, 2000; Ramírez-Esparza & Pennebaker, 2006; Sikes, 2006; Goodson *et al.*, 2010; Powell, 2011). It is understood that narratives may capture reality as direct reports of events (Labov, 2006) or deliberate distortions, even if minor, of the events (Presser, 2009). However, narratives may also engage aspects of human experience that are incommensurable (Rorty, 1980) such that there can be no understanding of the distance between narrative and “reality”. Thus, narratives can only be understood by engaging and interpreting them (Riessman, 1993).

This research project assumes that school principals make choices in their professional life according to their school context, but also in relation to their life story and purpose (Lessard, 1986; Helena & Abrahão, 2002; Rousseau & Van der Veen, 2005; Grodzki, 2011). I research in a holistic way how principals lead a school by using their personal narratives about their work life (Webster & Mertova,

2007; Eacott, 2010). I also seek to understand the practical knowledge and values (Bruner, 1986; 1990; 1996; Cohen *et al.*, 2011; Smith, 2012), as well as the ethical, moral and cultural ambiguities that principals experience (Garson, 2017).

### ***How narratives generate data for research***

A second important conceptualisation (Robert & Shenhav, 2014), in narrative research relates, to the choice of the processes that the researcher engages, to create meaningful data from the narratives. There are two generic foci. The first focus, described as *working with narratives*, looks at working with narratives as a particular approach. Three common approaches of *working with narratives* are noted (Robert & Shenhav, 2014). The first approach considers narratives as a particular paradigm (Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007). The second is axiology-based and seeks to give voice to the participants (Atkinson & Delamont, 2006). The third approach is based on a specific set of analytical procedures, usually drawn on literary and linguistic traditions (Franzosi, 2010).

The second generic focus for generating data, described as *working on narratives*, considers that narratives are objects with particular properties. Three ways of working on narratives are noted here. Firstly, narratives can be construed as ‘grand stories’ or conversations. Secondly, narratives can be construed, with no medium limit, as the totality of the research material, as long as a story is being told. Finally, narratives can be seen as major topics or *grand narratives* that underlie the research material or an ensemble of stories.

This research assumes the existence of ‘small stories’. Narratives exist at different levels, starting with ‘small stories’ or actual conversation units (Polkinghorne, 1991). The ‘small stories’ are nested within larger wholes (Polkinghorne, 1991; Bamberg, 2006; Bernhard, 2014). However, the researcher has to uncover the larger stories by considering the overall coherence and the consistency of the whole (Bernhard, 2014). Using the narrative-as-an-approach or narrative-as-object foci are not mutually exclusive choices. In practice, a narrative analysis is located on a continuum between the two foci (Riessman & Speedy, 2007).

In the next section, I discuss how this research positions itself in the continuum of narrative analysis.

### **4.3.3 Navigating the continuum of narrative analysis**

A researcher gives a personal turn to the research data (Chase, 2005) by selecting one among several possible modes of narrative analysis, according to the aim of the research. The researcher can consider capturing the meaning of subjective experience as it is told (Polkinghorne, 1988; Riessman, 1993) because narratives shape lives (Ochberg, 1994). Indeed, valuable insights can be gained when the research considers both the meaning that is carried by the narratives and what can be learnt by the structure and context of the narratives (Lieblich *et al.*, 1998; Andrews *et al.*, 2008).

In this research, I seek answers to the research problem presented in chapter 1 at three levels. First, there is the level of principals as they lead their school on a daily basis. The research seeks to understand the personal experience of the participant principals as instructional leaders. The second level is that of the principals, as a professional body. The research seeks to understand how principals, as a group, construct their experience of instructional leaders. At this level, insights can be gained into what can be done to improve the quality of instructional leadership in the Mauritian context. The third level is that of the constructs that the principals use, with respect to quality of teaching and instructional leadership. At this level, the research seeks to understand these constructs, in relation to existing theoretical frameworks.

At the first level, there is rich contextual data framing the experience of the participants. Moving from the first level to the second level, the focus shifts onto common narratives shared by the participant principals, or that underpins their common experiences. As higher level-narratives are gained, there is a loss in the “graininess” of the individual narrative detail. Moving from the second to the third level, the change in focus results in a further loss in the wholeness of the individual narratives. However, in parallel, access is gained to even higher-level narratives.

There is no one single approach that attends to the three levels. As the narrative researcher sifts through the narrative data using a particular tool, some data is brought to the forefront and other data pushed into the background. Thus, in order to attain the three objectives, three separate analyses are conducted to focus on each of these levels. In section 4.5, I examine the challenges arising from relating the different findings from the three levels of analysis into one coherent meta-analysis.

In the following section, I consider the research design and how it relates to my positionality and the research objectives.

## **4.4 Research design**

### **4.4.1 Introduction**

The research design has evolved during the course of the study through a series of iterations, and its final evolution is presented in this section. The design evolved during fieldwork, following interactions with participants, and then during the analysis of the data collected. In the following sections, key aspects of the research design will be considered.

### **4.4.2 Sample and Sampling strategy**

The research problem is articulated around a group of principals of state secondary schools. It is concerned with how these school leaders interpret contextually what quality teaching means and how they take action to improve the quality of that teaching. In the literature review at chapter 3, it was assumed that there is a strong interaction between the school context and the principal. A purposive sampling approach (Stoffels, 2005; Oliver, 2006; Palys, 2008) was therefore used for selecting schools and principals for the research. For this study carried out in the context of Mauritian state secondary schools, there are four school context factors and two attributes of principals that are believed to be significant for consideration.

The four school context factors are respectively: the leadership practice of the zone Director<sup>4</sup> overseeing the school, the school location, the academic ability of the student population, and the gender of the student population. The two attributes of principals that are believed to be of special importance are gender and length of tenure in the school considered. Moreover, the choice of cases is also made according to the maximum variation approach (Patton, 1990). This aims to include the spectrum of positions that can be found, and that are relevant to the research problem.

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<sup>4</sup> In the Mauritian state secondary school system, a Director of education is responsible for overseeing a number of secondary schools within one of the four identified geographical zones or within the Mahatma Gandhi Institute programme.

The list of state secondary schools and their principals was established, together with relevant characteristics. The accessibility of participants within the research period was a constraint (Smith & Osborn, 2008) on the sample that could be realised. The final selection was adjusted so as to avoid awkward situations such as only female participants or only regional schools<sup>5</sup> being included.

This approach has been described as appropriate to capture central themes across potentially large variations among the state secondary school principals (Patton, 1990; Teddlie & Yu, 2007). The final selection of participants was made on the expert judgement of the researcher. During the data collection period, two of the five participants changed tenure. However, they were retained in the study since they had worked for a significant period (more than one year and a half) in their previous school. Moreover, the second interview concerned stories of quality teaching that they had encountered as principals.

Permission to access state secondary schools and interview principals within the school compound was secured from the MOEHR (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Parker *et al.*, 2011). Preliminary contact was established with the principals in December 2015, and the first interview session was scheduled as per the participants' convenience. Permission was also secured for audiotaping the interview sessions.

The realised sample of principals is described in table 6 below.

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<sup>5</sup> Regional schools are schools that admit students only from one of the four educational zones as opposed to national schools that admit students from all over the island.

Reference of principal	Directorate	Status of school	Gender of principal	Location	Gender of student population
1	A	Regional	Male	Rural	Girls
2	B	Regional	Male	Urban	Girls
3	C	National	Male	Suburban	Boys
4	D	Regional	Female	Suburban	Girls
5	E	National	Female	Suburban	Co-education

Table 6: Selection frame for participants

The actual directorate name is avoided since it might lead to the identification of the school by default. The location of the school as urban, suburban or rural affects the socio-economic profile of the students who attend. This, in turn, has an effect on certain aspects of students' behaviour and academic performance. All three types of geographic location of schools are represented in the sample. There is a majority of male principals in state secondary schools. This is reflected in the sample frame with 3 principals being males and 2 being females. Only well-established principals were considered (Lovely, 2004); all participants in the sample frame had four or more years of experience in the role.

The five principals were interviewed between 4 January 2016 and 19 May 2016. The dates of the individual interviews are listed in table 7 below.

Pseudonym of participant <sup>6</sup>	Date of first interview	Date of second interview
John	15 January 2016	22 April 2016
Jenny	04 January 2016	22 April 2016
Ben	02 March 2016	19 May 2016
Tim	24 February 2016	19 May 2016
Tina	04 March 2016	05 May 2016

Table 7: Interview dates for participants

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<sup>6</sup> A pseudonym was used for each participant. The participants are introduced in section 5.2.

### **4.4.3 Sources of data**

Data collection focused on interviews of the participants, supplemented by field notes made during the interviews. Two interviews were conducted with each participant. The first one was a narrative interview of at least an hour and a half. Each narrative interview unfolded like evolving conversations with both principal and researcher as participants (Riessman, 2008). However, the principals were allowed much longer turns of conversation in the dialogue.

The principals were requested to give an account of their life history, with particular focus on their work critical life experiences that shaped them as principals and instructional leaders (Stoffels, 2005; Flick, 2009). This opens a window into their tacit knowledge (Janson & McQueen, 2007). The principals were able to move to areas they regarded as significant. This approach allowed a truer to life representation of the concerns of principals (Denscombe, 2010; Schafer & Clandinin, 2011).

The second interview was an episodic interview of about the same length as the narrative interview i.e. one hour and a half. The episodic interview is designed at exploring the notion of narrative as a form of representing experience respectively. By focussing on specific episodes in a participant's experience, an episodic interview looks at both the specific narrative knowledge and the related conceptual knowledge of the person (Flick, 2009). One inherent problem with the traditional narrative approach is the difficulty in directly eliciting the desired data. The use of an episodic interview for each participant allowed getting the desired conceptual knowledge from the participants; this knowledge can be combined with that obtained from the narratives collected in the first interview.

### **4.4.4 Interview protocols**

The two interviews for each participant were intended to draw out stories. According to Kurtz (2014), stories have a social function and people tend to behave differently when engaged in telling stories. People do not feel that they are probed and reveal more data. Eventually, the story provides cues which allow to understand why the participants responded as they did. Furthermore, well-constructed story elicitation results in fewer non-response behaviours. A guide was prepared to steer

each interview towards the different topical domains of interest, relating to the principal's life as the instructional leader of the school (Stoffels, 2005).

The three guiding question areas, adapted from Flick( 2009), that were formulated for the episodic interview are stated below: (i) *What does the expression “quality teaching and learning” mean for you? To what do you associate this expression?* (ii) *When you look back, what was the first situation when you had a concern about the quality of teaching and learning in the school? Could you please tell me about this situation?* (iii) *When was the first time you had to intervene in class about teaching and learning? Can you tell me about it? Can you tell me of other similar situations where you had to intervene?*

From the information gathered in the first interview, specific prompts referring to the teaching and instructional leadership situations evoked by the participants were used. Towards the end of the second interview, the participants were also invited to clarify points from the first interview that appeared unclear or incomplete.

Seidman (2013) suggests that an interviewer should be very careful about the power distance with the interviewee. In the course of the interview, the interviewer may allow the interview to drift into a conversation as a relationship builds up with the interviewee. Seidman (2013) suggests that the interviewer finds the good balance between saying enough of oneself and preserving the autonomy of the participant's words. Kurtz (2014) cautions that in narrative interviews, there might still be attempts to actively promote personal agendas or respond as to what seems to be expected. Nonetheless, this tendency is somewhat less as compared to other forms of interviews.

Flick (2009) argues that some people develop a high level of skill at hiding awkward situations while they are narrating. Thus, despite the interviewer's sharpness, he might not be able to see beyond the participant's rhetoric. Another caveat pointed out by Flick (2009) is the difficulty to decide whether the stories are complete or not. Different participants have different ways of narrating and elaborating their stories (Goodson, 2013). The interviewer may not be certain, for instance, about what topic needs elaboration or clarification.

An important advantage of interview-generated narratives is that they can capture valuable data about work practices and wider organisational contexts (Alvarez &

Urla, 2002). Indeed, they provide a window to look at the multidimensional context of the problem (Kurtz & Snowden, 2003; Schafer & Clandinin, 2011). This is clearly evidenced in the multiple tensions that were captured in the actual research data and noted in the findings, such as the difficulty for participants to reconcile between allocating time for co-curricular activities and protecting academic time.

An audio recording was made for each interview. Field notes were also made during the interview in connection with the attitudes and the interactions with the participants. Any insights were gathered in the spur of the moment. These notes were used to supplement the transcriptions and facilitate the understanding of the interviews.

#### **4.4.5 Transcription of interviews**

Each interview was partially transcribed. Non-verbal sounds, tone of voice, etc. were left out (Schegloff, 1997). Furthermore, only those elements of the participants' speech deemed relevant to the research question were transcribed (Powers, 2005). Unrelated events such as interruptions or incoming telephone calls were not recorded. If partial transcription is a time-saving strategy, care was taken to honour the narrator's voice and story (Oliver *et al.*, 2005), because this form of processing can lead to a 're-storying' of the narratives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990).

Thus, it was important to constantly refer to the original recordings to ensure that the contextual meanings (Cameron, 2001) had been preserved. The field notes were used to inform both the transcription and analysis of the audio recording. Uniformity of treatment was achieved for the different participants through reviewing and comparison of the transcripts during the transcription exercise.

## **4.5 Analysis overview**

### **4.5.1 Introduction**

Planning the analysis is an integral part of the research design. In this sub-section, I describe how narratives have been used in different ways (Robert & Shenhav, 2014) to inform the research problem. The first three tiers of analysis are based on the transcripts produced from the interviews of the participants. In the first tier of analysis, presented in chapter 5, a narrative portrait (Goodson, 2013) of each participant is presented to allow the voice of the participants to emerge. Insights are obtained on what principals bring as personal inputs to the job (Eisner, 1982). In the second tier, presented in section 6.2, the themes, structures and meanings noted in the different stories are compared and contrasted. Knowledge is essentially gained by deduction. The comparison is reported with a focus on common structures and narratives.

In the third tier, presented in section 6.3, the stories of quality teaching and instructional leadership are examined against the reference frameworks for teaching and instructional leadership. Knowledge is achieved through the abductive reasoning mode. In the fourth tier, presented in section 6.4, a synthesis of earlier findings is made. The common elements of the findings from the different tiers of analysis are identified. The findings are put together into a coherent framework.

In the four tiers, narratives are considered as an expression of both the life story and the life history of the participants. For tiers two, three and four, life narratives are also considered to reflect the interconnection between the participants' inner world, their actions and sayings. Additionally, for tiers three and four, narratives are considered to reflect the explicit and tacit knowledge of principals concerning teaching and instructional leadership. Specifically, for tier four, narratives are also considered to reflect the self-presentation efforts of participants. Finally, for the four tiers, narratives were taken to be complex wholes with multi-layered structures.

The sequence in which the different tiers are conducted is very significant to the analysis, and meaningful to the research. Each layer of analysis informs the next one. The third level of analysis, which is at the core of this study, looks into the relationship between principals' conception of good teaching and their practice of

instructional leadership. This understanding is developed after the personal background of the participant, and the narratives of being a principal in a Mauritian state secondary school have been established.

As the analysis progresses from the first to the subsequent levels of analysis, there is a loss in the amount of personal details which is matched by a gain in the depth of conceptualisation on the contextualisation of instructional leadership. In following sub-sections, the different levels of analysis are described in more detail.

#### **4.5.2 First tier: analysis of individual principals**

In this section, I present the eight steps of the first tier of the analysis, and I discuss some of the issues that had to be resolved. The first step consists of reviewing the transcripts of the narrative and the episodic interviews several times and splicing into the small units of meaning or “short stories”. An extract from a participant’s transcript is placed at Appendix B as an illustration.

The second step consists of establishing a connection between the different segments and events. Thirdly, the data segments are open coded as themes emerge from data, to capture the world of the participant (Cresswell, 2007; Goodson & Choi, 2008; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). At the fourth step, the life story of each participant, together with the timeline of events and experiences, is reconstructed (Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004). At the fifth step, as each life-history is completed, it is compared with the previous ones (Boeije, 2002, Grodzki, 2011; Gummesson, 2006; Goodson & Choi, 2008). The sixth step consists of identifying the dominant stories and processes of each life story.

The seventh step consists of making a narrative portrayal (Goodson *et al.*, 2010; Goodson, 2013) from the life story established for each participant. The narrative portrayal technique is a way of theorising about the participants’ data (Goodson, 2013) so as to bring out salient themes and contextual elements. In this research, the narrative portraits of the five participants are constructed around the themes of becoming a principal, challenges encountered, good teaching and instructional leadership. Vignettes are used extensively to ensure that the participants are given voice. The eighth step consists of a validation of the portraits by the participants, to ensure that they have been fairly represented.

The individual participants have different approaches to narrating their stories. Their narrations include different amounts of main narrative and contextual information. Moreover, for each participant, a large amount of material had to be sifted through. As was discussed earlier, there is no universally agreed method to identify narratives (Andrews *et al.*, 2008; Hyvärinen; 2008; Eacott, 2010; Norton & Early, 2011). The researcher gives a personal turn to the data by selecting what is to be analysed (Flick, 2009; Eacott, 2010; Norton & Early, 2011). Editing a significant amount of interview transcription can be a perilous exercise. Sikes (2010) cautions against the ‘Cinderella’s slipper syndrome’ where the researcher force-fits unruly data into a preferred form. As a researcher, I felt that it was difficult to determine how much I had to know about the participants before deciding that I could actually understand them (Josselson, 1983).

In this research, there was an effort to reconstruct a narrative that feels like *one story block* (Flick, 2009) for each participant, based on the premise that people live their lives in a storied way (Bruner, 1990). People usually create their personal narratives from fragments of experience (Riessman, 1993). By looking at the overall narration as consisting of nested *small* and *big* stories (Georgakopoulou, 2014), it was possible to develop a portrait of each participant, iteratively and incrementally. Progressively core stories or *scripts* (Labov & Waletzky, 1967; Bruner, 1990; Garson, 2008) became apparent, and a better understanding of the participants was constructed (Herman & Vervaeck, 2005).

A disadvantage of this approach is that some of the *small stories* provided contradictory information (Ryan, 2008), and dealing with it was problematic. These situations were confronted by looking back at the transcriptions, listening to the recordings and comparing transcriptions. In the case of some of the participants, such as *John* or *Tim*, whom I will introduce in detail later, such disruption was eventually beneficial. Indeed, it helped to identify the rhetoric being deployed. More generally, the numerous iteration loops in the analysis process avoided a premature closure and ensured that the analysis was conducted in sufficient depth. The narrative portraits are presented in chapter 5.

### **4.5.3 Second tier: cross-analysis of five participants narratives**

This second level of analysis builds on the first six steps of the first level described at 4.5.2 and progresses in six steps. As a first step, the individual participant narratives are contrasted with each other. Secondly, core stories are identified in the participants' narrations. They are then classified according to the types of processes and related to life-world milieus. At the third step, a contrastive comparison of life history and life story (Goodson & Sikes, 2001; Rosenthal & Fischer-Rosenthal, 2004) of each principal is made. As the analysis progresses, the codes identified in step 3 of the previous-level analysis are conflated to themes (Parker *et al.*, 2011).

During the fourth step, the previous steps are retraced in an iterative process until there is no additional information emerging. An integrative and contrasting portrayal of the participants' life histories is made. The fifth step consists of examining the participants' stories by looking at how the use of narrative time, the agency of the participants, and the role of conflict (Bruner, 1996). In the sixth step, findings of the comparative analysis of the stories are presented in terms of the meanings conveyed, the structure and context (Andrews *et al.*, 2008) of the narratives. The findings of the second tier of analysis are presented in section 6.2.

### **4.5.4 Third tier: analysis of the instructional leadership perspectives**

The third level of analysis looks inside narratives for specific concepts concerning quality of teaching, learning, and instructional leadership. This level of analysis proceeds in three steps. Firstly, the transcripts of each participant are reviewed for concepts of quality of teaching, learning, and instructional leadership.

Secondly, the concepts of quality teaching and learning of each participant are interpreted within the framework for quality of teaching and learning developed in chapter 3. Thirdly, the concepts of instructional leadership from each participant are interpreted with the lens of the instructional leadership framework developed in chapter 3. Steps two and three allow a deeper understanding of the complexity with which the participants conceptualise teaching and instructional leadership.

In the fourth step, the relationships between the findings at steps 2 and 3 are reviewed, and the findings of the third level of analysis are presented in chapter 6, section 6.3.3. and allows to enrich the framework with further insights.

#### **4.5.5 Fourth level: synthesis and presentation of findings**

The fourth and final step of data analysis presented in chapter 6, section 6.4 a synthesis (Polkinghorne, 1988) of the key research findings. In this step, themes that link up the narrative portraits, and the narratives identified from all the three tiers of analysis, are identified and presented. Methodologically, this poses the challenge of transitioning seamlessly from “working on narratives” to “working with narratives”, as discussed in section 4.3.2. The overall synthesis is placed within a narrative about the participants’ work lives. In this section, I also make links between my different research findings with the literature and discussions in the earlier chapters.

### **4.6 Methodological issues**

#### **4.6.1 Introduction**

A constructivist epistemology requires the concepts of credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability (Guba, 1981; Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Narratives are the product of the personal lives, society, and history (Liamputtong & Ezzy 2005). They are dependent on the context of the teller and the listener. Care was taken to ensure that the findings are congruent to reality, and based on the ideas and experiences of the participants, rather than the qualities and choices of the researcher (Shenton, 2004; Mack, 2010). I also needed to attend to ethical responsibilities (British Educational Research Association, 2018) relevant to my research. Moreover, as discussed earlier, the research is being conducted to attend to my social responsibilities as an education professional (Flyvbjerg, 2001).

In the following sub-sections, I consider the various issues that need to be considered to address issues of credibility, transferability, dependability, conformability, positionality, and social and ethical responsibilities.

#### **4.6.2 Looking at credibility**

Credibility relates to the confidence that can be placed in the research findings, and whether plausible information has been drawn from the participants’ original data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). As discussed by Connelly & Clandinin (1990), there is no absolute safeguard against misrepresentations when using narrative as a method.

The vignettes were chosen and sequenced purposely by the researcher (Riessman, 2008) to highlight narratives identified as significant by the researcher. Alternate ways in which the data could be interpreted were considered (Angen, 2000). The narrative portraits of the participants derive their convincing power from verisimilitude (Amsterdam & Bruner, 2000). Claim is also made that they are legitimate, because they were endorsed by the participants.

Four strategies were deployed to ensure credibility in this research (Korstjens & Moser, 2018): prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation and member check. Prolonged engagement was sought by having two long interviews with the participants. Persistent observation was achieved by having a second interview, focused on instructional issues. Method triangulation was applied in looking at the participants' stories using different methods in the first three tiers of analysis. Significantly, a number of findings were noted as recurring in the three tiers of analysis. Member checking was used in having participants validate their narrative portraits.

#### **4.6.3 Looking at transferability**

Transferability relates to the degree with which the results of the research can be transferred to other contexts or settings with other respondents (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The stories of the principals comprise a wealth of information reflecting their lived experiences. The narrative portraits made for each of the five participants represent thick descriptions that give the reader a feel of the context as well and the behaviour and experience of the narrators (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The inter-comparison of the narratives of the different participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002) and the comparisons with theoretical frameworks for teaching and instructional leadership allow the emergence of meta-narratives. These high-level narratives may be applicable to instructional leadership in similar school contexts.

#### **4.6.4 Looking at dependability and confirmability**

The dependability relates to the stability of the findings over time (Lincoln & Guba, 1985) while the confirmability of research findings relates to the extent to which they could be confirmed by other researchers (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

The inter-comparison of the narratives of the different participants (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2002) and the synthesis realised, provide findings of increased dependability and transferability (Shenton, 2004).

The third tier of analysis matches the collective narratives of the participants to theoretical frameworks, raised in dialogue with literature. The findings from this level of analysis are checked for consistency with findings from the previous tiers of analysis (Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

#### **4.6.5 Looking at positionality**

As a researcher, it is important that I clarify my role to make my research credible (Sikes, 2004; Loxley & Seery, 2008; Unluer, 2012) and mitigate some of the disadvantages of ‘insider research’ (Unluer, 2012). Researching a phenomenon that is located within a certain community is strongly affected by having a priori information concerning that community (Merton, 1972). Early conceptualisations of insider research were situated in the dichotomic ‘insider’ versus ‘outsider’ positionings (Merton, 1972; Kanuha, 2000; Gould, 2003). Both the insider and outsider positioning for the researcher are associated with certain advantages or disadvantages for research (Serrant-Green, 2002).

From the perspective that the outsider can only be acquainted with a phenomenon as opposed to actually know about it (Merton, 1972), it has been argued that the ‘insider’ position is the best one to get the most complete understanding of a social milieu (Malinowski, 1922; Lewis, 1973). The insider researcher usually shares an identity, or an experiential based with those being researched (Asselin, 2003). This position has been criticised because of the resulting lack of objectivity that it might be accompanied by (Wolff, 1950; Adler & Adler, 1987; Fay, 1996).

It has been argued that, should the researcher be already an insider, then true understanding can only be achieved by ‘going observationalist’ (Labaree, 2002). This entails taking some distance with the phenomenon under observation by being reflexive (Labaree, 2002). Since there appears to be some inherent advantages in

being an insider, participant-researchers risk to be unaware of the methodological and ethical dilemmas that they face (Labaree, 2002). This is certainly an invitation for researchers to understand their positioning, and seek to develop beyond habitual or institutionally imposed positionings (Acevedo *et al.*, 2015).

Currently, many authors argue that researchers actually position themselves on the insider-outsider continuum (Hellawell, 2006; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009). Moreover, there are several insider-outsider continua which may be significant for any researcher (Deutsch, 1981; Christensen & Dahl, 1997; Hellawell, 2006). Bourke (2014) notes that the positionality of a researcher is fluid and the stance of the researcher evolves depending on the interaction with the participants. From my experience in this research project, I believe this to be true. During the interviews, my rapport with the participants evolved according to their shared stories. Later, as I reviewed the transcripts, my attitude towards some of the stories evolved as I started comparing each other.

Initially, I had thought that being a principal myself was sufficient to be seen as an insider by the other participants. However, I met with instances of ‘othering’ from some participants which made me realise that there were circles of insiders. Some of these are: speaking Hindi fluently, being a long-time principal, and being networked with senior officials of the Ministry. Holding the status of insider implies being perceived and accepted as an insider (Haniff, 1985) by the members of the community being researched. This poses difficulty of considering the status of ‘insider’ as achieved (De Andrade, 2000). Thus, I might not have been aware of my actual positioning (Acker, 2000) during the research despite my efforts to be introspective (Dwyer and Buckle, 2009).

Moreover, how I chose to position myself, along the insider-outsider continua in my research, impacted decisions of what I chose to study and my ability to gain understanding about that (Merton, 1972). My different professional roles and social identities contribute to how I position my research (Acevedo *et al.*, 2015). It is thus important to attempt to be conscious of one’s positionality and how it impacts the research in progress (Greene, 2014). In table 8, I consider the advantages and disadvantages of a number of components of ‘insiderness’ on my research project (Hockey, 1993; Lloyd *et al.*, 1994; Fay, 1996; Labaree, 2002; Hellawell, 2006; Dwyer & Buckle, 2009).

<i>Dimension</i>	<i>Advantages/ Disadvantages of the insider perspective</i>
1. Familiarity with milieu	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I did not experience disorientation in entering my participants' school.</li> <li>- I was able to understand quite readily and to a certain depth, the stories of my participants.</li> </ul> <p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The familiarity with the school setting can make me, as a researcher, unaware of some phenomena.</li> <li>- The familiarity with the school setting can cloud my perception in the field and give me the feeling that I can speak for others.</li> <li>- The participants can also assume that I would be knowledgeable of the same aspects of the milieu as they are.</li> </ul>
2. Trust	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Participants, to a certain extent, confide more easily and are more open about the complexities of being a school leader.</li> </ul>
3. Acceptance/ access	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I was granted access more easily to my participants for extended interviews despite their busy schedules.</li> </ul> <p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Being granted physical access to a school leader does not imply that they would give access to all aspects of their experiences as a school leader.</li> </ul>
4. Separation between life and research	<p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Some of my participants started to interview me about other participants in my research work or to keep track of various issues, losing focus on the interview.</li> </ul>
7. Ability to 'locate' experience	<p><i>Advantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- I was able to put the stories of the participants in the perspective of the whole school system.</li> </ul>
8. Ability to observe experience objectively	<p><i>Disadvantages</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- It was more difficult for me, as compared to an outsider to the school system, to see how my positionality was affecting my research.</li> </ul>

Table 8: Advantages and disadvantages of insiderness

To the extent that I became aware of the shortcomings of my methodology, I had to take action as part of my ethical responsibilities to my participants and as a researcher.

#### **4.6.6 Looking at ethical responsibilities**

The participants were fully informed about the research and its objectives (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990) in a pre-interview meeting and also in writing. They were requested to sign an informed consent form (See Appendix C). It was established that there was no incentive to be gained from participating in the research. Moreover, they could withdraw from the research at any time they wished. Fortunately, no participant left the research. It was made clear in the first approach that confidentiality and anonymity of participants would be preserved. Moreover, the audio-records, field documents, and transcripts will be available only to my tutors, and myself and are to be destroyed within 3 months of the final acceptance of the thesis.

Understanding that being researched can create or worsen anxiety (Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995), the participants were allowed time to sort out their ideas and were given gentle prompts for encouragement, and reassurances as needed. As a researcher, I made a deliberate effort to distance myself from my role of principal, so as not to display any judgement on my colleagues as they recounted their experiences (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). For instance, when participants declared engaging in practices not sanctioned by the MOEHR, I avoided expressing any disagreement.

Care was taken to treat participants respectfully (Angen, 2000; Opie, 2004). This involved scheduling interviews at the convenience of the participants, so as not to interfere in their work, and being on time for scheduled interviews. The principals were met in their own office during a normal school day. However, this allowed for observations unrelated to the interview, and that the principals concerned did not wish to make known outside the school. Any such information was not included in the research material.

Another important consideration was unwanted disclosures. The start and the end of the interview were clearly indicated to the participants. The recording was limited to interview time. Participants clearly knew which information would be used in the research. After the final research interview, participants were debriefed to ensure that the interview has proceeded satisfactorily according to their perspective, and to clarify issues. However, any information that the participant explicitly did not wish to be used in the research was not transcribed.

It is noted that two participants used this opportunity to return to a particular interview and withdraw certain words that they had said and that had actually been recorded. Two segments withdrawn concerned issues of ethnicity. The participants had specifically referred to how certain practices in the educational system are tainted by ethnicity. A third segment withdrawn referred to certain specific criticism formulated against the MOEHR. However, two segments withdrawn seemed destined at hiding certain school level malpractices. This appeared as if the participants were trying to smooth their personal narrative. It is also noted that some principals wanted to disclose issues, which would be significant contributions, even though such disclosures might be prejudicial to them.

Since the state secondary school system is rather small and all the principals are well known, the anonymity of the participants became a stronger concern. It was felt that a full narrative report of the work life of each principal could not be written down, because including too much detail would allow good guesses as to the identity of the participant. A narrative portrayal technique was instead used to illustrate the findings with extensive use of vignettes, with selected details left out. Pseudonyms were selected randomly for the different participants, and also for the names of schools as appropriate. There was a challenge to keep sufficient details to describe the fullness of the experience of the participants while maintaining their anonymity.

The last stage of developing a narrative portrait was having this portrait validated by my participants. I experienced this stage with a lot of stress because I had concerns that two participants might wish to engage in further soothing of their personal narratives. However, not having participants validate the stories opened the portraits to criticisms of partiality or worse speaking for the participants. The five participants accepted to review their narrative portraits. Fortunately, the review concerned minor text editing, which did not significantly affect the flow of the portraits nor remove major details.

#### **4.6.7 Looking at social responsibilities**

Within the narrative space, the participant and the researcher can uncover aspects of practice that the participant alone would not possibly come up with (Orr, 1996; Kempster & Stewart, 2010). For this research project, it is instructive to note that two of my participants actually thanked me for the interesting conversation, while I had essentially prompted them to talk, and then stood back. This was a good indication that participants had spoken openly. However, in two cases the participants requested to be able to minimise or leave out certain significant details (Hart, 2002) from the transcripts.

The very act of analysing the data may transform the narrative. This poses the problem of the researcher as possibly not having the necessary legitimacy to do so (Eacott, 2010; Norton & Early, 2011). However, by merely being present as an audience, the researcher affects what the narrator says and how he tells it (Andrews *et al.*, 2008). Indeed, a narration is meant for a particular audience (Gergen & Gergen, 2003). Thus, the storyteller and the audience are already cooperating in different ways (Orr, 1996; Kempster & Stewart, 2010).

While being a principal allowed me to gain access more easily to my participants, I do understand that their perception of me is still coloured by the social, political and cultural context of Mauritius. As I will discuss when I describe my findings, I have come across situations where I realised that the participants were using rhetoric. I acknowledge that I may have not detected other instances where the participants may have used rhetorical language. Thus, stories of success may have been exaggerated or stories of failures minimised because the participants were afraid of losing face in front of a colleague. On the other hand, my participants may have acknowledged some realities of the job of principal more easily, because of my position of insider.

As I enter the context and have extended exchanges with the participant, I could consider myself the co-narrator of the portraits, and the stories generated in the research. Thus, I do acquire to some extent, legitimacy and competency to interpret them (Schall *et al.*, 2004; Mishler, 2005, Kempster & Stewart, 2010). However, I need to balance that against the requirements for credibility (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

For this research, collaboration with the participants was extended to the validation of the portraits. I had realised that my participants might have their own agendas which do not necessarily match the interests of the project as I see them. As a researcher, I was careful not to deliberately use my participants to push forward any research agendas, nor let them push their personal agendas through my research. Thus, throughout the research, I tried to remain uncritical of my participants and focus on understanding their experience, and how it related to my reference frameworks for teaching and instructional leadership.

My research started from a ‘personal trouble’ in my role as principal, and I related this to the management of instructional quality, which I feel is an issue of public concern (Mills, 2000). As I developed my research, I came to see the complexities and contradictions of the lives of principals (Flyvbjerg, 2006) well beyond of what I had expected as a supposed insider. The choice of presenting the narrative portrayal as the first tier of analysis reflects this choice. I intend to represent fellow principals as close to reality and appreciatively as possible, while presenting the complexities and difficulties of leading a secondary school. Personal narratives tend to be present in culture, politics (Chase, 2005; Wood and Skeggs, 2008), and in educational contexts (Ecclestone, 2004; 2007), for different purposes. I am not intending to post my participant’s stories on the public scene for sensation and spectacle, but to ‘speak truth to power’ (Coffield, 1999; Watts, 2008).

## **4.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter discusses the research design adopted for the research project carried out, and the various methodological issues that were faced while the research was being pursued. While the research was guided by the central research problem, it unfolded in a non-linear way. This is typical of qualitative research (Maxwell, 2012) since the field situation and data considered forced a review of theoretical frameworks, data collection, analysis procedures and presentation of findings. In chapter 5, I will present the first level of analysis of data, which is based on a narrative portrayal of the participants.

# Chapter 5 Stories from the field

## 5.1 Introduction

To find meaningful answers to the research questions set in chapter 1, a large amount of data was collected from the interviews with five principals. A driving question throughout the analysis has been how to compact the data and findings, while honouring its complexity. The first layer of the analysis, which is a narrative portrayal of the participants, is presented in section 5.2.

The next section sets the foreground against which the instructional leadership of the participants can be understood. After an overview of the participants, a narrative portrait of each participant is presented using vignettes (Eisner, 1982). Narrative portraits help create a sense of feel and place (Sikes, 2005). They also bring complex issues, surrounding the life of the participants, into light (Goodson, 2013). After each portrait, there is a brief review highlighting key narratives.

## 5.2 Stories from the field

The five participants are all principals with varying experience. They are described in table 9 below according to their respective order of appearance in the next section. The geographic location of their schools is broadly indicated in Appendix D.

Order of appearance	Pseudonym	School Administration Type	Experience as Principal at time of interview
1	John	State Secondary School	Less than 5 years
2	Jenny	State Secondary School	Between 10 and 15 years
3	Ben	State Secondary School	Between 10 and 15 years
4	Tim	State Secondary School	Between 10 and 15 years
5	Tina	Mahatma Gandhi Secondary School	Between 10 and 15 years

Table 9: Characteristics of participants

At the time of the interview, each of the principals had known a long career in education. All of the participants have experience working as principals in regional

colleges, and three have experience in national colleges. The participants also have different backgrounds as teachers, even if two do share the same subject specialisation. Each participant was encountered on a normal school day. During each interview, the multiple demands that are made on the principals' time were clearly noted. Indeed, in some cases, the interview had to be paused when the principals had to attend an urgent school matter. Then, as the principals returned to the interview, they would explain the situation that had occurred.

## **5.2.1 John**

### ***5.2.1.1 Profile***

Appointed principal after a long period as a teacher, John shared that the interviews were a welcome opportunity for him to think about his career. John gave the impression of an able storyteller. He could quite readily zoom into his experiences to examine minute details and zoom out to take perspective on what he had synthesised from them. At the time of the interviews, John was enjoying being principal in the school and was looking forward to concluding his career there. When the first interview was conducted, John had been in post the school for four and a half years.

### ***5.2.1.2 John's story***

John feels that he has taken a long time to emerge as a principal, even if he embarked on this path quite early in his career. John is quite proud of his achievements and we will find that this trait is somehow related to decisions that he makes as a principal.

John's involvement in administration started on the very day he started teaching, and he developed a dual professional identity of teacher and aide to administration.

*"I started as educator in the public service in the late 1970's. On my first day, I came across one of my former secondary school teachers who was now Rector<sup>7</sup>. He immediately embarked me into*

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<sup>7</sup> Principals of secondary schools are called Rectors and Assistant Principals are called Deputy Rectors.

*the office to help him with the timetable. So just like Obelix<sup>8</sup>, I fell in the cooking pot right on the first day. Over the years, I found myself always helping the school administration and the principal, always involved in the school activities. I was doing technical things like planning of the examinations. I was the Parent Teacher Association treasurer and I was also responsible for other school activities. Thus since 1980, I had always been a teacher plus something else.”*

After having diligently, and without any reservation, served schools and principals for more than twenty years, John had an epiphany. He had a vision of the ideal school that he would like to shape and lead. He realised that he wanted to become a principal too.

*“There was the change that took place during the years 2002 and 2003. Because all documents I was preparing... all was being done on behalf of someone else. The Rector always asked me to cast a glance on some paper. I did the job. I retyped, updated the paper and put it before the Rector for him to sign. Similarly, for a project, I planned and worked it out. I put up the principal’s name, passed it around among members of staff and then completed the job. One day I started to wonder ‘when will I put my signature?’ I got the feeling that I would, one day, like to create a model school according to my principles, and my personal dreams.”*

From that moment onward, John decided to start preparing himself to become a principal by shadowing the school principal and studying the administrative functioning of his school.

*“It is only when I was offered the opportunity at School A SSS<sup>9</sup> that I started to get interested in administrative procedures. I used to ask lots of questions to the higher executive officer and even to the*

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<sup>8</sup> The cartoon character, Obelix, fell into the cooking pot where the village druid was brewing a magical potion, an event that transformed his life.

<sup>9</sup> School A SSS is a fictitious name for the school. Further on, School B SSS etc. are used for schools that appear in John’s narration.

*word processing officer. That person is usually aware of many things because she is the one who types all of the school's documents. So, I started to learn that way. I took a copy of the school's database because I was one of the main actors responsible for the maintenance of that database. So, each time the word processing operator made a backup, I asked her to give me an updated copy. In that back up, there was an archiving system. With that system, I started to get interested in everything concerning the school, even the infrastructure.”*

John was eventually appointed assistant principal. During that period, John continued his preparation, focusing on gathering knowledge of administrative processes. However, on becoming a principal, John found that he had to change his perspective in order to discharge of his responsibilities as a pedagogical leader.

*“To tell you... at each period of my career, I have adapted myself to the position that I occupied. As a deputy<sup>10</sup>, I had limited myself to technical work; I developed certain procedures. For example, there was no computerised mark list, there was no curriculum structure. I did all that for them. As I was telling you, when I was Deputy Rector, I did not have this pedagogical responsibility. Hence, I put my focus on the technical aspects of certain procedures and discipline.*

*On coming here with the feeling that you are at the helm of the school... you invest yourself fully. I give all my time to my school. I regularly work on school matters from home, whether on my tablet or my computer. There is a clear change in how I define myself now as compared to how I did so in the 1980's and the 2000's, when I started to have both feet in school administration. I have come to master all of this now. From being a technician, I have become a leader. We found ourselves projected into this position and responsibility. It's up to you to see if you really want to improve*

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<sup>10</sup> “Deputy” is a familiar abbreviated form for “Deputy Rector”

*yourself and do a good job or you tell yourself you sit there and complain that as a Rector you cannot do anything about it.”*

John’s sees his leadership practice as an extension of his philosophy. He sees himself as a driving force, shaping daily life in the school. He is also deeply committed to realising his vision for the school.

*“Let me start by saying what it should not be. It should not be a head of school restricting himself to his office... and letting the teachers do as they please. What is the opposite of this? You get involved in everything and you care about everything. You meet them in the staff room, you meet them in the corridor, you talk of the department and the activities... You ensure that you are pulling them on board in your vision of the school. The leadership is done through my commitment, my interest for one and all. It’s my personal way of ensuring that I have all my teachers on board with me.*

*For example, when I meet a head of department and I will ask: how is your department, are the teachers OK? The teacher will tell me of any problems within the department. In all that I am saying to you: I put my nose in every pie. I try to give the best of myself in all aspects of the work of my teachers. Today, I am not interested to work at the level of the Ministry. The idea has never come to me. I see myself within a school, with a responsibility and a mission more important than being surrounded by four walls at the Ministry.”*

A key personal experience that has influenced John is his success in helping a particular student through his secondary education. John is inspired by this success story to help other students overcome their odds and achieve academic and personal success.

*“Michael<sup>11</sup> is a young person who has completed his University studies. He left secondary school during the period 2003/4. He is handicapped from birth and has reduced mobility. School A SSS was*

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<sup>11</sup> Real name changed.

*the nearest secondary school to his place of residence. I was personally responsible to help make arrangements to facilitate his movements within the school premises. For example, I had to arrange for access ramps where needed.*

*Given that I was involved in the preparation of the timetable, I had to ensure that all his classes were held on the ground floor. I can say that I nurtured Michael. We cared for him. He grew up fine. He completed his secondary school education and is now a university graduate. Today, he is very active in the advocacy groups for young handicapped people. Today, what I am actually doing now in my actual school, is the culmination of what I had started with Michael.”*

John is motivated by his experiences with Michael to help students that have academic difficulties. He believes that it is important for schools to provide such students with appropriate extra-curricular activities to ensure their well-being.

*“As a school principal, I have to oversee the wellbeing and the security of all students. Some students, especially from the prevocational sections, come from difficult family backgrounds. It is clear that the role of the principal is not merely to manage the school premises, but also ensure the wellbeing of these students. The principal has to ensure that the school has activities that are convenient for this category of students. The aim is to reassure the prevocational students<sup>12</sup> so that they do not feel different from those of the mainstream sections.*

*This is in line with the Ministry’s policy, which is to take them on board along with the mainstream students. They wear the same uniform: they should be given the same treatment! I work a lot with social workers to help these students. I also encourage them to represent the school in culinary and handicraft competitions. They even perform dancing representations during cultural festivals.”*

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<sup>12</sup> The Prevocational programme prepares students who failed the national grade 6 examination for entry into vocational education programmes.

John recognises that the work of a principal has multiple facets. He relies on teamwork to get things done around the school. Moreover, he appears to have developed a bond of trust with his team of supporting teachers.

*“By being engaged in these events, the principal does more than technical work. Supporting the prevocational students for instance, is work over and above timetabling, scheduling of examinations, maintenance of the school premises and other issues. For me, once a principal starts to manage the school, he has to be properly surrounded by staff members willing to help, just as I was one of the members of the school management team at School A SSS. The new principal has to construct his team also. We must never think that we have gone through all these stages, that we know everything, and that we can do everything on our own.*

*I am happy that I have a committed team supporting me in this school. Right now, as I am sitting with you, I do not have to worry about what is happening outside. And, I know that since staff members are aware that I am taken up, they automatically put themselves in a state so as to be available to cope with any problem that crops up. They know that the principal is busy, so they automatically take up the responsibility and the initiative.”*

Despite his successes, John nonetheless thinks that an important difficulty of the job of principals is the role overload that they routinely face. Moreover, he deplors that this tends to be unrecognised.

*“I remember Mr. White<sup>13</sup>, who was president of the teachers’ union and then got promoted to the post of deputy rector. He then founded the union of deputy rectors... and when he went to deposit requests and expectations in front of the Pay Research Bureau, he had proposed that the secondary school principal’s salary be brought in line with that of a manager of a prevocational institution. At the*

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<sup>13</sup> A pseudonym has been used.

*MITD<sup>14</sup>, there is a manager for academic matters, a manager for infrastructure, etc.... But, at secondary school level, the principal has to cumulate the duties of all these managers at the same time... And the salary is much lower than a manager of one section, posted at the MITD. The secondary school principal has to attend to multiple tasks... When infrastructure is concerned, I have no problem since personally I like to tinker. There have been lots of infrastructural upgrades in the school premises... However, I can imagine that other principals could be experiencing difficulties on the job with such a diversity of daily issues to attend to.”*

Despite the multiplicity of roles that the principal must fulfil, John is clear that one important role of the principal is to know the teachers and to send them the right signals. He is keen to observe them, both in and outside class.

*“Even if I am not an expert in all subjects, with the background that I have, I would be able to know when the teacher in front of me is faking or not. At the beginning of the year, I try to do my class visits to give the signal, especially with new teachers: those who have just been transferred, especially if they are young... You want to have an idea of the competences and qualities of your teachers. Because you have to expect complaints from certain parents who come to make remarks on certain teachers. And if you have not been to class, you cannot appreciate if it is something regular...or something unusual that happened only once. You need to know the teacher; you need to find out about this teacher... Who will do everything for his students when they participate to a competition on stock exchange? Who is worried about his students? Who is always at the office to query about possible new correspondences in connection with the competition involving their students, and who is following up?”*

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<sup>14</sup> The Mauritius Institute of Training and Development or MITD is the apex institution in charge of TVET in Mauritius and operates under the aegis of the MOEHR.

John wants his educators to be good communicators and have good subject knowledge. He has three expectations of teachers in his school.

*“Firstly, there is elocution of the teacher in class. If the teacher is of introverted and timid type and does not make the effort to assert himself, then that teacher cannot be successful. A teacher should not raise his voice as if in anger, but to raise this voice to make himself heard, to assert himself and better capture the attention of the students... Already here, the teacher would be failing on their job if he does not have or he does not project the necessary self-confidence in front of the students. Secondly, I would say that it is the subject knowledge. Thirdly, I would say that it is the interaction between the teacher and the student.”*

John’s expectations of his teachers relate to his vision of good teaching and the role of teachers in class.

*“I first react as the parent or the citizen that looks at the school. I would say that teaching and learning is an activity that involves teachers and students, and where there is a transmission of knowledge... It is in the context of the person who believes that the school has this function: the transmission of knowledge... When you speak of teaching and learning with me, it is more of an interaction, not only transmission between two people: the person who is the more informed and the person who is the less informed. The person who is more cultured and more trained can, through this interaction, understand the student who is before him and better adapt himself to better lead the student towards an ideal, an objective... towards what we more commonly say in the technical jargon of the ministry of education: this ‘quality education’ ”.*

John’s believes that quality teaching is about leading the student to knowledge and inciting them to learn. He thinks that teachers should ideally link what is done in class to applications in the real world. However, he notes that quality teaching does take time and that teachers require discernment on the most appropriate methods to use, in order to cover the required lessons.

*“The quality of the methodology used is crucial because the quality of the information shared will lead to further learning on the part of the student... A teacher who adapts himself to the student will find the most appropriate method for the child and will use the tools that are appropriate: books, charts, teaching aids, technology, etc. The teacher must optimally use all these tools to prepare the students to seek the information by themselves... Ideally, the teacher should push his students to see that for all that you learn at school, you can find a use or application in everyday life, so that you can understand the lessons and life better... But there is no need to practice this for all lessons. Teachers should consider doing it perhaps once per week, if only to make a resume of a concept... One can talk five to seven minutes to show the application of what has been discussed during the week.”*

Even if John emphasises the importance of good methodology, he believes that the first requisite for good teaching is the vocation of teaching. Accordingly, he feels that the first responsibility of principals is to improve the attitude of teachers. Moreover, he believes that teachers should continuously seek to improve themselves. He also thinks that principals have little direct control on the process of improving teaching.

*“The principal’s first responsibility is to try and change the attitude of the teacher. I am pushing everyone to get informed, to get interested and to challenge themselves. However, in their domain of specialisation, it is innate, it must come from inside them. For my part, I believe that the teacher should first and foremost have his vocation. When you develop the vocation to be a teacher... you know what are your duties and your responsibilities. If we satisfy ourselves with what we already know, we will remain the same kind of teacher as we have always been... But, if we take the pain to get informed, to grow and learn, to continue our teaching and personal development, by being interested in all that happens around you... you do your own SWOT analysis, you look at your weaknesses, you look at what you can bring on as strengths in your pedagogy, then, you will be able to*

*improve your teaching, ensure your own evolution in your profession... Otherwise, you will remain who you have always been.*

*There is also the question of motivation. If you want to motivate teachers to pursue their self-development, you will have to give an incentive... I am sufficiently realist. What can I do to motivate them to be better? I can focus on the education. I can help my teachers become better educators: as an educator, educate your students; but for teaching...I can help, I can try to supervise... but it is up to each teacher to improve their teaching.”*

Despite his observation that principals have little direct control on improving teaching, John notes that there are elements, such as the system of class inspections and that of teacher evaluation, that could be improved to give the right incentives to teachers.

*“It is true that in the context of a class, teachers are stressed to achieve their objectives. They have a scheme of work to complete. The scheme of work is submitted at the beginning of the term and teacher have to come at the end of the term and say what has been completed, with an analysis of performance based on the assessments carried out in class... I understand that with all the objectives that need to be attained, the teachers will feel a bit stuck... With Quality Assurance overseeing class inspection, teachers are under pressure. Many teachers are telling themselves that they need to show that they have taken care of low performers and that they have done remedial work... Most often, teachers do not have the time to develop their lessons optimally.”*

While John appears critical of the professionalism of teachers, he notes that there is a significant problem with the absence of a system that promotes the continuous development of teachers. This, according to him, explains why teachers are not intent on improving their skills.

*“When the PMS<sup>15</sup> was introduced, it was copied from some other country... Within, there was this idea of personal development: you need to suggest in which field you feel you would need further training. However... how many teachers go for further training? This has been lengthily discussed in the newspapers with the protest of teachers... It has been about the PRB which has cancelled the practice of awarding an incremental credit for all those who have higher qualifications.*

*And now... there is that great debate about further studies by educators: a union representative has even declared to a newspaper that only lazy teachers would content themselves with a first degree... And indeed, in that press article, someone made the observation that that there was no scope for promotion for teachers... There is no motivation for them to be better. I am trying to look at the bigger picture here... May be, the Ministry of Civil Service could set up specific training programmes for the different categories of teachers.”*

### **5.2.1.3 Analytical summary**

John’s story about learning to become a principal, starting from his position as a teacher, then as an assistant principal, and then finally as a principal, points to him moving from an outsider perspective of the role of the principal to an insider perspective. Just as teachers learn about teaching by watching it (Lortie 1975), it is possible that school staff learn being a principal from observing their principals. In the case of John, despite having worked closely with a number of principals, he appeared to have been quite surprised by first-hand experience of the role and responsibilities of a principal. As an ‘outsider’, he had seen the role of the principal through the lens of the legislative style (Collins, 2005) as the design of procedures.

As an ‘insider’ he found that being a principal was more about relating to the various stakeholders. Since becoming a principal, John has developed a keen awareness of his moral responsibilities as a school leader (Ciulla, 2008). Although

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<sup>15</sup> PMS is an acronym for Performance Management System

John started to envision what an ideal school could be while he was an assistant principal, he further developed this vision as he interacted with the school stakeholders (Hallinger, 2003). Thus, his focus on extra-curricular activities might correspond to an alignment with the aspirations of the school community rather than a concern with implementing policies concerning quality of teaching and learning of the MOEHR.

John's approach to leadership appears to be eclectic. He pictures his role as being available at all times to serve the school (Greenleaf, 1991) in a "servant leadership" approach. Some of the elements of this principal's leadership approach such as focussing on his model of an ideal school, on his deep commitment to his school and his discourse of improving teachers, are reminiscent of the transformational leadership style (Burns, 1978). However, unlike in a pure transformational leadership style, the principal is here trying to spread his personal vision of the ideal school rather than developing a shared one with the school stakeholders. At other times, he seems intent on projecting the image of a strong benevolent leader who embodies the core values of the institution. This reminds us of the paternalistic leadership style (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008).

John views teaching as more than just instruction in class (Smith & Ennis, 1961; Jackson, 1962; Green, 1971; Freeman, 1973; Smith, 2008) and appraises teachers accordingly. Moreover, John is very cautious in his appraisal of teaching because the quality of teaching of any teacher varies from one lesson to another. John's views about good teaching are generally in agreement with the literature reviewed. For example, he believes that good communication between the teacher and pupils is important (James, 1977; Murphy *et al.*, 2004), and he emphasises the importance of knowledge of subject content (Danielson, 2007). John ideally sees teachers inspiring students to learn (James, 1977) with well-scripted (Arends, 2001; Ohlsson, 1986) and appropriately pitched (Ohlsson, 1986) lessons.

John seems to be very critical of the current school system where teachers are not able to produce the best quality of teaching because of practical constraints. John believes that teachers can only improve through reflective practice (Loughran, 2002; Davidson, 2003), and seems critical of the idea that principals can be held responsible for improving the quality of teaching. Moreover, he is concerned about three systemic issues that hinder instructional leadership of the principal. Firstly,

the lack of incentives for teachers to improve is causing teachers to keep stuck in their old ways (Cheng *et al.*, 2010; Devine *et al.*, 2013). Secondly, the MOEHR's focus on monitoring the performance of teachers (Apple, 2006) through the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division is being counterproductive. Thirdly, John also feels that there is a problem with the quality of teacher candidates (Barber & Mourshed, 2007).

According to John, principals in Mauritian state secondary schools also face role overload (Hamre *et al.*, 2008, Hamre *et al.*, 2010; Abu-Nasser, 2011). For over twenty-five years as a teacher, John was shaped by his successive principals to be an aide and a school administrator. At the time of the interviews, he appeared to have replicated a similar approach in his school and has shaped a team of teachers to help him cope with the demands of the job. He is satisfied that he is performing quite well because of his personal resourcefulness, despite the dysfunctions of the school system.

## **5.2.2 Jenny**

### **5.2.2.1 Profile**

At the time of the interview, Jenny had spent more than ten years as head of school in a number of different schools. Jenny is clearly passionate about her work and holds some strong personal values, even if her zeal has somehow been tempered by her experiences. As a storyteller, Jenny is quite fascinating in that she tells the story of her career in detail as it intersects with her personal life and relates with an astonishing precision to important dates in the social life in Mauritius.

### **5.2.2.2 Jenny's story**

Jenny's traces her journey into school leadership from her days as a teacher. While she was closely involved in various aspects of running the school, she had not given much thought to joining school administration.

*"I have never been a HOD to a French Department but, let me tell you, I was in the team helping administration... I was member of the PTA, already in the proximity of the administration. I was involved in the team writing of the last school magazine ever made*

*at School A SSS<sup>16</sup>. We were helping administration, but we were doing our normal teaching as well.*

*It was in August... my friends convinced me to send an application for the post of Deputy Rector. I told myself that it was a first time, and I had to go and see how things happen. So, I went to the interview without real preparation. In December, I was surprised to be informed that I had been selected. The next day I went to meet the CTO<sup>17</sup> and the PS<sup>18</sup> ... we received our letter”.*

On becoming an assistant principal, Jenny did not have a clear idea what school leadership was about. However, she was quickly thrust into the leadership of a school. She started learning about leading a school as she did the job, when the school principal became sick and had to delegate much of the responsibilities to her.

*I found myself posted at School B SSS. It was rather far from home... It was a long trip, but I enjoyed it. The landscape was full of greenery. It was good to look at... The 5th January was my first time at School B SSS. It was a girls’ school. I went to meet the Rector... The administration block was an old building with really not much space. Since there was no office for me, I settled down in the Rector’s office at a small table besides his desk... I spent a lot of time reading my books during the first week because there was nothing to do. But the Rector was not in good health, and soon he started absenting himself for extended periods... This gave me the possibility to assert myself.”*

Jenny got the opportunity to act as replacing principal in a number of schools before eventually receiving her first posting as principal of a school. Despite having had several short experiences at the helm of different schools, Jenny found it

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<sup>16</sup> The name School A SSS used here is a different school from John’s story. As in the case of John’s story, successive schools will be labelled School B SSS, School C SSS, etc.

<sup>17</sup> CTO is an acronym for Chief Technical Officer

<sup>18</sup> PS is an acronym for Permanent Secretary

challenging to take the full responsibility of being a school principal. However, she found that she could enlist the help of students to assist in the running of the school.

*“As from May that year, I got to move around a lot until the end of the school year replacing rectors who were on leave... There were two boys’ schools and one girls’ school. Then, I was back in School B SSS for two months until the end of the year. As the Deputy Rector, I had more responsibilities such as discipline, and I monitored and empowered the head girl and the prefects.*

*I had a small team around me. We mostly took care of activities and discipline... For example, there was a big rush at the school break in the afternoon. One student got injured. What we did was to organise the students when the bell rung at school break so that they would leave class in order. I spoke to the school superintendent and the prefects... The school buses would line up outside the school. It was very dangerous for the students. To get the students safely in the bus, I established bus prefects.*

*Unfortunately, at school break, the school superintendent took her things and walked away... I had to rely on the prefects, but the job got done...the girls did a fantastic job”*

With time, Jenny discovered more about her school and learnt how to respond to the various situations. She was starting to feel comfortable so that when she got transferred to a new school, she was taken aback.

*“I recall, that all of a sudden on 1st of March, I got my letter to go to school C SSS. It was a boys’ school... I was discouraged because I did not want to change school now. I was used to school B SSS. But more than this, I was actually scared to change and go to work with boys.*

*Certainly, another reason to be scared was the bad reputation of school C SSS. The change was drastic for me... I got the instruction on Friday and I had to go on the following Monday. Being in charge of a boys’ school was a really different experience. We are*

*thrown into it... and from one day to the next, our professional life changes.”*

As she adjusted to School C SSS, Jenny started to reflect on how the setting affected the behaviour of students and her job. Working with her school management team, Jenny involved herself to improve academic outcomes for her students.

*“The change from a girls’ school to a boys’ school was difficult to get adjusted to. There was only a small quadrangle for 450 students to play. The whole school administration worked from two classrooms. It really felt stuffy... Since there was no Deputy Rector initially, I had to work alone. However, it felt good to be there, even if I had only a small team to work with me... Still, I have to say that it was more challenging. You know, boys are more difficult to monitor than girls. You need to be more vigilant, at all times. I stayed there for more than four years... With the school management team, we did a good work because we had a good intake and there was a lot of potential.”*

According to Jenny, student discipline appears to be a significant element of managing a boys’ state secondary school. The principal was happy to receive help from any quarter to resolve issues. It seems that she could not establish a working relationship with the assistant principal.

*“There had been a significant improvement in the performance of the students. The teachers and I, we were doing a good job... There was a good motivation amongst the teachers and the prefects. We had indeed managed to get the prefects to help us. Yet, I must say that some of the prefects were truly rascals! In 2010, a group of students shirked classes and damaged 25 windows in the specialist rooms... They would have possibly gotten away but for an ice cream vendor who was on school premises and had seen them. The person came forward as witness and we were able to trace back every single one of these students... We worked with the students but sadly some of them never improved, they failed their exams and left school. In 2011, I got a Deputy Rector... Unfortunately, that was no improvement for the school because the gentleman was*

*always late and when he was at school, he was always seated in his office.”*

Jenny was soon to re-experience the difficulty of being moved from a school. Jenny is frustrated that she had no time to reap the benefits of the good work that she started in School C SSS. However, her stay at School D SSS proved to be short.

*“In 2012, I was transferred to School D SSS that was close to a ‘star school’. It was again a girls’ school... Though I was bothered by the transfer, running a school with girls it’s OK... We started to work together and there was a good response from the staff and from the students. I introduced the National Youth Achievement Award to the school, and it picked up really well. The school team was prepared to go to the international meet and as the Rector, I was supposed to accompany them. Everything had been worked out and then I got transferred... I spent only 9 months there, unfortunately... I enjoyed some good times in that school. I had a really good team to support me.”*

While Jenny speaks much about teamwork to get things done, she also relies on committed and resourceful individuals who create momentum for specific projects important to the school.

*“In School D SSS, I recall there was a Physical Education teacher who helped a lot with student activities and in particular with the Pre-Voc students. I remember that we organised a mini-sports day based on traditional and old-times games... Another interesting thing that we did was to partner with the nearby primary school. We organised many activities to work with this primary school. The students really enjoyed that... We had planned out a big activity just before I was transferred.”*

The next school provided a quite different and unexpected experience for Jenny, which affected her professional outlook. Jenny who was considering herself as successful in her practice faced serious challenges to which she was not prepared. Eventually, even if there was a heavy price to pay, Jenny held on to her principles.

*“I think I had started to adapt myself easily to School E SSS... However, I had to take some difficult decisions... You see, I have always been a disciplined person. I wanted discipline in the school. But then, I might have insisted too much on discipline... The students were used to doing whatever they wanted... The Rector before me had been in position for years. The school community had been used to certain ways of doing things.*

*There were many things that were not OK. When I arrived at the school, I tried to bring things back in order... Everything was mixed up in the school! The students, supported by the teachers and the administrative staff, had staged a protest... It started because I was not agreeable to the students going to an educational outing in jeans rather than the school uniform... For the sports day, as well, they wanted to come to the stadium in tight shorts...of course I could not let them.”*

Jenny found it difficult to accept the unethical behaviour of her staff. She acted in line with the Ministry’s regulations and she was confused by the lack of support of the Ministry officials in the case.

*“The administrative staff and the teaching staff joined in the protest... They were used to be late to school and so many other types of abuse. It was a conspiracy... The Deputy Rector, can you believe it... yes, really, she wanted to take my place... The Zone Director had come to meet me. A group of students had started to walk from the bus station in the morning in large groups and shouting slogans on their way to school. The Police called me: they wanted to arrest the students... I opposed that because I wanted the students to grow and change.*

*The Director understood me. She guided me to write letters to the headquarters... A high-level delegation came to school, headed by the CTO... The administrative staff complained that I had refused to let them close the school on the sports day. As per the Ministry’s regulations, you need to run the school if only on minimum staff... They wanted to have the school run as per their whims and*

*conveniences. I would have appreciated support from the headquarters and the occasion to clear my name... But it never happened..."*

Even if Jenny did not eventually stay long in the school, the consequences of these events were difficult to handle professionally. It made her adaptation to the next school more difficult. However, Jenny has weathered out the initial resistance to her tenure and is looking forward to achieving many projects.

*"When I reached School F SSS, some teachers actually challenged me. I was told 'What are you doing here? You were kicked out of the school there! Why are you here?' ... It took some time to overcome the resistance. Many of my teachers are doing a good work. However, there are some black sheep... Unfortunately, two of my best teachers got transferred this year.*

*How are we expected to bring the school performance up? As I see it, if the school produces laureates, they will be on the technical side and not in other subject groups... We wanted to set up a proper room for dressmaking and fitting out but this has not been possible. The PTA has committed to many other projects such as setting up a number of multi-media rooms... Parents are attracted to all things with technology."*

Jenny had made efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. However, she notes that appreciation of good teaching can be very subjective. On coming to her current school, Jenny was confronted to many complaints against a certain teacher. Jenny investigated the complaints through class visits. When she first visited the class, Jenny was truly impressed at the way the lesson was being masterfully led by the teacher. Coming out of the class visit, Jenny was left wondering why there would be any complaints.

*"Good teaching depends on the teacher. Each teacher has their own way and approach to teaching. We cannot compare between teachers because what constitute good teaching depends on what subject is being taught... When I came to this school, I heard about*

*this English language teacher. Stories about her were that she did not work in class and that she was a poor teacher.*

*When I went to her class for the first time, she was teaching the concept of generation gap to a grade 12 in considerable detail. The examples used to illustrate the lesson were well-chosen... The amount of information that was exchanged and discussed was just amazing. The student participation was great, and the class was lively. When I left the classroom after that lesson, I asked myself... how anyone could say that that teacher was not doing her job.*

*However, there was a new complaint about this teacher one month later, this time from grade 13. So, I went to visit a grade 13 class that was being conducted by the same teacher. The teacher had embarked herself on a discussion about economics... Well, it was at least as good as an economics class delivered by a good economics teacher. This shows the range of general knowledge possessed by that particular teacher.”*

When eventually the good teacher was transferred away, she was replaced by a teacher who had a poor technique. However, Jenny is surprised by the absence of complaints against this teacher. Jenny is hesitant on how to deal with the situation. She feels that she does not truly have ways to reform a teacher's attitude.

*“This year, this teacher has been transferred to another school through what I believe is an intervention of the Parent Teacher's Association. I am waiting for the next PTA meeting to tell the parents about it... This English teacher was replaced by another lady teacher. My Senior Educator and I went for a routine class visit. Well, I was shocked... To tell you frankly, we do not know what to do with this new teacher...The class had worked through a comprehension exercise. They had read a text and had answered questions based on the text.*

*So, the teacher was correcting the exercise. The students had to note down directly in their copy books... The teacher was accepting only one answer as correct and did not allow the students to ask*

*questions. Nothing was written on the board... When she came to the vocabulary part, the explanations that she gave concerning the words were all wrong...and in one particular case really absurd and opposite the actual meaning of the word.*

*What is that? Is that person a teacher? How come that I am not having complaint letters against that teacher? Did the Ministry find her good enough to be posted in this school or for that matter better than the teacher she is replacing? How do you call this? And then, what to do with her? Call her to the office? Unfortunately, we cannot intimidate teachers anymore... They've got their union. Well, I just told the teacher that I would be coming back to her class. To be honest with you, I am dreading that visit... I am dreading what I will see."*

Jenny is concerned by the lack of professionalism of officers within the educational system, be it teachers, assistant principals and even principals.

*"In this school, I do not have a Deputy Rector. This means that I have more work... But at the same time, having one in the school does not necessarily means that you are assisted. In School E SSS, can you believe it, the Deputy Rector was involved in a conspiracy against me? Yes, she wanted to take my seat! She wanted me out, to take control of the school!*

*But then, you should not think that Rectors necessarily do a good job. When I was to be posted at School G SSS, the outgoing Rector was so unhappy that I was coming that she tried to instigate students to go on strike... Fortunately, I had the support of my Zone Director. When I came to the school, I met the students and quickly the situation came back to normal."*

Reflecting on her own professional transition from being a teacher to a principal, Jenny still feels the abruptness of the change. She is also concerned about how poorly principals are supported by the Ministry. She feels that she did not receive adequate training to do the job well.

*“Fortunately, over the years, I have been able to acquire experience and make the most out of it. Even if there is some training, I feel that we principals are thrown into it ... One day to the next, our professional life changes. Honestly, the induction course I followed was too brief. I think that there is not enough training... Recently, I took a course on procurement. Only then did I understand what it was all about...after all these years in school! I have tried to make the most of the few trainings that we received.”*

Reflecting on the current push of the Ministry to improve the quality of instruction, Jenny notes that when she was a teacher, she did not indulge much in such practices herself. She is quite impressed by a teacher who has developed a practice concerning remedial work in her current school. Working with the teacher, Jenny found a way to improve the process for the school.

*“It started with a teacher of Enterprise Education in Grade 9... I wanted to go to class because of the subject was to be examinable at National Assessment this year. I first witnessed the procedure in her class. She had given a test and now she was taking all the questions, attending to individual problems, having the students work it out in their copybooks... It wastes a bit of time though; it took the best of two teaching periods, but all the students’ problems were attended to. When the students reworked the test, most of them scored at least 90.*

*I was impressed with what that teacher was doing. It was a school where parents were complaining about teachers all the time... I asked that particular teacher if she had let the parents know about her work in class. She said ‘no’. I told her that she should. She had the parents sign in their ward’s copybook to acknowledge that the students had reviewed and retaken the test.”*

What is really impressing and delighting Jenny now is that this specific practice has spread from teacher to teacher spontaneously. However, Jenny understands that this approach would not necessarily work well in another school. In other words, Jenny is noting that there are limits to the instructional leadership of a school leader and the extent to which teachers will endorse their principal.

*“Now, other teachers use that strategy too. The practice apparently spread from teacher to teacher... I have endorsed it as a standard school practice... There goes the remedial work!*

*However, I think that this practice, even if it is good, would not work in another school... Oh no! Indeed, you cannot just take what works in a school to another school. There are things that teachers cannot accept... But then, to find out, you need to test things out, because you cannot know beforehand.”*

As Jenny further discusses, there are many systemic issues that need to be addressed before school can make definite improvements and be recognised for doing so. The notion of quality and quality targets for the school must be clearly defined.

*“Apart from class visits, the other means that I use to know about the quality of teaching and learning is by the analysis of students’ performance. I look at the distribution of the students’ marks according to a grade system similar to that of the School Certificate. The results of the first semester are based on few assessments and cannot be used for the comparison... But for the second term onwards, the marks are based on more comprehensive tests. Using that, I can have a good idea of what’s happening. I can say that this school is doing well... Can you imagine, even if the SC results were 100%, the Quality Assurance came to school for a long working session? According to them, the quality was not good... despite the 100% and wanted to know what I would do to improve that.”*

Jenny notes that it is very difficult to actually evaluate the quality of teaching and give teachers feedback on their work. According to her, the perceived performance of teachers may vary considerably depending on the students they work with.

*“But then, even when we supposedly have good teachers posted to our school, things can go wrong. Two years back, we had a ‘star’ teacher Mr. X, coming from a ‘star’ school... He is the Head of Department... But look at the results for Mathematics and for Additional Mathematics. The results are declining alarmingly...”*

*Even with Mathematics at subsidiary level in Grade 12, all the students failed last year.”*

Beyond the performance of teachers, Jenny also notes that the syllabuses are evolving and feels that old teaching and learning practices need to be revisited.

*“I would not say that it is a problem with the teacher or the department, however... What I see is that the performance is declining in the subject itself. Indeed, there seems to be a problem with the subject. I see that with Sociology as well... The syllabus has changed. The performance in the subject has declined seriously and less students are taking it up.*

*Last year, a lady teacher from another ‘star’ school came here. She calls herself a ‘laureate maker’... Well, since the lady is here, I saw the performance in the subject declining... Even the Quality Assurance department came to discuss this particular issue with me... I had to conduct a class visit. When I went to her class, I found that the lady was doing her teaching in Creole all of the time... She should have been using English!”*

### **5.2.2.3 Analytical summary**

Jenny’s story of learning to become a principal appears to be similar to John’s i.e. it includes an initial shock and a period of transition from the “outsider” to the “insider” perspective. In Jenny’s story, in contrast with what was noted in John’s story, there are more narratives running on the dark side of principalship. Jenny, as we will find, speaks more explicitly about emotional load and fear (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004) than the other principals. Again, like John, Jenny used the strategy of developing a team of teachers and other staff to work closely with her, to cope with the role overload.

Jenny extends on John’s understanding of the complexity of the school environment by adding a key stakeholder: the students. Jenny’s narratives are strongly shaped by issues of student discipline. Her description of the large-scale vandalism incident highlights the lack of means available to principals (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004) to maintain discipline within the school premises, as well as a lack of civic values on the part of the students (Jackson & Sherriff, 2013). It is felt

that Jenny challenges the notion that students are fully committed participants in their educational process. As we will find, the need to re-engage students in school life is also discussed by Tim and Tina.

Jenny appears critical of the performativity culture (Apple, 2006; Sahlberg, 2011; Lynch *et al.*, 2012) that has been introduced in the policy narratives (MOEHR, 2008). Jenny notes that there are actually no approaches to managing instruction that works in all schools. She feels that the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division is putting unreasonable standards for her school, because the levels of student outcomes that they are setting are unattainable.

From Jenny's perspective, the role of a teacher goes beyond instruction in class (Smith & Ennis, 1961; Jackson, 1962; Green, 1971; Freeman, 1973; Smith, 2008), as discussed in the literature review. However, Jenny does believe that there are some systemic issues with the quality of teachers (Barber, & Mourshed, 2007). She finds there are "black sheep", with poor attitude and personality, and about which she is helpless. Jenny seems to view teaching in class as a complex activity that cannot be reduced to "teaching as science" approach (Willms, 1992; Marzano, 2007).

From her experience, Jenny feels that good teaching is not necessarily successful (Ericson & Ellett, 1987; 1990; 2002). She also believes that there cannot be only one type of good teaching because different teachers have their own approaches. Jenny seems to find it difficult to make a benchmark for good teaching because of the different subjects that are taught at school. Jenny tries to conduct regular class visits even if she believes that there are many factors affecting the quality of outcomes and which are beyond the control of the school. This seems to concur with literature which suggests that principals find it difficult to evaluate teaching (Elmore, 2008).

Jenny's general leadership style appears to be democratic (Lewin *et al.*, 1939). She also seems to have the ability to spot exceptional talent, and give them space to thrive. She understands that school leadership is a dynamic interaction with stakeholders (Hallinger 2003; Bolman & Deal, 2008). Also, Jenny does not seem to use elaborate planning. She is content to allow good ideas, that she spots, to flourish as she sees appropriate to the school context. Jenny feels that the power wielded by principals has decreased (Collins, 2005) because of teacher unions and

poorly performing teachers cannot be called back to order. As we will find, the issue of principals having little room to manoeuvre because of the pressure exerted by teacher unions is also taken by Ben.

Jenny encountered one of the biggest challenges, in her career as principal, when she replaced a principal who had installed a “laissez-faire” culture (Lewin *et al.*,1939) over an extended period. When she started to restore staff and student discipline, she found herself under enquiry from the MOEHR. Her experience concurs with observations of the messiness of the school context (Jackson & Sherriff, 2013). This poses the problem with how MOEHR perceives the situation in schools and the type of feedback that principals receive.

Her experience points to schools being unique contexts, which the principals have to master if they are to lead well. As we shall see with Ben and Tina, the experience accumulated has a significant effect on the principals’ leadership. In the case of Jenny, she has become quite cautious about criticising teachers because she prefers to avoid pressures (Arkin, 1981; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991). Thus, her understanding of how teaching and learning can be improved does not necessarily inform her instructional leadership practice.

### **5.2.3 Ben**

#### **5.2.3.1 Profile**

Before the first interview, I had known Ben for more than fifteen years from the time when he was still a teacher. Ben then got promoted to become a principal. At the time of the interview, Ben had been a principal for about nine years. Ben’s transformation over the years is something that has impressed me. He had first appeared to me as a soft-natured person, who certainly did not fit the principal’s profile. As I met him again, several years into his career as principal, I was curious how he had transformed into that confident and dynamic person.

#### **5.2.3.2 Ben’s story**

Ben’s first posting as a principal was in a school reputed difficult. However, despite his initial qualms, he soon found out that he could manage the school. Moreover, the experience of dealing with the students of this school appears to have taught

Ben a key philosophy that would he would put to use throughout his years as a principal.

*“School A SSS was a school that no one wanted. There were always problems in that school: fights between students, fights between students and people coming from the outside. Teachers could not work... It was a difficult school with a bad reputation... When I got there, I found that it was not the school that I had heard about. It was not so difficult! What was required was to understand the students; you needed to win them over... What I had to do was to put myself in their shoes, understand their way of doing things. Understand their surroundings. Understand their environment”.*

Ben describes how changing the school culture was hard work, first by teaching students about values and civility before inculcating discipline.

*“Slowly, by talking to them, I managed to make them understand that they had to go back to class... At the start, for the assembly, it was noisy, they were talking all the time. Again, slowly, through talking to them, I managed to get the assembly in order. I made them understand how to be behave, and... to come at school on time... These were little things: the etiquette, but they had to learn it. Once they were used to it, then it was the beginning of discipline. We could talk of discipline at school.”*

He is grateful that the teachers in that school showed co-operation. The students being very difficult, this created the necessary motivation among teachers. Ben notes that the composition of the school population can cause significant challenges to the school leader. Also, the collaboration of the staff with the school leader can vary significantly according to the school context.

*“I have an anecdote from School A SSS. People would say that the school was bad, and the students were rude and dangerous... Approaching school holidays, students would line up outside my office. When the students did it for the first time... the teachers and other staff were afraid that the students were coming to fight with me. In fact, they simply came to greet me and wish me good*

*holidays! This had never existed in this school before I worked there... The students were showing in their unique way, their appreciation of me and my work. Teachers were co-operative because it was a difficult school... In School A SSS there were many Catholics, and it is located near a "cité"<sup>19</sup>. The teachers did not fight among each other, there was no division because they were fighting against the students... all the teachers would co-operate."*

Moreover, Ben's next tenure was also a difficult school. As we will see further on, he flags the issue of social tensions as determinant to the school's well-being. He sees that they have a serious negative impact to the school, with apparently few remedies. According to Ben, at that time, when the transfer of a number of principals was being considered, he was chosen because of his ability to handle difficult schools. Indeed, Ben's second school as principal also provided a strong challenge.

*"At the time I was transferred away from School A SSS... there were two other schools which were facing difficulties. There was School B SSS and the other was School C SSS where, apparently, there was a very serious 'communal' problem.*

*I tell you how I feel... Where there is a problem, it's there that they will send me. So, I was sent to School B SSS where I immediately had to face a difficult situation. The students were on strike. The previous rector had slapped a student...trying to repress a student unrest. A solution was needed... They told me to go there."*

Again Ben managed to turn around this school, which he attributes to the co-operation of the staff of a school in a rural region as compared to school in an urban region. Ben believes that the rural subculture encourages discipline within the school and makes school very pleasant to work in.

*"At School B SSS, there was a good administration which was encouraging, and a good school superintendent. The clerks, the typists, they were all professionals, doing their job as they should. It*

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<sup>19</sup> A "cite" is a high-poverty settlement area in the Mauritian context.

*was a great encouragement; it was a great support...helping me to do better. Moreover, the teachers of the countryside, from their culture and their way of life, they all want to co-operate with you. There is no opposition, they all want to cooperate. As a Rector, when everyone wants to cooperate with you, you feel good...and you want to do well. You feel motivated.”*

Having worked in two difficult schools made Ben focus on “emotional intelligence”. He is convinced that by finding what motivates people, he can win them over. The principal also notes that he manages to exert strong authority on his staff and his students by adopting the role of a parental figure.

*“The most important thing is human relations; I saw it at School A SSS. There, I developed a method... I worked with emotional intelligence. In any situation, you need to be able to work. We need to find a solution where all are winners... If people see you as an adversary, an enemy, they will oppose. I had to win over the people. If you control the school administration, if you get the administrative staff with you... then, no matter how difficult the school is, you will be able to manage. Here at School D SSS, whether it be the non-teaching staff, the teachers and the students, they do not see me as a Rector. They see me as a father... You see, as I walk around the school and I see a girl doing something wrong, I can reprimand her... However, there is that closeness too, we can discuss the issue and try resolve it.”*

According to Ben, he sustains this status because he is constantly sorting out problems for the school community. Ben freely recognises that such a strategy, unfortunately, does not work on some individuals. He is thankful that it works for most. He also recalls that at one of the schools where he had been a principal, the students had wanted to go on strike, because they were not satisfied with a particular teacher and wanted that teacher removed.

*“My strategy of managing by using emotional intelligence works... However, at times people abuse it. Sometimes people take politeness and courtesy for weakness. You may do a lot to help them and make their life better but when you talk to them, they might still*

*not listen or not believe you... Some abuse my politeness and deliberately are late every day. Thus, as I said, my approach has a few negative sides as I have just mentioned... But, if you look at the big picture, the approach works.*

*Once, the students at School B SSS were unhappy about a particular teacher who was not doing his job well. You know, I feel that the Ministry could have relocated this teacher elsewhere... At 10 p.m. the news had already spread on Facebook that the students would be on strike the next day... The School Superintendent got news from the police and called me that night.”*

Although Ben was successful in avoiding the strike by his personal resourcefulness, he still feels that had been let down by the Ministry. Nonetheless, Ben still tried his best to keep his word.

*“When I reached the school in the morning, the students were standing outside in the yard. I immediately guided them to the hall to make a special assembly. Your challenge in such a situation is to be a good orator and you really need to convince. And you also need to be true to your word. I told the students that I needed two days to resolve the problems that they had reported. I had thought that within two days the Zone Director and the Ministry would have helped me.*

*Well, they all let me down. I had been told that they would remove the offending teacher to another school. However, they never did that. Now, I had made a promise to the students, and I needed to keep it. I worked day and night to modify the school timetable. All classes with the older students were removed... and the teacher henceforth had lower classes only. It is very important for the students, that you keep your word. Whatever you say, you need to do!”*

In arriving in his current school, School D SSS, Ben was shocked to find how the teaching staff was divided in two main groups and how there was constant bickering between them. This prevailing school culture contrasts sharply with what he had

experienced in his previous school. In his two previous schools, managing through emotional intelligence had functioned well. However, Ben found that the approach is not as effective in his current school. He has to raise his voice to get things done, and this is bothering him.

*“Here at school D SSS, this is quite a different context. When I arrived here, the situation was quite unhealthy. For one whole term there had been no Rector... After my first morning assembly, the students came to meet me. I spoke with them for five minutes. That was enough to get prefects on me side... These are some of the strategies that I use.*

*In this school, there are two staffrooms. This means two different cultures. There are many ladies in the teaching staff... Actually, there are 60. In fact, it is difficult to cope with the situation. Just imagine... Someone comes to you and explains their problem. And you agreed to make arrangements. Now, somebody else comes and is not happy that you have given an advantage to the first person.*

*In School B SSS, the culture was different. There the culture was to work for the school. There was a sense of belonging to the school... Here, I need to shout a bit. This is to the detriment of my health. Even if it is not in my nature to shout at people, even it is not in my habit to do so, even if I do not like it, I need to do so! Sometimes I am so disgusted with the school that I even say that I want to retire.”*

Because of the hectic pace of the school life, Ben cannot find time to devote to monitoring teaching and going to classes. Since there is no assistant principal, so many problems daily and so much paperwork, there is simply no time to look at teaching and learning. Ben attends to complaints concerning teaching and learning that he receives during staff meetings with teachers. He usually informs teachers that the school has received complaints, and invites them to be more careful and dedicated in their work.

*“To be truthful, I do not have that much time to spend on monitoring teaching and going to classes. In this school, there is no*

*deputy rector... There are so many problems, so many things that you need to answer for such as paperwork, that I just do not have the time... When there are complaints, you hold a staff meeting to say that there have been such and such complaints and urge the teachers to be more professional... I do believe that more class visits would have been profitable. Students do come to see me and complain about specific teachers not doing their job as they should. I usually call the teachers concerned and discuss the complaints with them.”*

Ben feels that it is difficult to work with teachers and has no clue how teachers respond to his advice. He acknowledges that depending on students' complaints is not reliable. Moreover, he also recognises that it would have been profitable for the school if he could find time to conduct class visits.

*“Most teachers tend not to appreciate when I talk to them... I try to give some advice to the teacher. To what extent they listen to this advice I don't know. But I should really be going to class to see if the teacher is doing what I requested him to do and if there is any change... The teacher might change or not. But then students might not come back to complain again. In such a case, I will act as if the problem has been resolved. So, my stance is that when students come to me, I have to react and do something about it... But honestly, I do believe that this is not enough: I should really be going to classes to see what happens there.”*

Another approach for Ben, to tackle problems in pedagogy, is by referring reported cases of poor teaching to the Quality Assurance section who, according to him, do come often to his school. Ben feels that this division of the Ministry has more expertise for improving teaching at school.

*“Another way for me to handle poor teaching is to make full use of my quality assurance inspectors. They do come quite often... If there are problems, I will give them names. If students come and complain about such and such teachers, I will give the names of these teachers. The quality assurance inspectors will conduct a proper follow-up. They have their way of proceeding... They do this*

*work every day, they evaluate teachers regularly and they will evaluate the teachers' work better."*

According to Ben, Quality Assurance and Inspection Division officers are experienced in assessing teachers and giving them feedback. Also, just as John earlier, Ben is quite content with availing himself with their services. Indeed, he feels that he does not have all the competences required to improve instruction to in his school.

*"They first go to class for observation. Then, they come to my office and give the teachers a feedback in my presence. They give advice which I might not necessarily be able to give... And there is a follow up. They will come back after some time to visit the class of the same teacher and see any changes. Then, they also analyse the results and look for any problems... For instance, in this school, they found that the performance in Mathematics, in general, was poor. They called a meeting with the Mathematics department to discuss the matter with that department... So, you see, I avail myself with the services of the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division in my role of responsible for improving the quality of teaching and learning... Because, I do not necessarily have the competencies to assess all the classes."*

As Ben describes good teaching, he paints a picture of an activity guided by good pedagogical principles, which also include the emotional aspect of the teaching and learning relationship. Ben believes that teachers should focus on building good relations with students.

*"I would say for mathematics... I can assess the subject well because I was a mathematics teacher. I would not say I was the best teacher, let's say not even an excellent teacher... but I know the subject and how it should be taught... There is an order in which concepts should be introduced... Integers, equations, etc. Similarly, for any other subject, I believe that when a teacher starts a class, he should do a recall of the different concepts relevant to the teaching that follows. The teacher has to move from known into unknown, from concrete to abstract... You should start from some kind of*

*concrete situation and move to the abstract... You should use an example with which the student is familiar, knowledgeable about or familiar with... You should put the child in a mood that he can start to learn. He can then accept your teaching.”*

Ben remarks that he has noted, through visiting classes over the years, problems in the pedagogy of mathematics teachers. He has found they tend to give examples instead of actually explain a concept.

*Some teachers only show one or two examples, and only a few lines worth of explanation... I have seen this by going to class, not necessarily in this school, but I have seen such practices... As a deputy Rector and as a Rector, I have often seen this in different schools... In School B SSS, I had time to go into classes for classroom observations, so that I could check this out.”*

Moreover, Ben believes that the problem of poor teaching in class is closely related to widespread private tutoring. According to him, many school teachers assume that all students do resort to private tutoring. These same teachers tend not to care how effective their teaching has actually been.

*“Here, in this school, students happen to be ‘good enough’ academically and they tend not to rely on the performance of the school teacher... and also go for private tuition. Some however, come from families that do not have the means to go for private tuition and need the teachers to perform in class. However, unfortunately, there are teachers who do believe that all students are going for private tuition... and who do not consider that the students might not have understood.*

*Then, there is the case of better students who might be interested in competing for the scholarship Even when if these students do understand, the teachers could make the effort to go more in depth, instead of relying only on the examples in the book... Some teachers only glance over topics. They complete lessons in 15 minutes, whereas they should be going for better paced explanations, and they do not care whether the students have understood or not.”*

Another serious problem that Ben flags is that, in much of the teaching that he has observed, teachers do not evaluate how much learning has taken place after a teaching episode.

*“Many teachers do not take time to check whether teaching has taken place. There are ways of checking that students have indeed understood... In some cases, I have been blunt with the teachers concerned. However, sometimes the students will stay quiet even when they have not understood the teacher, or the explanations are unsatisfactory... I recall the case of a teacher who did not teach what was in the weekly plan or the lesson plan. The students did not understand at all what the teacher was up to... I informed the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division who came to the same conclusion as me.”*

Based on his experience, Ben believes that there is no general approach to improving teachers. He is convinced that to transform teaching, one must first transform the teacher. Ben feels that the best approach is to observe the class of a teacher and to give feedback through an open discussion, rather than using the report formats prescribed by the Ministry. He also feels that such a process takes appreciable time.

*“Generally, I would say that to improve teaching, first it is about the individual, about the person... There is a format for reporting class visits. You need to check the scheme of work and the lesson plan. However, I am not sure that using these formats helps... Thus, what I prefer is to observe a class. Then, I call the teacher to my office and formulate suggestions and discuss with the teacher. A frank discussion is what is best, I think... We need to win over the teacher to our point of view, to convince him; but this is a process that takes time, and time is what is lacking! This is a kind of job that perhaps I could have delegated to a Deputy Rector... even if I do think it is important, highly important.”*

Over the years, Ben has noted with concern that the quality of results at School Certificate and Higher School Certificate examinations has been decreasing steadily over the whole country and he cannot provide any explanation for that. He

believes that the main weakness in the state secondary schools is teachers, and wonders if training could address the problem. However, as a principal, he finds that his possibilities of action on teachers are severely limited.

*“I think that there is a problem of declining quality in all schools: I think it is a national problem... I have no explanation... When your students complete their School Certificate, they need to have attained five or six credits, and not have simply passed with the minimum possible results. They need to achieve their Higher School Certificate having passed in their three A-levels. They need to be able to go through their university studies, get a job and do it well... They need to be able to shoulder their responsibilities.*

*Schools should not only develop students academically. The curriculum needs to develop the different aspects of the student. The syllabi must not be open only to national but international realities as well... We are not meeting our objectives because there is a lack of professionalism at various levels in the workforce. There is a problem of low competence, poor ethics, a culture of amateurism, excessive absences and lateness... There is an attitude where some people are trying to enjoy all the benefits availed in their conditions of service. When you look at the schools in Mauritius in general, infrastructure is there. So, this is not a weakness. Teachers are a weakness in the system. It starts with a lack of training...*

*Unfortunately, you must let things rest as they are because you cannot take action... As a Rector, you have got your hands tied.”*

According to Ben, a good teacher must be hard working, plan his work well, ensure that his students learn and have good class management skills. The principal nonetheless recognises that a good teacher would not be able to secure successful outcomes for all his students in all types of school environments. He stresses that it is important for the teacher to adapt to the situation and do remedial work.

*“How do I recognise a good teacher? Good teachers work, cover the syllabus, do not absent themselves, are not late and make sure that the students have actually understood so that they do pass their exams. A good teacher has good class management and a good*

*control on discipline. A good teacher can make students sit down, check if they have done their homework. Then, check their uniform, their dress, their interaction... Can a good teacher do this for all students? No... not for all students. In a school like QEC, you would expect that all students do pass; in a school like School A SSS where I worked previously, 50% would be a good performance... But it is there that remedial work comes in and makes the difference.*

As a principal, Ben feels that it is his duty to ensure that there is good teaching. However, it is not easy to ascertain what kind of teaching is happening in class. As Ben found out, class visits are not necessarily effective.

*“The beginning of a good teacher is to always record what you have done and plan what you will do... As a Rector, you can do class visits to try to make teachers do their job. That’s one way... Other things that the Rector can do is encouraging teacher attendance and decreasing teacher lateness... However, I must point out that even if the Ministry puts a lot of emphasis on class visits, there is no guarantee. The teacher could be performing at his best during a class visit...once you are gone, he returns to his usual self...”*

The principal notes that it is difficult to handle student complaints. However, he does his best to guide his teachers.

*“But then students will often come with requests for changing the teacher... and this cannot normally be done. You can talk to the teacher, and try to advise him, based on your experience. You try to win over the teacher...emotionally... explain to him how the problem arose, and what he can do to avoid or remedy the situation.”*

Ben feels that the circumstances make it difficult to work systematically towards a pre-determined long-term plan. One first problem is teacher mobility. Related to teacher mobility is how students adapt to new teachers. The principal also notes that students do not necessarily recognise and appreciate good teachers.

*“What am I doing to improve the school? Well, there is no established plan. It is a work in progress... It is not as if there was a plan that has been worked out and that you could check against... Then, there are constantly teachers coming in and leaving the school, even within one department. You also have the situation where students get adapted to a teacher and when a new teacher, a better teacher comes to the school, pupils might still complain... All kinds of things are possible... Well, in any case, I abide to the School Management Manual constantly. These days there are so many complaints from the Union that it is important to get the procedures correctly. There is a lot of pressure from teacher’s union... From the moment that there is an incident, the union will try to find out if you operated according to the manual or whether you erred.”*

Ben wishes that he could devote more time to monitoring teaching. However, he feels that the administrative staff at school is not working to standard. He is also bothered by the lack of support given by the Ministry.

*“People who are supposed to be assisting you in your work... They are letting you down! I have no deputy rector, but a senior educator. If I could better share the job or delegate. I would spend more time to check on teachers... whether they are wasting time in class or whether they are working... We need that whenever we take a decision, we have the support of the ministry of education.”*

Thinking about the principal’s work, Ben muses over the various qualities that principals must bring to the job. He feels that these qualities are essential even if not all principals do have it.

*“To be a good principal, you have to be a good negotiator, a good politician! You have to be a true leader, ‘a meneur d’hommes’ and be able to lead all kinds of people... You also need to be able to use deception to achieve the school’s objectives. If you put the right people in the right place, you can get improvement... Unfortunately, not all who are rectors deserve to be called rectors... To have*

*effective teaching, there must be the right persons, whether it be teachers or principals.”*

Ben also reflects that principals do not necessarily benefit from their experience to get better . He regrets that despite age and experience, principals do make mistakes, and sadly the system is such that a principal could keep making the same mistakes for 20 years!

*“Rectors are not infallible. We do make mistakes even if we appear old and experienced... If we made a mistake 20 years ago, we might continue on making the same mistake... If you are doing something that is wrong or ineffective and thinking that it is OK, a mentor could help you reflect on your effectiveness, a mentor could give you feedback and help you in changing things... However, I do not see who could fulfil that role. Zone directors always call you to reprimand.”*

Ben notes that there cannot be adequate preparation for the principal, because schools are different, and situations can be difficult to read.

*“Sometimes things do not turn out right. Despite your goodwill and despite all your actions, things are not going the way you want... And, you may ask yourself the question why, because sometimes, you get discouraged... Because, the same things that you are doing would work well or would simply work in another school context... And all your philosophy, that you spent 5 years, 10 years to build, to develop, it simply fails, and you need to throw it away.”*

Ben feels that it is important to understand that schools are dynamic organisations which do not respond in easily predictable ways. Very importantly, he highlights that the school must itself adapt to the principal. However, there are social factors which have a lasting effect, and against which principals do not have solutions.

*“Before a principal can be effective, the school community must adjust itself to the principal... And it takes time. I think that 2 years is the minimum. When I look at myself in this school, I came here two years ago. Now I am finding the school under control and the staff responsive. When I came to the school, they had been used for*

*a long time to the previous rector running the school in a certain way.*

*In rural areas, the transition is easier. There is the culture that they should respect you, that you are the 'guru'... You do not need to exert that much control. You do not need to be a political leader. You are the rector and they will respect you.*

*But then, the mentality of workers, and the lack of professionalism is the common thread between all the schools I have worked in... There is also a lack of commitment of parents... You know, if schooling were not free, parents would be more responsible and concerned."*

### **5.2.3.3 Analytical summary**

Ben's experience points to schools being a messy context (Jackson & Sherriff, 2013). According to him, the school context and climate are strong determinants of the way in which the principal leads the school. Each school has a unique school culture arising from its location, the type of student population attending, and elements of national culture such as ethnic sentiment. For instance, the collaboration of teachers is easier when the school faces problems of student indiscipline. Ben recognises that just as a principal needs to adapt to the culture of the school, it does take time for the school community to adapt to the principal.

Ben appears to challenge the master narrative that principals should be in control of their schools. He is very critical of a system that does not choose its principals well, and then does not train nor support them. Ben argues that what works well in one school may not work well in the next school pointing, to contextual nature of leadership. This requires principals being able to adapt (Hersey & Blanchard, 1971). But Ben further argues that principals are not really able to learn alone from experience and improve their practice as proposed by Houchens & Keedy (2009) and Guthrie & Schuermann (2010).

Even if Ben seems to have found wisdom and resilience to deal with routine business, he appears to feel quite unable to bring significant changes in the quality of teaching and learning in schools. He experiences role overload and focuses on the day to day running of the school. This situation has been verified for principals

in many other contexts (Hamre *et al.*, 2008; Hamre *et al.*, 2010; Abu-Nasser, 2011). He attributes his success as a principal to three factors. Firstly, he has a paternalistic leadership style (Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Secondly, he pays attention to emotional intelligence. Thirdly, he has noted that improving schools implied changing school culture, which concurs with the literature reviewed (Barth, 2002; Marks and Printy, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Gurr, 2008). According to Ben, school leadership and management therefore depends on the school context.

Just like Jenny, Ben has the emotionally difficult experience (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004) of being let down by the Ministry in critical situations. Now, Ben tends to be very cautious before making important decisions. He strictly abides to standard protocols listed in the School Management Manual, to avoid any backlash from stakeholders (DuFour & Berkey, 1995; Hopkins, 2009; Weast, 2010; Tas, 2011), and more specifically from teacher unions, in the local context.

Ben adopts a situational leadership approach (Hersey & Blanchard, 1971) where he adopts his style according to the situation. His dominant leadership style is based on working with emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). He prefers showing care, and using a gentle voice most of the time. However, he admits that he needs show toughness at times. Thus, Ben's general leadership approach seems to move along the paternalistic style continuum (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008).

Just as John or Jenny, Ben understands teaching as a complex activity that involves instruction and other activities (Smith & Ennis, 1961; Jackson, 1962; Green, 1971; Freeman, 1973; Smith, 2008). Despite Ben's elaborate understanding of good teaching, this does not seem to find its way into an equally elaborate instructional leadership practice. Firstly, he feels that he has little time to give to monitoring instruction, given the various demands of school administration. Secondly, he seems to believe that there is a problem with the quality of teachers (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Thirdly, he feels that he has little competence to evaluate classes for subjects outside his field of specialisation (Tas, 2011). This points back to the difficulty that principals face in evaluating teaching (Elmore, 2008), and improving teaching in the Mauritian context (Peerthy, 2018, unpublished).

Ben's focus on non-instructional aspects of school leadership appear to be a pragmatic choice. He seems to find many contextual factors that he cannot control

or resolve as a principal. He deliberately delegates monitoring of instruction to the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division to create breathing space for him to better manage the school.

## **5.2.4 Tim**

### **5.2.4.1 Profile**

At the time of his first interview, I had known Tim as a professional contact for six years. Tim has always been a man of few words. He strictly adheres to his philosophy of keeping things simple and keeping to the basics of school management. However, as the conversations unfolded, it became clear that Tim had deep insights into human behaviour, whether concerning teachers and students.

### **5.2.4.2 Tim's story**

Just as for Ben, we will find that Tim's story is underlined by a personal philosophy that focuses around managing how teachers and students feel. However, Tim's story is very unique in the mentoring that he experienced during his early career. That period was indeed determinant for his subsequent practice as head of school.

*“My journey into administration starts with becoming a deputy rector. As a teacher, I was not specially used to helping administration; I enjoyed teaching a lot... I think, it just appeared logical for me to try go for a promotion; some of my friends had done so already and were apparently doing well.*

*I think I must first start with my period as deputy rector at School A SSS. During that period, I got some short periods as acting rector, in a number of schools including School B SSS... As I recall, this particular posting was a very good experience.*

*This period of being deputy rector at School A SSS has been very important for me... I mean for developing as a rector. The rector of School A SSS was a friend and a former college classmate. He had got promoted before me as deputy rector and when I was at School A SSS, he had been rector there for a few years... We got on very well right from the start and he took me under his wing. I worked closely with him, and I learnt the job from him. He really was my*

*model and I do what he was doing in the school... In that, he was my model as rector, and basically, I do what he does.”*

When the next selection exercise for the position of principal was advertised, Tim felt that he had acquired the ropes of the job, and that he was ready.

*“My mentor definitely is a strong inspiration for me and certainly he gave me knowledge of school management. But then... certainly, I have my own temperament. I believe that, to be a rector, you need to have an appropriate... a strong temperament.*

*So, when the PSC<sup>20</sup> advertised for the post of Rector, I applied... because, I thought was ready to be a Rector...it was just the next thing to do.”*

Tim was lucky to have a long tenure in his first school as full-fledged principal. He found adapting to the new school to be quite easy. He could rely on the teachers' collaboration and this facilitated his administrative work. Moreover, Tim is aware that he can be seen by his students as a role model, so that he needs to behave accordingly.

*“I was lucky when I reached the school that I found many of my former colleagues. So, fitting in was really easy... I found people that I could trust, and I allocated them responsibilities such as for various committees, for example the disciplinary committee... But then, a rector needs to have a strong philosophy and a strong personal sense of discipline to guide him through his different decisions. For example, a rector or a teacher should avoid being seen by his student smoking... But why create difficulties for oneself? Even if I smoke, I make sure that I never do it in front of my students...even if I did once talk about it during a school assembly, on the occasion of the World Tobacco Day.”*

Tim believes in keeping situations simple and rules clear for all. The principal applies this principle in matters of student discipline to makes students more

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<sup>20</sup> “PSC” is an acronym for Public Service Commission. This body is responsible for the recruitment of staff under employment by the MOEHR.

responsible and to minimise parental involvement. Nonetheless, he also believes that calling in the parent is a measure of last resort, because of backlash effect this can produce.

*“This keeps things simple and clear... and I like simple and clear. Last week, there was a boy who seriously misbehaved. I talked to the student and gave him a piece of my mind. I slapped the student... But then just after, I put my hand on his shoulder and talked to him as a father. I asked him why he was acting as such, forcing me to punish him and creating problems for himself. He shed a tear and apologised... the problem is solved.*

*After you have brought in the parents, what will you do more? Once you have brought in the parents, the child is ‘no longer a virgin’... and the same measure might not work well later... My basic idea is to keep things simple.”*

Despite generally trusting his teachers, Tim keeps a close eye on what is happening in the school. He believes in walking around the school and solving problems as he encounters them. The principal recognises that the school environment, whether urban or rural, and the academic ability of the students does have an affect the running of the school.

*“But then, I like keeping track of things. You know, I do not normally stay that long in my office... I walk around the school and attend to the problems as I meet them... After School A SSS, I spent two years at School B SSS. School B SSS was quite different from School A SSS, in terms of environment and the kind of students that there are there. The school was in a bad spot... As I understand, they sent me to the school to put it back on track... In some way, I could say I was proud of being entrusted such a job.”*

Just as Ben earlier, Tim clearly takes great satisfaction in his competence and ability to manage difficult schools, even if it apparently took a toll on him. The principal evoked some terrifying moments that the school had been through. When he started to put his plan for student discipline in action, he relied on the school culture. He put his foot down hard and persevered.

*“There had been a lot of fighting around and in the nearby village because of ethnic issues. There had been intrusions within the school premises of gangs armed with machetes looking for certain specific students... Student discipline and teacher morale was in a poor situation... On teachers’ side, I had to put some discipline on morning attendance... You know, I like to observe things. I learnt that from a former rector, Mr X. He would say: ‘you need to observe the school before starting anything; you need to observe it for at least one week.’*

*I came up with a very strong measure for the students... I told them that as long as they would be undisciplined at school and break school property, I would not allow students to attend football matches in which the school team was participating... Of course, as usual, I conducted frequent rounds, all day, or delegated my deputy rector... The school calmed down eventually; the students and the teachers were back in the classes.”*

In good time, order was restored. Tim started to organise activities to restore the image of the school. Eventually, on leaving the school, the principal felt the satisfaction of having turned the school around.

*“I then worked with the students to create their sense of ownership. The school needed to be cleaned, so we organised a cleaning day. Led by the prefects, the students participated... and it was a big success. There was a blood donation, and the activity was a huge success with the students. This also helped restore a bit of the tarnished image of the school with the community... On leaving School B SSS, I can say it was mission accomplished. The school was finally in order. There was discipline again in the school, the students were happy, and the teachers were happy. I had appeased tensions, and I had got the students back to class.”*

However, for his next tenure, again he found a school not in order. As we noted with Ben previously, Tim is not satisfied with the work of his predecessor. According to him, the previous principal had failed on some crucial aspects of the school, one of them being student discipline.

*“When I came here at School C SSS, the school was in a mess... I had to work at regaining control of the school... The rector just before me had unfortunately, according to me, been a bit too lenient on discipline... There were students out of class all day, walking around and up to no good. One of the first things I did was to get the prefects to work with me.*

*Just as with School A SSS and School B SSS, I worked with the students to develop their sense of ownership. The school needed to be cleaned...so we organised a cleaning day. It was led by the prefects and the students participated massively... it was a big success. Sometime after, we also organised a blood donation.”*

Tim finds that some teachers are not behaving with good professional ethics, thereby contributing to difficulties. The principal attributes that to younger teachers not having the proper vocation as teachers of old.

*“Last week a lady English teacher gave a class of Grade 10 students a writing assignment with title: ‘a teacher that I hate’... Why would a teacher do that? Of course, two students took the opportunity to write really unpleasant things about a lady teacher... One was sexually explicit... the other used unpleasant words to describe the physical appearance of the teacher.*

*I had my disciplinary committee talk to the students. I will personally talk to the students later during the day... a meeting has been arranged. They have apologised and promised that they will not repeat such misbehaviour... There is a real problem with teachers nowadays. We no longer have teachers as there once were... There are people doing it without vocation, and the outcome is all kinds of problems at school.”*

Tim is not happy about the work done by his predecessor. He feels that being a principal requires commitment, a flair for making decisions that keep teachers happy, and strong principles.

*“You know, here at School C SSS, the principal before the one I replaced did a really good job... He worked a lot for the school.*

*Even today, the people I meet speak well of him and recognise his contribution... I see a Rector as a fatherly figure. A Rector must be firm on discipline, but he must also show care.*

*When I came to the school, I had to get the students back to class. After taking on discipline, I had to establish trust with the teachers and show them support... But then, they have to do their job. This will be the second year that I am in this school. This year, I arranged the timetable so that all teachers benefit from two afternoons off. On the second one, they can leave school at around 14h00... This is something that I have been doing since my first school.”*

Tim feels that the key is commitment, whether in students or in principals themselves. He feels that being a school leader is not a job; it is a vocation that the principal lives for.

*“Since my first school, I have always worked at creating a sense of belonging among the students. I wanted them to feel part of their school family... When I came to School C SSS, I surrounded myself with the prefects. We organised a blood donation, a tombola and a cleaning day.*

*You know, Mr X<sup>21</sup>, had done a real good job as rector. Unfortunately, I cannot speak about the work done by the one after him and who preceded me. The difference between these two rectors is their commitment... their sense of belonging to the school.*

*Do you know Mr Y, the rector; he suffered from cancer? Two weeks or so before he died, he asked to visit the last school where he had worked: School D SSS. He went there after normal school hours and he walked around a bit. It is as if he was always thinking about the school... In many ways, I do picture myself as this. Good rectors*

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<sup>21</sup> Mr X is a pseudonym.

*are like this... We are committed to our school; we invest ourselves into it.”*

Tim feels that there is a need for principals to monitor teachers these days. According to him, teachers are not as professional as they used to be. He thinks that teacher culture has changed over the years and teachers are not as devoted to their job as they used to be, and it is something that he cannot work against.

*“A Rector needs to really monitor teaching because we have to face it: teachers today are not as dedicated as they used to be... The very culture has changed. The teacher culture has changed, as compared with what it used to be. Unfortunately, it has gone down... Previously, teachers were devoted to their work. But the mentality of the young teacher is different... I see it around the school.*

*So, you need to be vigilant... However, I do not think it is about being on back of teachers. We also need to give motivation and incentives for them to do their work. Actually, you do not need to go into class to know which teacher is doing well... By just standing outside you get to know. Are the students listening, taking notes in their copy books, doing some class work or are they fidgeting?*

*I will get feedback from students and parents, usually when they are not satisfied. However, I go and ask too... You see, I do my job, I maintain discipline and get the students to enter the class. The teacher must do his part and deliver.”*

Tim walks around the school a lot during the school day, and he keeps track discreetly on his teachers as he does. The principal feels that he can learn much about teachers by observing them quietly as he walks by.

*“A good teacher must know his subject. Then he must deliver the goods. There must be good class management. By this, I do not mean only discipline. I do walk about a lot... When I pass by a class, I see if the students are busy doing their classwork. If they are engaged, then I know that is this a good teacher.*

*As I say, I do walk about a lot and I do not necessarily do a lot of class visits... Last week, I was walking around the school. I had heard that a certain Grade 9 class is a bit unruly at the moment and I wanted to have a look at them. But then, as I passed by this Accounts lesson, the Grade 9 students were relatively quiet. I stayed close to observe and listen. The teacher was proceeding by dictating short questions and the students started doing the question immediately after. The class seemed well organised and the students knew what was expected from them... The students' engagement was pleasing to observe."*

Tim's evaluation of a teacher's performance is strongly influenced by the behaviour of the students. The principal also uses direct feedback from students and parents. However, he cautions that sometimes evaluations can be tricky. He cites the case of a teacher who was clearly having difficulty at some point. With just a little encouragement and support, he was able to turn around the teacher's practice.

*"As I said, if I walk by a class and I see students fidgeting, wasting time, or making all kinds of noise, I will know that the teacher is not doing his job. But then, then there are other means... When I sign report books, I have a good look at the performance of students. In some particular cases, I can also ask feedback from students or parents... But this must be evaluated carefully because a complaint may arise from different causes.*

*I recall a young teacher at this school who had just come in and she was having difficulty with the students, in particular a Grade 13 class. They were rowdy and she wanted to quit. I was not very sure if she had the ability to cope myself... I was new as rector and I did what I thought was a good thing. I encouraged her to persevere. I did request prefects to help keep that particular class in order. I also gave her incentives... For example, I facilitated a timetable swap so that she could attend her PGCE courses... Well, that proved to be what was required. As she built up her self-confidence, she became one of the most appreciated teachers within the school."*

Tim understands that even if the Ministry is pushing forward for more quality in education, the quality is already good. According to the principal, improvements must be sought in terms of an updated and adapted curriculum.

*“Quality teaching starts first with good infrastructure... I must say that in Mauritius, we have good infrastructure. Then, there must be good instruction. I will say that the quality of instruction in Mauritius is still good... However, the curriculum must still be made more adapted to the new realities... Some effort is made with the HSC Pro for example, which would prepare students to be work ready in the IT sector.”*

#### **5.2.4.3 Analytical summary**

Tim’s journey as a principal started with a very successful first tenure. However, he was not able to replicate his reported successes in his subsequent schools. Tim comments that ultimately a principal wields little power (Collins, 2005), an issue discussed in the literature review. Just as Ben and Jenny earlier, Tim has experienced schools as messy contexts (Jackson & Sherriff, 2013). He finds that the type of school environment, the school reputation, and the academic achievement of students has a strong influence on the daily running of the school (Barth, 2002; Marks and Printy, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Gurr, 2008). Also, just as Ben and Jenny, Tim appears to carry emotional wounds (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004) from his difficult experiences, that shape the way he manages his school.

Tim appears to feel strongly, just like John, that there is an important moral dimension to the role of principal (Ciulla, 2008). He believes that he needs to be a role model for his students. Simultaneously, he appears very concerned about the limited number of options that schools have to escalate measures to maintain order. In contrast with the other principals, Tim does not necessarily go by the prescribed procedures (MOEHR, 2009). He appears quite critical of the Ministry’s approach concerning student discipline in schools.

Tim’s leadership style reminds us much of transactional leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1985) when he provides a lot of incentives for his students and staff to collaborate and play their roles as expected. He displays a keen understanding of

his stakeholders, and a knowledge of what motivates them most. At other times, Tim behaves as a paternalistic leader (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008). Tim's general leadership style appears to be a mix of transactional leadership and paternalistic leadership styles. This contrasts with John who appears to use transformational leadership in combination with paternalistic leadership.

Tim focuses on maintaining discipline, and appears to effectively delegate various aspects of school administration. He seems to believe that his job is to get the incentives and the school climate right. Just as seen with John earlier, Tim feels that good teaching is the teacher's responsibility. In contrast with the other principals, he is not interested in conducting class visits and mostly relies on observing teachers as he passes by classes on his regular walks around the school compound. Tim find it difficult to intervene on complaints against teachers (Elmore, 2008), because their root cause is often unclear.

Tim, just as the other principals, understands teaching as a complex activity (Smith & Ennis, 1961; Jackson, 1962; Green, 1971; Freeman, 1973; Smith, 2008). However, there is a strong focus that the teachers should deliver efficaciously on their responsibilities. He believes that there is a strong issue concerning teacher quality (Barber & Mourshed, 2007) that has emerged in the recent years. Tim seems to have a romanticised notion of teachers of the 'good old days'. He feels that, today, many teachers lack the necessary commitment to be in the profession. Despite his criticism concerning teachers, Tim believes that the quality of the education is quite good, even if improvements should be sought in a school curriculum that is better adapted to the school system. However, this can be construed to be a justification for not engaging in systematic class visits and giving feedback to teachers.

Moreover, Tim's comment reflects ambivalence that arises from having to daily spend a lot of time handling the 'messiness' of the school context. He is guided by a management precept of keeping things "simple and clear" that shapes his school leadership and management. This allows him to steer away from pressures and potential difficulties that he describes and is anxious to avoid. Thus, Tim routinely focuses on general management issues, at the expense of instructional leadership and management issues. Eventually, just as for Ben earlier, Tim's understanding of

teaching and learning does not appear to find its way into his instructional leadership.

## **5.2.5 Tina**

### **5.2.5.1 Profile**

I had known Tina for nearly six years as a professional contact before the start of my research. Among the five participants, Tina is the only principal of the Mahatma Gandhi Directorate. She was very eager to help with the research and readily made some time in her busy schedule for the interviews. Tina seemed to be using the interviews as a stepping-stone for her own reflection, as part of an ongoing effort to develop professionally.

### **5.2.5.2 Tina's story**

At the time of the interviews, Tina had been working in school administration for more than 10 years, making periodic transitions between secondary schools. Tina experienced an extended period as assistant principal before eventually becoming a principal.

*“Actually, I started in the management of the school more than ten years back. I was a teacher, then and there was a vacant position. I applied... and I was among the few selected to take up the position. I became a deputy rector at School A SS for about five years. Then I went to School B SS as Rector for again about five years... Then I worked at School C SS for about two years. Eventually, I was posted back at School A SS as Rector.”*

Tina found her transition from teaching to administration easy to handle. Even as a teacher, she had constantly been involved in assisting administration with various tasks and programs. She also believes that her training, her background, and the life experience that she accumulated are significant to how well she performs.

*“As a teacher, I was committed to my teaching, but I was also helping administration... I was on both “sides”, so that it really helped me. There were many things that I was doing already such as organising activities, helping students participate in projects, organising clubs, I was active in the environment clubs and the*

*disciplinary committee... I think that there are two things that shape us. First there is the training and background that we have. Then, secondly, there is also the life experience that we have... Being a rector for me is a marvellous experience... because you are like the leader. You are there to set the tone and, you are there to set the example.”*

Tina is very fond of her first tenure as school leader. This first experience as school leader made her value team working, even if she was not able to replicate the same experience in subsequent schools.

*“I can tell you that I was really happy at school B SS, because I was with a team working together. This was very encouraging... It was in this period that we introduced the activity periods at school...well more precisely, the extra-curricular activity period. We really did marvellous things at school because we felt like a family. When the school was formed, many of the staff were young. All of us, we wanted to do something for the school... and we were creating the school culture as we went along... To have been involved in such an endeavour has really helped me grow as a rector.”*

According to Tina, much of her success in her first tenure was about the staff development, empowerment and participation.

*“For me, a school is not a ‘one-man show’... Because in a school, a rector cannot do it all alone. In a school, if we do not have the staff with us, and if we do not have the students with us, it is impossible to achieve results. I could sense... I could feel the collaboration. We had to shape up the school. We conducted a number of workshops... actually, we did one each term. This training was important because most of the staff members were very young. We worked together; we did a lot of brainstorming. We had the pedagogical committee, we had the welfare committee, we had the clubs running... I valued all the ideas that came from the staff. There was of course some fine tuning done by me, but it felt like we were all taking the decision together.”*

Tina believes that it is important for a principal to help a vision of quality emerge. First, the school's vision needs to be aligned to the Ministry's and the MGI's vision. The principal feels that it is important to get the whole school to work together to shape a vision.

*“When I joined School B SS, I found that they did not have a proper vision and mission statement. I realised that there was something to be done in that field... First, there was the vision of the Ministry, and secondly there is the vision of the MGI... From this starting point, we tried to formulate the vision, mission and core values of the school. It is a vision that all of us worked together for... It is true that the staff of the school come and go but once we set the vision for the school, it remained there.”*

Tina understands that different principals might have different views and perceptions of the same vision and mission documents of the school. However, irrespective of the differences between successive principals in a school, she feels that the holistic development of the child should be the primary concern.

*“Now, of course, there is a new rector in School B SSS. It may be that the new rector has his own vision, his own way of saying things... Thus, if the rector thinks that the school has to change its vision and mission statement, it can... but this should be for the good of the school. It is very true... The vision that I see, someone else might see it with a different eye. Or, they may not understand it in the same way that we worked it out when I was at School B SS... Of course, the school development plan should be dynamic, but the main principles should be there, that is the MGI vision should be there. We have to cater for the holistic development of the child.”*

Nonetheless, Tina feels a tension between pushing for academic development which shows up in the Ministry's vision and pushing for holistic development which shows up in the vision of the MGI, which she favours.

*“However, I note that while the Ministry seems more concerned about the academic part, the MGI is very concerned about the holistic development aspect... As rectors, we need to be concerned*

*about the academic part. But you also need to consider the other part of the development of the child... We need to see that the child is following the classes and doing the work properly, and we need to minimise the level of indiscipline.”*

Tina however notes that each school is unique, and that the same strategies would not work in different schools. The principal remarks with nostalgia how school B SS was her best school because of the high level of collaboration that she experienced from the staff.

*“I will be frank with you. Of the three schools in which I have been working, my best collaborative team was at School B SS. Because there I could get the collaboration of everyone... the trust was there. They depended a lot on me. They had experienced some problems before, and they had to change. We had to change the school, they had to improve the school and they...we become like... a proper leader.”*

The same experience simply could not be easily replicated in the next school because of the lower levels of collaboration that could be elicited from the staff. Tina had to adapt herself and adjust her expectations to the new school.

*“At School C SS they already had their School Development Plan so that they already had their own way of doing things. There were certain things that I wanted to do and that I used to do at School B SS, but I could not do there... I started it in School B SS, it went on very well and I got the collaboration, but we need to get a team working on that... However, in School C SS for more than a year, I could not get a team.*

*We had to have the people trained and come together to do the activities. Like I said, there were some obstacles on the way that we could not remove. Then, the way of working is not exactly the same... These things can be very subtle... Indeed, there are some very subtle issues. Nonetheless, I took up the challenge and I enjoyed working in School C SS... Even if there were very, very few*

*staff members who collaborated initially, we got things started and started to drag others into the various activities.”*

Tina sees various ways in which schools can be different to work with. For instance, in her current school, she finds that there are many teaching staff having many more years in service than she has.

*“I came here about one and a half year back... Could I have tried and used the same strategies as I have used in other schools, or even here before? No, each school has its differences... We have to adapt. I cannot come here and say I will do this and that. You have to adapt to the school culture. We have to change our strategies, our actions according to the needs of the school and the needs of the students. Many of the staff here are senior staff and some of them are senior to me... They have their own way of working. So, I need to adapt myself to the situation. But... I am getting the collaboration of students also, and this is helping me. With time, I have come to identify staff members with special qualities that we can use for activities... and it is very nice because things are really moving now.”*

The issues of student indiscipline are not the same in the different schools and eventually evolve with time. Moreover, she sees that owing to her strong communication skills, handling discipline has not been difficult.

*“There are problems of indiscipline in all schools. Still, there are some differences between the different schools in which I have worked... However, the problems evolve with time, and new problems appear. But then, for me, maintaining discipline has never been a big issue... It is just that students should know what you mean. You need to talk to them because prevention is more important than cure. I talk to them to prevent certain things from happening, and up to now I think that we have been doing a good job... My perspective is that we have to be very strict with students. If there is a case that has been reported to me, on the same day I will call the parents, talk to the students, explain to them why what they did was not good.”*

Tina believes that managing student behaviour requires channelling the students' energy into activities, that keep them interested in school life. However, Tina recognises that balancing between curricular and non-curricular activities can be difficult.

*“I like organising activities for the students... If I can share something with you, these activities that are organised at school, in some way help us to manage students, and in some way improve discipline at school. Because many times, students misbehave at school because they have got some energy that cannot be channelled properly... But, when we give them the opportunity to participate in activities such as the Duke of Edinburg Award, or be involved with projects that take them on a tour abroad, then the students use this energy in a very good, constructive manner... and it also encourages students to come to school.*

*If nowadays we say that the students just come to school and rectors are there to manage discipline and academic matters... if we continue like this, our kids will not want to come to school! Of course, the work has to be there. I never accept that my students miss a class except on exceptional grounds. But still, we should be able to do both.”*

Tina is very concerned about creating a school atmosphere that is conducive to learning. Nonetheless, she is equally concerned about the quality of instruction in the classrooms. She believes that teachers and students have a role to play in the teaching and learning interaction. Her perspective on the balance between studying and activities is explained by her understanding of how teaching and learning takes place in class.

*“Well, good teaching and learning... it depends a lot on the teachers. First, teachers should be well versed in their subject. They must have a good dose of pedagogy, should understand their students and create a rapport with the students such that the students trust them... That is for the teaching part, in class. However, the teachers must plan their work. They must prepare their work so that when they go class, quality teaching can happen.*

*On the other hand, the students should have the proper frame of mind to understand, so that that learning can take place... If the teachers do their best and the students are not motivated to learn, all the efforts go to waste. The students should be there, prepared, with all their textbooks. They should have their homework done at home, and come with their difficulties, to interact with their teachers... Quality teaching and learning is very important because our main business here at school is teaching and learning... So that also is where discipline comes in, and that's very important."*

Tina has a strong focus on improving teaching and learning in her school. She notes that the reputation of the school and the school leader is dependent on how well students perform in standardised examinations. While she tries to improve teachers by giving them feedback about their teaching, she also involves the parents in the hope of getting the students more engaged in their studies.

*"How to improve teaching and learning is a very important question for a rector to think about and reflect on... Our percentage pass and the quality of our results are important because we are judged, our school is judged according to that... I do not know about state schools but there are a lot of things that we try to do at the level of the MGI. I walk a lot to see what is happening in class.*

*If we see that there is something that is not OK, we call the teachers and talk to them. Otherwise, we hold regular meetings with heads of departments. We check whether we are having certain problems with some members of certain departments... It is expected that the heads of departments do some mentoring on the teachers.*

*Then, we also follow up at the level of students' learning. We monitor the results of students. And if we see that they are not working very well or are failing in a subject, we call the parents. We talk with the parents, and they will know what the problem is. The parents will then be able to monitor the problems at home."*

Tina recognises, however, that it is not always easy to help teachers improve. Thus, in many cases, Tina resolves to ‘managing’ problem teachers rather than improve them.

*“Even if you check on teachers, it does not necessarily produce results... Well, you are a rector yourself and you know that it does not work all the time! You know it is very positive when you talk to certain staff members and they say: we understand, and we are going to do this or that. But it’s true...that’s not for all teachers. We have to manage our teachers... We have to do with what we have... Yes, we have to make the best with what we are getting.”*

Reflecting on her transition from teaching to administration, Tina found that it was easy. She feels that the training that she has received has been useful but notes that there is marked difference between theory and practice.

*“I did not have much problem adapting to management... I followed a few courses that were organised by the MGI. There was one leadership course that was organised over a period of twelve weeks. This was held when I just joined as a deputy rector. It helped a lot... Even the Ministry of Education organised a training for Rectors...and that too helped. Then, there is a management training course that I followed on my own. It is a middle management course that I followed at the Mauritius Institute of Education.”*

Nonetheless, there are moments when she has no clue, looking at theory or at her experience, what to do. She then reflects on good practices from other countries that she has read about, to find solutions to her problems.

*“I then did my Master’s ... There we learnt a lot, but of course, that is just theory and case studies... But then, in practice, things are different. When you are there doing the work, you have to be proactive because there are certain new situations that we do not know how to deal with...then we have to learn by doing it. So, whatever I do, I reflect on it and then I relate it to what is done in other countries and how things are...so this helps me to get ideas of how to do new things or how to do things in a better way.”*

Tina likes to keep track of the situation of teaching and learning in her school. She has found that she can get reliable feedback from walking by the class, or from students after class.

*“First of all, let me tell you from experience. You do not have to go into the class of a particular teacher to see, to say that the teacher is a good teacher... When I walk around, when I see how the teacher is, this gives me an idea. And some teachers, even if I have never been to their class, they are doing it so well that the feedback that I get from students is very good.*

*But there are certain teachers where I can see something lacking, and who need extra support. Then we try to see how we can help. If a teacher in class is just sitting on his chair, and the students are doing their work all the time... then there is something wrong. The teacher should be interacting. The teacher should be asking questions, and letting students talk.”*

When she goes to class, she pays attention to the teacher preparation and to the students’ engagement. She is keen to get a picture of the whole classroom interaction.

*“When you go to class for a class visit... you could be going to an arts class, a language class or you could be going to a science class or you could be going to an economics class. When I go to class, firstly, I will see whether the teacher has got all the documents, the attendance is taken, the lesson plan is there, and the objectives of the lesson are appropriate.*

*And then, I also look at what the students are doing. When I go to class, it’s not just for checking teachers... I tell them at the very beginning that when I come to class, it is just as a help, as a guide to improve what we are doing. On students’ side, I see if they are keeping their copybook clean, if the teachers are signing the copybooks, and if the students are attentive... So, it’s about monitoring the whole classroom situation.”*

Over the years, Tina has found that experience in teaching does not necessarily make for good teaching. The principal feels that the proper attitude is a pre-requisite to make a good teacher.

*“We have all varieties of teachers. Some are experienced and not that good, while there are young and excellent teachers. A teacher can be the ‘senior most’ and not be able to teach... I also have some supply teachers who are doing very well. Firstly, the basic thing is attitude... the attitude of the person. If a person is coming here just to spend some time and earn his money, it is not going to work... We need to love the kids. We need to deliver, and we need to understand that at the end of the day it is very important to that child who is in our class... And that child can be from a poor family, that child cannot go for tuition. So, that what you would be doing for these kids is very important,*

*So, for me a good teacher can be anyone. He can be a senior most or can be a junior. But they must have the proper attitude. And then they must love the kids... It is very difficult to pretend.”*

Tina believes that teacher attitude is the key reason why teaching is so difficult to change.

*“This is why it is difficult to change teachers. I have tried it in a number of cases, and sometimes it works... but in some cases, we have to keep on trying. In general, I will say things in the staff meeting... But if I need to say something on the work of a certain teacher, I will call that teacher one to one. Sometimes, this will happen not even in the presence of my deputy... because teachers do not like it. They feel that they are being monitored.”*

Tina finds that changing teacher culture is very difficult. According to her, debriefing teachers is a very tricky exercise.

*“In fact, there is much to do in terms of teacher professionalism. I think, we have a lot to do there... Very often, and I find it sad, when I say something very sincerely to a teacher, they don’t take it positively... Maybe you have the same experience... And if they do*

*not take it positively, actions will not be taken. So, there goes your feedback... I think in Mauritius, we do not have this idea of reflecting on our work, on coming together to improve... That is the problem!"*

In contrast, Tina finds it easier to work with students whether providing them support or working on indiscipline.

*"Firstly, we try to give them all the support in terms of environment, in terms of technical support, in terms of library facilities... And then we tend to keep very close contact through the student bodies such as the student council. Some of the students come and give feedback... So, we can find out if there is anything wrong and we try to help. We encourage them. When, we see that some classes in particular are having some behaviour problem... we go and talk to them."*

Tina thinks that how principals lead or manage relates to how they integrate all their life experiences and learn from them.

*"I do not believe that the subject area, the subject specialisation of the rector makes a difference... It is more about the experience, what we have been doing, and how we have been teaching. Different teachers do things differently. It all depends on how we have been doing things...these experiences help.*

*Well, my secrets are... there are two of them. Firstly, I love the kids and I would do everything that I can do for them. And secondly, I am a hard worker... I will always be doing something to improve. I think that there is much about my character here... I don't think that anyone going through the same track would necessarily have the same leadership style as me. My experiences must have definitely contributed somewhere... but more important is the person."*

Reflecting on school leadership, Tina finds that school leaders need time to achieve their objectives. It takes time to adapt to a school and to know the stakeholders.

*"It is important that you have the time to implement your ideas, to belong to the school and do the work for the school. If you are going around every two years... I feel I would not like it, because it takes time to adapt to a school. To adapt to a school, it takes one year... I*

*took almost one year to adapt to this school, for me to say I know my kids, I know my teachers.*

*It is very difficult to know, when you do something, how it is going to be taken, how it is going to be perceived, who to go to for what? It takes time to understand this... I think that it takes a minimum of four years to be able to achieve something for the school."*

Tina feels that the school leader has a lot to contribute to the school, for the improvement of teaching and learning. However, there are also constraints within the educational system that have negative impact on the teaching and learning situations.

*"First, let us take it at the management level: the rector being an instructional leader. A rector in a school is a very important person because whatever is happening will be what the rector wants to see... For example, if I see something that is not correct, all of a sudden, I will stop it... So, the rector has an important role to play, whether it be the monitoring of the teaching, or of the learning of students...*

*Secondly, it's about how the system affects the teachers... I feel that there are many teachers who are not motivated to work... they are not giving their best. Perhaps there are certain problems such as heavy workload or not enough time for them to sit together and plan the work. Maybe we should give teachers more time for that."*

Then, Tina reflects on the selection process that sometimes recruits inappropriate people to become teachers. She feels that being a good teacher requires innate qualities, and this should be taken into account in the selection process. She also criticises the lack of follow up on the continuous professional development of teachers.

*"It's true, not everyone is born to be a teacher. There are many teachers who are here because they do not have anything else to do. They are not born...it is not in their blood to be a teacher. But then, if you have a proper screening of the recruitment process so that we recruit the right person... That would make a big difference because , at the level of the school, we do not have a say in the teachers that*

*we get... If we get teachers motivated and prepared to do the job for the kids, we would have much different results.*

*Attitude is also important when we come to continuing training. I have done a lot of training. So, this helps me... It helps somewhere but for some people it may not help.... I will tell you. I will give you an example... How many teachers go to follow a course at the MIE? It is the same course. Some of them get the certificates and then forget about it and there are others who will really try to apply it...to apply certain principles.”*

Moreover, Tina believes that there is a need within the education system for high level cadre to be more aware of what is actually happening within schools, and how the constraints within the system impact quality.

*“Well, we have to make them come together and discuss, because there are many things that at a higher level they do not know. There are problems at the root level that, may be as a director, they won't understand... Maybe we have to make them work together. So, instead of making it top down, we can take suggestions from rectors, teachers and students... from the school on what to improve... We cannot put all the blame on the rectors or the teachers because we are not happy about the quality of the SC or HSC results.*

*We are doing many things because we know that we have to do it, but we've got a lot of constraints. For example, a class of 40... A teacher with 40 students? How much quality teaching can we do? Can we continue talking of quality teaching... if we keep this parameter the same? There should be flexibility... We should first always ask the question: are we helping the learning?”*

### **5.2.5.3 Analytical summary**

Tina's first tenure was a learning experience that continues to shape her principalship, even if she has not been able to replicate its success. She notes that she was driven to grow as a leader by the high-quality collaboration of the staff. The principal sees a big difference between theory and practice. She finds that there are many practical situations for which theory gives no answer.

This points to the gap between theory and practice (Salazar, 2007; Robinson *et al.*; 2008; Weisberg *et al.*, 2009) discussed in chapters 1 and 3. Her experience points to the dynamic and interactive nature of leadership (Kemmis *et al.* , 2014; Congo-Poottaren, 2015), that was discussed in chapter 3. Her contrast between urban and rural schools draws attention to the importance of culture (Barth, 2002; Marks and Printy, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Gurr, 2008) in shaping school leadership.

Tina consistently uses the democratic leadership approach (Lewin *et al.*,1939). She needs the collaboration of teachers to get things moving around the school. She tries to be attentive to the existing school culture before trying to change it (Barth, 2002; Marks and Printy, 2003; Fullan, 2005). She acknowledges that certain aspects of the school culture are so enduring that it can seem ineffectual to try to change them. This points to the limits to the power of the principal in the school context (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004; Cohen, 2005).

Even if, like John, she insists that a school should be guided by a vision and mission statement, Tina handles the concept of vision quite differently from John. She uses it as a tool to motivate stakeholders, rather than to trigger transformational changes. Moreover, she appears strongly committed to her mission. Overall, Tina's leadership is a blend of the democratic (Lewin *et al.*,1939). and transformational (Burns, 1978) styles, which she adapts according to the context and the circumstances, as in the situational leadership model (Hersey & Blanchard, 1971).

Tina, as the other principals, appears to have a clear understanding of teaching and what contributes to the quality of teaching in class. According to her, good teaching requires teachers to have subject mastery and good pedagogy. The teachers should develop a good rapport with the students, and the students must trust the teachers. Moreover, the teachers should plan the delivery of their lessons well. However, she believes that the active collaboration of students to the learning process is required (Pitkäniemi, 2010) for learning to take place effectively.

Tina sees teaching as a complex performance (Smith & Ennis, 1961; Jackson, 1962; Green, 1971; Freeman, 1973; Smith, 2008), as noted in chapter 3. She notes that the quality of the relationship between the teacher and the student is a prerequisite to quality teaching and learning (James, 1977; Murphy *et al.*, 2004; Devine *et al.*, 2013). While recognising the teachers' contribution to a student's success (Pipho, 1998), Tina, in contrast to the other participants, places a high premium on the

collaboration of the students to a quality teaching and learning process. This reminds us of Pitkäniemi's (2010) position on "teaching-studying-learning" discussed on chapter 3.

Tina seems to believe that the problem that she finds with teacher professionalism is related to the quality of teacher candidates (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). She feels that teaching is a vocation, and that not anyone can be a teacher. She finds that, most of the time, teachers tend not to engage in reflective practice or seek to improve their practice. This goes against the frameworks respectively proposed by Danielson (2007), Stronge (2007) and Devine *et al.* (2013) and confirms what has been noted in other contexts by Williams and Grudnoff (2011) or Martins *et al.* (2015).

Tina seems to be critical of the policy narrative on instructional improvement. She made a passionate and urgent appeal to open a new dialogue between the decision makers and the school stakeholders, because she saw a disconnect between them. She notes that there are many systemic constraints to quality of teaching and learning. According to her, neither the principals nor the teachers can resolve these. Moreover, she seemed to see the focus on performance, discussed in chapter 1 (Tawil *et al.*, 2011; Ah-Teck & Hung, 2014), as counter-productive. The school needs to be more interesting and fun for students, or improvements in learning will not happen.

### **5.3 Chapter Summary**

In chapter 5, the participants were introduced, and the first tier of the data analysis was presented. For each participant, a narrative portrait vetted by the participant was put forward. Following each portrait, an analytic summary was presented highlighting important themes in the portrait and links to other portraits. While each participant's portrait stands on its own, it is clear that they relate to each other through commonalities in the participants' experiences.

In chapter 6, the participants' stories are made to talk to each other and to the literature. The second tier of analysis which consists of looking into the themes and structures used by the participants as school leaders, is presented in section 6.2. In section 6.3, the third tier of analysis examines the participants' narratives through the lens of theoretical reference frameworks on teaching and instructional

leadership respectively. Finally, from the findings of the different narrative analyses, a synthesis is presented in section 6.4.

# Chapter 6 Stories talking

## 6.1 Prelude to a dialogue

In chapter 6, section 6.2, the interactions between the stories are explored more deeply than in chapter 5. As part of the analysis process, this particular section has been re-written a number of times. With each iteration, the presentation became less participant-centric and more conceptually driven as narratives emerged, pulling the participants' stories into a conversation. It is clear that such a choice has the immediate impact of losing some of the idiosyncrasies of the participants.

However, by using such an approach, we gain understanding of the participants' stories in a broader context. The comparison between the participants' stories is presented in six themes: (i) the life stages of the principal (ii) the impact of school contexts on school leadership (iii) the agency of the principal (iv) the centrality of trouble (v) the norms and culture of education, and (vi) the challenges of school leadership and instructional leadership. The cross-comparison of the participants' narratives has been tabulated and is placed at Appendix E.

In section 6.3, the stories of the participants are made to talk back to the reference frameworks for teaching and instructional leadership, which reflect the literature and theories reviewed. From this interaction, nine observations are made concerning how the participants address quality of teaching, instructional leadership and related issues.

In section 6.4, the findings of the previous tiers of data analysis are brought together through the meta-narrative of school being a dangerous context, where teaching and instructional leadership can be messy processes. The synthesis is centred on a number of themes related to the impact of conflict on school leadership, the complexity of school contexts, the difficulty of learning on the job, the standards of success and the role of the school principal.

## 6.2 Stories ‘talking to each other’

### *Opening the dialogue*

A comparison between the life stories of the different participants has pointed to a number of distinct time periods which structure the stories. These time periods correspond to stages in the professional life of the participants. Furthermore, within these different periods, a number of themes have been noted to be very significant to the unfolding of the principals’ stories and of their careers.

### *Looking at professional life stages*

A comparison of the life stories of the five principals indicates a number of common key events that guide a similar unfolding of the stages of the professional lives of principals. Five distinct time segments were noted in the stories, corresponding to significant professional life stages of the principals. These life stages are represented in figure 1 below.

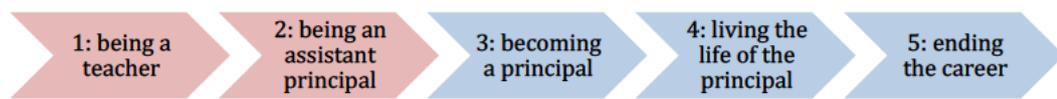


Figure 1: Professional life stages of a principal

Segment 1 refers to moments of the participants’ professional lives when they were still teachers, but that are now relevant to them as principals. Segment 2 refers to moments of the participants’ professional lives when they were still assistant principals, but that are now relevant to them as principals. Stories from segments 1 and 2 are significant because they indicate how specific experiences shaped their principles for action and their motivations. Segment 3 refers to the beginning of the principals’ career. During this period, the participants acquired hands-on understanding about what it is to be a principal. They met with various types of challenges, which they had to resolve. It is to be noted that the duration of this phase varied according to each participant.

Segment 4 is the stage when the principals have acquired confidence in their ability. All the participants are, at the time of the interviews in segment 4 “living the life of the principal”. They considered themselves well established, having successfully handled a number of challenges faced earlier. They were fully engaged in the

principal's work life, both with its routine and surprises. Segment 5 is a period when the principals approach the end of their career. They take stock of their achievements or lack thereof and start to think of their legacy.

It is noted, however, that only segments 2, 3 and 4 are present in the stories of all five principals. John, Jenny and Tina refer to segment 1, and only John, Ben and Tim refer to segment 5 in their stories. Transitions or anticipated transitions in professional stages are significant in the principals' narrations. John, while firmly installed in segment 4, was considering that he had already accomplished many of the things that he wanted to do as a principal. However, he was giving thought to his end of career and was hoping to spend his last years as a principal in the same school to enjoy the fruits of his labour.

Jenny's transition from segment 3 to segment 4 was accompanied by the distress of being thrust into an unknown environment and having to learn the job alone. Ben, in contrast, is worried about the toll of the daily stress on his health condition. Even if at the moment of the interviews, he was contemplating ending his career, he felt that might come abruptly. Tim, for his part, was thinking about his legacy and how people would remember him. He felt that his current school was not the last school. He was worried about how he would perform in stage 5 and the next school. At the time of the interviews, Tina had experienced living in segment 4 in two schools previously. These experiences appear to be the strongest influences in her practice, at the time of the interviews.

The transition, between the beginning period of the principals to that when they are well established, was noted as significant in this research. The importance of this transition has been reported by a number of researchers in other contexts (Lovely, 2004; Clark *et al.*, 2009). Locating the time periods illustrated in the participants' data allows a clear organisation of the data. However, there are additional structures that are visible, and that distinguish the participants further.

The two segments of time that are of special relevance to this study are segments 3 and 4. These are considered in more detail, further on, in this section. Indeed, they do relate strongly to instructional leadership from the perspective of the school leader, which is a theme that drives the research. Nonetheless, it is recognised that the other segments do have an effect on the overall narrative concerning the principals' work life. The influence of the external contexts is also strongly felt. In

the next section, we consider how these interleave the stories and the work lives of the principals.

### *The context of the principals' stories*

As the different participants weave together the overall story of their work-life, it can be noted that they interleave many narratives. These set the context to the personal stories of the principals. Three meso-level narratives, used by all the principals, are described here. The first one concerns the public's perception of schools. Principals are acutely aware of the reputation of schools, which leads them to be apprehensive of changes in posting. The second one concerns the divide between national schools and regional schools. National schools are described as good schools with a different kind of school culture as compared to regional schools. The third one concerns the urban versus the rural school divide. Schools in rural regions are described as having more cooperative staff who respect the authority of the principal, as compared to urban schools.

Two macro-level narratives concerning professionalism are noted in the principals' stories. The first one concerns the professionalism of the teaching staff in schools. All five principals agree that there is generally a problem with the professional attitude of teachers. Clearly, the principals do not agree on the proportion of teachers in service who are not doing a good job. However, they all agree that there is a significant number of teachers who should not be in that job.

The second and even more surprising narrative concerns the professionalism of principals themselves. Two striking elements of this particular narrative are considered below. The first element relates to the relationship between the participants and their former principals. John, Jenny, and Tina describe how, as teachers, they used to assist their principals to organise extracurricular activities for the school. In the case of John, he was assigned many administrative duties that would have been more appropriately discharged by an assistant principal or the principal himself. However, it is noted that while the participants were being shaped to be of good assistance to administration, none described being given pedagogical advice or support.

The second element is the relationship with other principals, as peers. John, Jenny, Ben, and Tim all express strong criticism concerning the lack of professionalism of

many principals, more especially those that they have replaced when posted to new schools. The five main criticisms formulated against the other principals are: lack of competence, laziness, inability to maintain discipline, poor ethics, and lack of devotion to their school.

Three very significant meta-narratives can also be found in the participants' stories. The first one, shared by all the principals, is about the power relationships between the principals and the other stakeholders, especially teachers and students. John, Ben and Tim, although different in their ways, display the paternalistic leadership approach (Farh & Cheng, 2000; Pellegrini & Scandura, 2008; Rehman & Afsar, 2012) that was discussed in chapter 3. That these three principals actually use this leadership style, and the difference in the way they use it could be related to the diversity of cultural background and the Asian influence discussed in chapter 2. Indeed, all three want to project benevolence and strength.

John and Tim will apparently not hesitate to punish teachers and students who transgress certain limits. John, for instance, called for the immediate transfer of a teacher who refused to do more than the established number of working periods for a head of department. Tim does not hesitate to use corporal punishment with students. Jenny and Ben rely on the cooperation of staff and students, despite the limitations of the approach. Jenny, for her part, limits her use of formal authority, out of fear of reprisals. Ben, out of conviction, will use formal authority as a last resort. Tina, for her part, is very aware of power relationships. While she prefers to use democracy and teamwork, she has found that not all school cultures welcome democratic practices from principals.

The second meta-narrative concerns the relationship between the schools and the students. As a key stakeholder group, students are becoming emancipated of school as a social system. Jenny, Ben, Tim, and Tina have noted that students have less respect for the school discipline today, and they are not necessarily interested in attending school. Indeed, Tina notes that the school needs to evolve to become more appealing to students. This suggests that there has been a very important social shift.

A third meta-narrative is that of ethnicity. It is found in the stories of four principals, as mentioned earlier in the section on the centrality of conflict. It is clear that the principals and the various school stakeholders are very aware of their own ethnic identity. Such a situation poses two significant challenges for the school. Firstly, in

a context where ethnicity is exacerbated, how the principals perceive a given situation may be strongly clouded by ethnicity. Secondly, it poses the converse problem that how the principals are perceived may depend on their ethnicity rather than actual actions or performance.

From the narrative perspective, these different layers provide contextual information that foreground the personal stories of the participants. On a deeper level, it can be argued some layers can provide justifications for the actions and decisions of the principals. However, ultimately, these higher-level narratives do set clear limitations on the principal's and the school's agencies in driving change.

### *Agency in principals' stories*

An important theme, that is found in the narratives of the principals concerning their professional life stories, is how they negotiate their agency. In this sub-section, we consider how the five principals have faced and dealt with challenges, that have impacted their ability to be strong school leaders. Human agency arises from beliefs and values, amongst other things (Bruner 1996). Despite being formal leaders, the principals find moments in the school life where formal roles of authority do not necessarily grant the power to lead changes within the school community.

In his debut as a principal, John thought of his job as managing administrative processes. However, he came to the realisation that being a principal was about leading people such that he eventually focused on learning about leadership and leading his school. Just as John chose to become a principal and be recognised for his skills, he chose to make his school become more visible. Yet, the gains in visibility were apparently achieved at the expense of focus on instructional matters. John's decision to make the school more visible can thus appear as driven by his personal ambitions, in the light of his earlier decisions. Indeed, while high visibility projects benefit the school's reputation, they benefit the principal's reputation as well. This marked a turning point in John's career when he started to take actions with long-term impact on his school. Moreover, it is felt that high visibility projects can be construed as being initiated by principals with strong agency and thus enhance the image of principals.

Ben's sense of agency is central to the unfolding of his story. At the start of his first tenure, in a new school, he had to contend with a very difficult school climate and found that he had very little means of direct action on the school. Looking for ways

to handle the school, he came across the concept of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995) that appealed to him, and he decided to try it out with a big reported success. At this turning moment, Ben decided that managing emotional intelligence is a powerful approach to leading his school and henceforth developed his practice around that core principle. Both Ben's placement in a particular school and his serendipitous discovery of emotional intelligence had an effect on his eventual decision to centre his practice on managing emotional intelligence. By understanding the agency of others through the emotional intelligence construct, Ben was able to create a space to develop his own agency.

Jenny experienced a strong agency crisis when she encountered a complex student sit-in situation. She feels that she could not resolve the issues she faced because she would not renounce her moral values. She now feels let down by the MOEHR despite having done a good job. As a result of her negative experience, she is now careful about being accepted by the school stakeholders first, before trying to change things significantly. Jenny is now acutely aware of the need to obtain the approval of parents, teachers, and students. For instance, she will discuss any important measure with a teacher team before rolling it out to the whole school. She is also content to sponsor initiatives proposed by teachers of her school when she feels it will achieve her agenda. Jenny's agency has clearly been reduced. Even if she is the formal leader of the school, she feels that she can no longer impose her preferred ways. She will often restrict herself to actions that she feels her teachers will accept. Moreover, she notes that with time in the school, she is better accepted and that her agency increases. After two years in her current school, Jenny is, at last, experiencing the relief of having some room to manoeuvre.

Early in his narration, Tim wants to convey the idea that his apprenticeship to his mentor gave him very good tools to be a strong principal. However, as the story of his first tenure as principal unfolds, he explains how he was lucky to get things working well, which changes his initial main narrative. In describing his second tenure, he is rather discreet about his accomplishments. He explains lengthily how that particular school was difficult to manage. Tim attributes his difficulties to a rural setting, the poor academic background of the students and a lot of unrest due to various inter-ethnic tensions in the area. Tim was interviewed while in his third tenure as principal. Talking about his third school, he is very critical of the previous

principal whom he holds responsible for many of the difficulties that were being faced. The way Tim's stories evolve after his first tenure make us wonder about the truth of the initial discourse. While initially Tim described his ability to change things in the school processes and the school culture, he subsequently spent a lot of time describing why he was not able to repeat his successes.

Tina's stories reveal a pattern similar to that found in Tim's stories. The initial portrayal of a strong principal progressively gives way to a narrative of the principal having to negotiate the compliance of various members of the school community. Tina suggests that she had an easy entry into the profession because she managed to get a young and supportive team to assist her. She attributes her success in her first tenure to her understanding of school management, acquired through the job induction training that she underwent. However, during the second tenure, she found it difficult to replicate the same processes that she had installed in her first school and the same successes. Interviewed in her third tenure, Tina appeared to be resigned to her limitations as principal. She understood that her ability to effect changes in her school depended much on what the teachers were willing to implement, especially that many of the teachers were quite experienced.

It appears that all five principals are very intent on creating a good impression, and present their principalship as successful. However, it is also clear, from the principals' inability to replicate or maintain success in time, that there are many factors collaborating to their success or setting up their failures. Clearly, one significant systemic issue for principals is that they have to face conflict throughout their professional lives.

### ***The centrality of trouble in the principals' work lives***

Bruner (1996) posits that "trouble" or conflict has a central place in narrative realities. In this sub-section, we consider the different types of conflict that the principals may face during their workday, and how their professional life is actually shaped by conflict. As was discussed earlier, a principal is expected to be strong. This implicitly means that there are inherent difficulties that are present in secondary schools, which the principals have to face successfully. Even if the principals may have very idiosyncratic approaches, they do appear to face similar types of hard-to-solve problems.

In Ben's description of his first school as a principal, he portrays a school culture that is difficult to cope with. Ben's story challenges the conventional narrative of the principal being in control of his school (Ah-Teck & Starr, 2014). Students are depicted as not interested with school and unwilling to collaborate with school. The school administration was powerless, and the situation had largely brought the school to a standstill. Instead of seeking to enforce discipline straightaway, Ben tried inculcating manners in the students, while maintaining an open dialogue. Eventually, as the large-scale indiscipline was resolved to a large extent, the focus turned towards a new significant trouble: a small number of student leaders who openly flouted school regulations. At this point, the story takes a twist. One of these students' leaders decided to make amends and to help school administration overtly. Even as conflicts seemed to subside within the school, disputes involving students and occurring in the school neighbourhood became worrying. Eventually, even if Ben, as a principal, was able to solve certain problems, or mitigate them, others were clearly beyond his means to solve.

There are various kinds of conflict that are occurring at all times around schools, and three sources of conflict that are common to the five principals' stories are discussed next. A first potential source of conflict is student indiscipline, which may arise from various causes. Immediately, it is clear that each of the participants approaches indiscipline in a different and personal way. While John and Tina do believe in channelling the students' energies to a more productive use, Jenny opts for more pastoral care. Ben chooses more empathetic communication, and Tim prefers frank conversations with students. Despite the different approaches chosen by the principals, it is clear that controlling student indiscipline is always a work in progress. Indeed, while John and Tim come from very different personal philosophies, they believe that they need to constantly walk around the school to avert problems that may quickly get out of hand.

A second potential source of conflict that is mentioned by four principals is ethnicity. As was discussed in chapter 2, ethnicity is an important issue in the Mauritian social and political arenas. Unsurprisingly, ethnicity affects schools in a number of different ways. For instance, John believes that the best students of his school belong to a certain "minority group", more specifically Tamils. Jenny attributes many of the problems that she faced to racism against her, because she

belongs to a certain ethnic group. Ben shares that there were many difficulties in one of his previous schools because there were many students belonging to the 'Creole' community. Furthermore, he feels that his ability to speak Hindi facilitated his acceptance by the school community in a rural area.

Tim for his part explains that he faced serious difficulties in maintaining discipline in a particular school, where ethnic tensions had flared up between Hindu and Muslim students. Tim also shares his concerns that the selection of principals for state secondary schools is strongly affected by consideration of ethnicity. The notion of ethnicity is a strong feature of the school context, and it might influence the decision of principals on a daily basis.

A third potential source of conflict that is shared by all the principals is the evaluation of teachers and providing feedback on teaching. In chapter 3, it was noted that culture influenced teaching at various levels (Bruner, 1996; Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, Keedy, 2005; Wallace, 2009; Ripley, 2013). However, some of the principals seemed to attempt changes in teaching while ignoring the cultural transformation required (Heifetz and Linsky, 2002; Houchens & Keedy, 2009). While the central business of a school is teaching and learning (Mulford *et al.*, 2004; Pont *et al.*, 2008; Schlechty, 2009), the principals do not systematically provide feedback to teachers on their work, or spend much time on this activity.

We note that four principals seem content to, whenever possible, transfer the responsibility of evaluating teachers and debriefing them, to officers of the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division. Indeed, John, Jenny, Ben, and Tim have described how they report poor performing teachers to the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division for class inspection. Moreover, such an approach appears to be a means of exerting pressure on teachers, who fear such interventions, according to John and Ben.

Finally, a fourth potential source of conflict relates to how the Ministry perceives situations in schools and evaluates the work of the principals. Apart from Tina, who speaks consistently of support from her supervising Director, and John who claims to have support at the level headquarters of the MOEHR, the remaining three participants speak of the lack of support either from their immediate directors or the MOEHR. Indeed, they describe how, when faced with difficult situations in

their schools, they failed to get the help requested. Moreover, they were blamed and criticised, which seems to now create much professional anxiety.

Each kind of trouble attracts the attention of the principals with a different sense of urgency. Eventually, all of them shape the daily agenda of the principals. As in Ben's story, students' lack of interest in schooling reflects social-cultural issues. Solving them perhaps implies long-term interventions in the school community, and Ben does not have these resources.

### *Norms and culture of education*

A common element of the principals' stories is how these interact with some strong narratives already existing within the Mauritian education system. One of these master narratives, already presented in chapter 1, is that principals are strong leaders and well in control of their schools. This was noted in Ah-Teck & Starr's (2014) study where principals claimed to be able to drive and maintain changes in quality. Tim's narratives are strongly driven by the issue of control and illustrate the importance of this particular master narrative. His story that he literally breezed through his beginning career as a principal appears aligned with the script of the principal as a strong leader. He explains how the excellent mentoring of his previous principal and the few periods in which he had acted as replacing principal had helped him master his role as principal.

However, further ahead, Tim's story takes a new turn. He explains how he had managed to avert the usual beginning pitfalls by finding the support of teachers to handle discipline and other school management issues successfully. Eventually, Tim recognises that to be a principal, one had to show strong resolve and have strong principles. This draws our attention to the fact that he must have experienced serious difficulties. The initial rhetoric serves to run the canonical script of a "strong principal in charge of his school".

However, eventually the narrative seems to change to "I had difficulties that I managed to overcome". This shift is very significant because Tim from draws from it the legitimacy of being a seasoned and battle-hardened principal. What is even more interesting to consider here is that Tim, as a narrator of his early career, might have himself considered that his initial storyline would make his story too extravagant. Thus, as the narration progressed, he tried to return to a plot line that seemed more in line with what he feels is common experience of principals.

A second master narrative, that is encountered in the principals' narratives, relates to the importance of private tutoring. Bray (2007) has described the pervasive nature of private tutoring in the Mauritian educational system. This issue has a significant impact on important factors such as student absenteeism or teacher commitment. Considering the importance of private tutoring and how it affects secondary schools, it is surprising that only one principal out of the five broaches the subject directly.

Ben indeed explains how today parents are more concerned about their wards attending private tuition rather than school. Students tend to rely on private tutors whenever they are not satisfied with the performance of teachers at schools. Moreover, teachers tend to do less in class, because they are inclined to suppose that all their students will resort to private tutoring. Tina, while not taking the subject head on, expresses concerns about students not being interested in school these days, and on the need to motivate them to attend school.

The third master narrative concerns the perception of the amount of formal authority that is wielded by the school, as an organisation. The school is bound to follow a number of laws and regulations. By virtue of these, as head of school, the principal is attributed certain responsibilities and decision-making abilities. Yet, all five principals, at multiple locations in their respective stories, talk of the decline of the principal's authority and the respect of the stakeholders for the school as an institution. Teachers are bound by a scheme of service that clearly define their job responsibilities. Nonetheless, teachers may challenge their principals either in subtle power plays or very overtly. The disputes may range from not implementing daily lesson plans to staging protests. Eventually, the principals appear wary of open confrontation and seem more inclined to maintain a *status quo* where possible.

Students are themselves bound by the rules and regulations of their respective schools. Yet, students may also raise stakes in their contestation of disciplinary measures. At the same time, traditional disciplinary measures appear to have become quite ineffective to amend behaviours. Parents, for their part, may harass teachers and principals alike by writing anonymous letters to the MOEHR which, in turn, exerts a lot of pressure on the principals. Thus, despite an apparent position of authority at the head of a prestigious organisation, principals of state secondary schools are much constrained in their actual ability to take actions.

A fourth master narrative noted in the participants' stories relates to the model of professional learning of principals. In the Mauritian education context, there is the expectation that principals have acquired their competence as instructional leaders, mostly from their tenure as teachers. The principals participating in the study had actually been selected by interview from their experience as vice-principals and as teachers. In 2016, the requirements for becoming a vice-principal were amended to increase the minimum teaching experience requirement to fifteen years, with no other change. Indeed, this is still in line with the EHRSP (MOEHR, 2008) and the School Management Manual (MOEHR, 2009a), where the principals are seen to be experts of teaching by virtue of their own teaching experience.

Looking at the stories of the five participants, it is noted that all of them did proceed through their career as principals with little formal support and training from their respective supporting administration. Actually, four principals: John, Jenny, Ben, and Tina speak of a short leadership training that they received. For three of them, the training took place when they were already well established as principals. Ben speaks quite harshly against such training because it has proven to be inapplicable to his school context. However, only two principals reported that they had to seek knowledge beyond what they had acquired from their teaching experience or provided with during their limited in-service training. The role of experience in the unfolding of leadership practice thus appears significant. In the next sub-section, the development and contextualisation of leadership practice is discussed.

### ***Leadership and instructional leadership***

Bruner (2004) draws a parallel between life and narrative: "Narrative imitates life, life imitates narrative". The stories collected give the insight that the professional life of principals is not only filled with trouble, but that it is shaped by having to deal with trouble constantly. It appears that all five principals have retrenched from apparently risky decision-making, and do lead some rather superficial change initiatives instead. This shows us that the practice of the principal is not only affected by the knowledge, values, and skills that they bring to the job, but also by the daily experience of having to deal with problems that they might not be able or willing to solve. Moreover, the leadership of the principals evolves with experience on the job. In the next sub-sections, we shall focus on the stages 3 and 4 of the

professional life of the principals, which have been noted to be of greater relevance and significance to this inquiry.

The narrative time segment 3 in Figure 1, “becoming a principal”, covers the debut of the principals, starting with entering the job, facing the various challenges involved and experiencing personal transformation. A number of different themes have been identified within that period in the participants’ narratives, and have been represented graphically in figure 2 below.

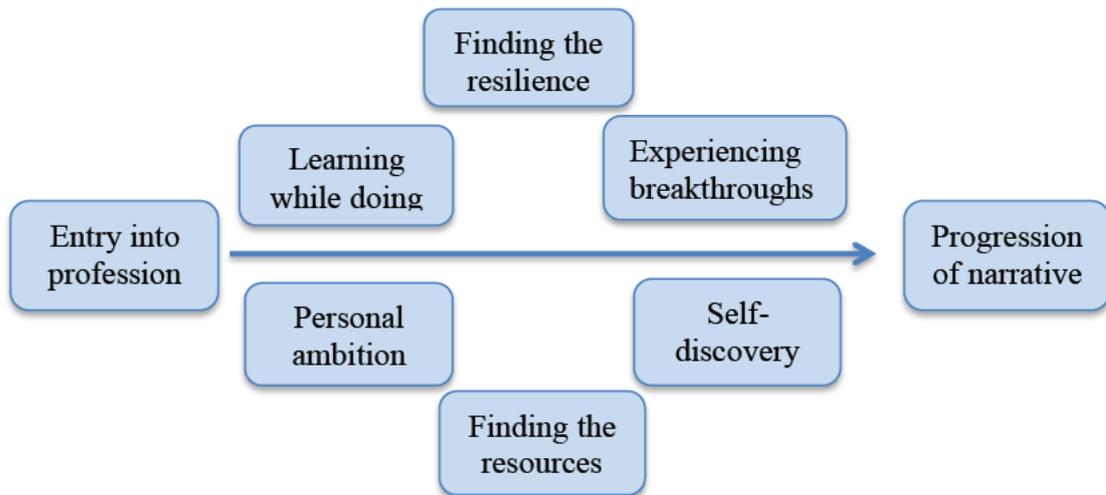


Figure 2: Becoming a principal

Apart from routine and “safe” decisions, principals can quickly be hard pressed to take measures, without the benefit of experience. At this early point in their career, they often reconsider their motives for taking up the job of principal. From facing the various challenges, the novice principals learn about the job and the school as they go along. This learning involves key realisations, forming guiding principles, learning to manage time, prioritising issues and working with others. This period can be stressful for the principals, who have to learn resilience. Eventually, the principals emerge from this period, transformed in a personal way, and this experience has a profound incidence on their subsequent practice.

Three principals namely Jenny, Tim and Tina talk of their early experiences on entering the profession. Tim describes a very easy entry into the profession and finding himself in a position where he could now apply the principles acquired from his mentor when he was an assistant principal. He also describes feeling very confident about his ability to cope. Jenny, in contrast, seemed to have experienced considerable stress. She had been assistant principal in a girls’ school and learnt

about managing a school there. After that period, she was rather scared of working in a boys' school, especially one with a bad reputation. She speaks of being very worried about having to go over the process of learning about a school, but this time taking the full responsibility of the school. Tina, in comparison, appeared to have handled the stress of the initial period much better than Jenny. She attributes this to finding the necessary resources in the induction training organised by the school directors.

Central to becoming a principal is learning on the job. Even Tim, who prides himself of having been effective right from the start, acknowledges that he essentially observed the school functioning for one full week to learn about the school, before starting to take important decisions. The challenge for Tim was about finding out how to apply his core principles and procedures in a new school. For Ben, a first challenge was learning to lead people and setting up teams to assist him in running the school. Here, we note that both John and Tina faced a similar challenge. John, for his part, had previously thought that a principal had to be good at administrative duties. Instead, he found that it was mostly about leading people.

For Ben, another challenge was to understand the culture of the school, and tackling the various problems associated with it. While dealing with routine and daily difficulties, he strained to find his breakthrough, which would come serendipitously with his learning about the concept of emotional intelligence. Based on this concept, he formulated an approach that would eventually allow him to resolve the problems of his school, starting with very difficult students. Jenny recognises that she had to face various difficulties, too many to mention. Yet, looking back, she sees her experiences as having contributed to her learning and growth. Jenny's breakthrough appeared to have come after one year in her first school. When the school certificate examinations results were published, she found that the students had performed well. This was for her a validation of her work at school.

For Tim, this breakthrough appeared to have come in less than one year, when he successfully managed to apply the principles acquired from his mentor. Ben's breakthrough was when he managed to apply his newly found principle to turn around the school. At the end of the first term, when students lined up outside his office to greet him before the school holidays, Ben was at first shocked. But then, he realised that he had successfully acquired the students' collaboration. Two

principals, Tim and Ben, speak clearly of their resilience being put to the test. Tim recognises that sometimes he had tough decisions to make. For Ben, achieving success was good because the challenge had drained him physically and emotionally. For Jenny and John, it would seem that personal ambition i.e. their desire to be head of school, had been a resource on which to draw resilience.

The beginning period was indeed a period of self-discovery for the five principals, culminating in recognising themselves as competent. Tim found that he had to stick to some core values to be a good principal. Ben, for his part found he had developed his character and effective communication skills, an achievement of which he was quite proud. For Jenny, this period was a journey towards discovering deep personal values. As a teacher, she had always cared about developing and helping students. Now as a principal, she has realised that her leadership was about caring for others.

John’s key discovery has been that being a principal is all about leadership and commitment. He now believes that he has to inspire the school community with a vision if he is to see his “dream school” become a reality. Having been exposed early on to theories about school leadership, Tina for her part realised that she had to blend theory and practice, if she was to grow in the job. She also discovered that a principal could not lead the school alone. She henceforth focussed team development.

The narrative time segment 4 in Figure 1, “living the life of the principal”, covers the period when the principals feel well-established in their schools. A generic structure was noted within segment 4 as described in figure 3 below.

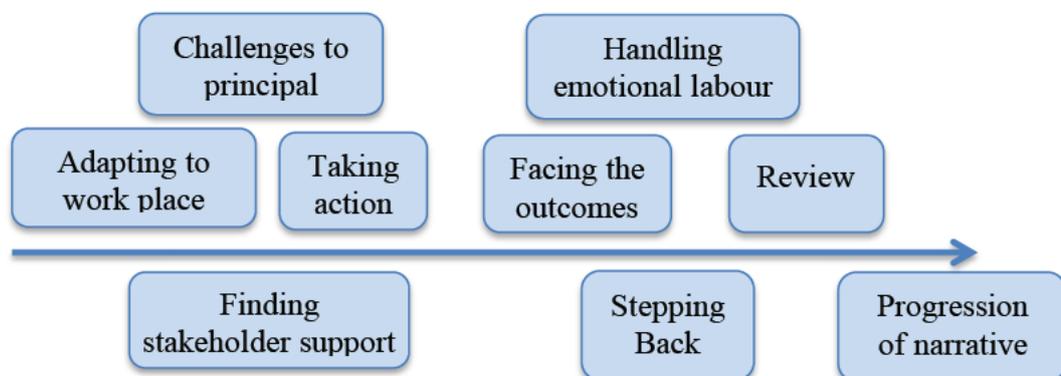


Figure 3: Living the life of the principal

There is clearly more complexity than in the previous segment. The principals can change school several times in a career. The work-life narrative is rebooted, with the principals having to restart the process i.e. adapting to the new school environment. Moreover, the challenges that the principals face may fully enter the picture right from the beginning, or come unexpectedly at a later stage.

Sooner or later, the principals need help to get the school management processes working. They need support from key stakeholders, including teachers, administrative staff, students, parents-teachers association, and MOEHR officials. As the principals enter a school, they need to learn about it. This is both about observing and learning as you do. The principals have to draw on their principles, experiences, and knowledge in order to make decisions. They do have some routine-based decisions to make. However, they also have to take actions that concern changing school procedures, adopting new routines, or achieving long-term objectives.

Trying to get the school embrace changes intended to bring about desired improvements may stir up resistance. This inevitably changes the position of stakeholders and crystallise yet unseen challenges. Having set things in motion, the principals have to manage the processes. At the same time, there can be a significant amount of time and energy spent over urgent unforeseen events or accidents. At this stage, the principals also have to take strategic decisions on how to spend their time, and what to focus on. Depending on the outcome, the principals may have to take stock and decide on a new approach to attain their objectives, or set new ones. This takes them back to the stage where they have to take actions.

Data from our participants shows that being a principal is about being fully engaged with the school, both intellectually and emotionally. Handling stress on a daily basis takes a toll on the principals. This may lead them to review their principles and the scope of their work, in order to decrease the stress. The principals may also feel the need to “step back” from their routines and immediate concerns. Looking at the system, they reflect on their principles and strategies either, to improve outcomes or decide how successful they are at their job. This narrative time period, with its multiple recursive loops, is thus even more complex than the beginning period of the principal. As the principals move from one school to another, it appears to be the start of a new story, beginning with adapting to the new school.

The same generic storyline would be applicable to principals who move from “becoming a principal” to “living the life of a principal” while being in the same school. As the new principals gain confidence, they can start to take actions beyond the basic routines required by school life. They may seek to bring more profound changes within the school. As the school community aligns to the new directions proposed by the principals, challenges and opportunities may manifest, affecting the principals’ perception of the school.

The eight major themes, that contribute to structuring the narrative period “living the life of a principal”, in the stories of the participants are discussed briefly below.

#### *Adapting to the workplace*

Of the five participants, John was the only one who was relatively new to the profession. At the time of the interview, he had been a principal for less than five years and had been tenured in only one school. In contrast, all the other participants had each experienced at least three schools as principals and had each at least nine years of experience in the post. One very striking feature of the stories of the principals is that success in one school does not guarantee that there will be the same kind of success in the next school, as can be noted in Tim’s story for instance.

After a reported very good performance in his first school, Tim was eventually posted to a new school with a different culture. Tim was unable to replicate the success obtained in the first school, which left him somewhat bitter. Now having been transferred to his third school as principal, Tim had to face the challenge of adapting once again to a new school. As usual, he gave himself a week of walking around, observing the school and learning about it. He found out that after nearly twelve months at the school, spanning two academic years, matters were still not under his control.

At the time of the interviews, Tina was nearly at the end of her first year in her third posting. Just as Tim, Tina’s best experience was in her first school. Furthermore, Tina also seemed ruffled that things were not working as well as she would prefer. The notion of interdependence of the principal and the school is emphasised by Tina. She believes that the effectiveness of the principal eventually depends on the school, a position that Jenny appears to share.

### Challenges to the principal

The challenges that the principals have to face are many. The stories from our participants indicate that adapting to a school can be difficult. Five key challenges have been noted. A first key challenge is turning around the school culture as Jenny, Ben and Tim found. Students are very reluctant to give up certain habits and these principals ran into difficulties when trying to bring more discipline to the school. A second key challenge is getting the required support from the appropriate authorities when difficult decisions have to be taken. Managing a hectic time schedule is a third key challenge noted by the principals.

The fourth key challenge is that each school has a unique context. The contributing elements of this complexity include geographic location, the quality of the student intake, and the gender of the students. Moreover, the staff in rural areas tend to be more cooperative, while generally girls' schools tend to require fewer efforts for discipline. The fifth key challenge is about sustaining the interest of students in attending school and to study. As Ben has noted, students nowadays appear less interested in school. He believes that widespread private tutoring is an important cause of decreased students' motivation. According to Tim, one direct consequence is that schools have little authority left on students because school matters little to them. So, one of his concerns is about facilitating activities that create a sense of belonging among students.

### Getting the support of stakeholders

A key narrative among principals is finding stakeholder support to facilitate or assist in the running of the school. Teachers constitute a very important stakeholder group of the school because of their large numbers. From the narratives of all five participants, apart from teaching classes, it is noted that teachers do assist principals in running the various programmes of the school. Even if the participants appreciate teacher co-operation, they all agree that there is a problem with teacher professionalism. Although smaller in numbers, the administrative staff is also very important to the principal. While the principals generally agreed that these staff are crucial to the good functioning of schools, it was however noted that there was a problem with their professionalism. Moreover, while assistant principals would initially be considered as key stakeholders, most of the participants are not looking forward to working with one.

Students constitute an important stakeholder group. Jenny, John, Tim and Tina, for their part, are all very committed to organising activities to create a positive experience for students at school. They believe that this can address lateness, absenteeism and other attitudinal problems related to the interest of students in school. Another significant stakeholder is the parent-teacher association of a school. The experience of the principals with this stakeholder group was noted to lay on a continuum. Depending on the school, it can be very collaborative or have a high nuisance value. The MOEHR is a crucial stakeholder, especially when the principal is challenged. Four of the principals have expressed their disappointment with the lack of support they have experienced.

### *Taking Action*

One factor that shapes how the principals envisage to take action is for how long they have actually been tenured, and how long they believe they will remain in post at the school. Then, there is the issue that the principals are taken up in the rush of the daily routine. Only two participants, through good organising skills and delegation, have reportedly been able to ease this pressure. Apart from dealing with the daily issues of the schools, some participants appear to be having a hard time on deciding on their future actions. Previous failures have made them wary of seemingly easy formulas to apply. Thus, the principals guide their schools largely through core strategies that they have embraced. An important action strategy is to enlist core teams, especially teachers, to help in various administrative duties. For instance, all five principals deliberately engage in team building, each of them adapting to their particular school context. It is also noted that two principals have a strong penchant for the walkabout. They take systematic walks across the school to meet and discuss with staff, to discover problems and solve them.

### *Facing outcomes*

Each principal does set up one or more criteria for the success of their actions. One criterion is good reputation as mentioned by John and Tim. Another one, for Jenny, Ben and Tim is student discipline. Three principals Ben, Tim, and Tina feel that the smooth functioning of the school is a good measure of how effective they have been. Tim looks at teacher happiness as a measure of success, while Tina considers how much she has facilitated learning. Jenny, Ben, and Tina all report of moments of serendipity when, by inspired action, they managed to resolve the challenges that

they were faced with. For Jenny, it was finding an approach to improve the monitoring of teaching and learning at school. For Ben it was avoiding a student strike, and for Tina's part, it was setting up a teacher learning community. Keeping the school flowing smoothly can require a strenuous effort, as suggested by Jenny, Ben, and Tim. Indeed, as Ben explains, this is an achievement in itself.

#### *Dealing with the emotional labour*

All the participants, to some extent, have to deal with emotional labour. For instance, Tim and Tina are very nostalgic about their first tenure as principal which was, according to them, their best experience. Both Jenny and Ben reported feeling that they were being tested to the limit. Indeed, Ben, Tim, and Tina speak of being alone and unsupported by the MOEHR. John's words reflect that feeling perfectly:

*"The principal's seat is the seat where one feels the loneliest."*

#### *Stepping Back*

All five participants periodically reflect on their work life and the educational system. John, Ben, and Tina have noted that there are significant differences between schools admitting students on a regional basis and others on a national basis. They found that "national schools" have a certain type of intake of students with fewer disciplinary issues and better academic achievement. They believe that this creates differences between schools and gaps between what is possible in regional and national schools. All five principals have also reflected on how the lack of teacher professionalism is affecting the quality of functioning of the schools. They have found that it is very difficult to give feedback to teachers and to improve their teaching. Apart for Tim, this significantly affects how the principals conduct their instructional leadership.

As John and Tim found out, the multi-cultural social environment can play a significant role in the functioning of a school. John, for his part, found that, in his school, students of minority groups had a strong tendency to perform better academically. This was a fact for which he could not provide a clear explanation. In his previous school, Tim found that inter-cultural tensions, within the local community, were playing out among students of the school. This was affecting discipline and eventually academic performance, and he could hardly do anything about it.

Contextual awareness appears to be a key learning milestone of the participants. Through posting in different schools, they have become attuned to the specificities and requirements of the situation. This awareness leads them to adapt their practices to the situational needs. When the context called for alleviating tensions, they steered energy in this direction. When learning was the priority, they oriented efforts to setting up systems and procedures to support quality. They were strategic, in the sense of responding to immediate needs of the situation. However, being strategic by looking at the longer term was perhaps too much of a risk, or they could not find the space to be so.

### Review

Generally, the principals tend to review the pace at which they can bring change. Both Ben and Tim expressed doubts as to whether eventually the objectives of principals can be achieved in the school, given the lack of effective means to attain them. Indeed, a principal can only communicate and not coerce. Thus, both principals seek to elicit collaboration, rather than mere following of instructions. Jenny, for her part, tries to tread lightly and identify what measures would be accepted before actually rolling out plans.

While Ben will now scrupulously go by circulars and manuals to avoid any backlash from teacher unions or the MOEHR, Tim will sometimes deliberately use unconventional strategies, such as corporal punishment for indiscipline, to keep the school under control. Jenny, just like Ben, is afraid about things going wrong, and will now go to great lengths to be sure that her actions are accepted by the school community.

All five principals will intervene on quality of teaching whenever there are complaints. Three principals who are all in their third tenure, Jenny, Ben, and Tim appear to have made the daily running of the school their prime focus, and they essentially measure their success in these terms. John, the newest principal was, at the time of the interviews, thinking about objectives for academic improvement for certain categories of students in his school. It is noted that only Tina has stayed with her mission of improving learning outcomes for her students.

## **6.3 Stories talking back**

In this section, the narratives of principals concerning quality teaching are first matched to the reference teaching framework. Then, the narratives of the principals concerning instructional leadership are examined in the lens of the “instructional leadership framework”. Finally, a cross-comparison is made between the findings, obtained by matching participants’ narratives to the two theoretical frameworks.

### **6.3.1 What stories about quality teaching and learning tell us**

The difficulty of defining good teaching was discussed earlier, and eight dimensions of good teaching were identified to encapsulate it in the Mauritian context. In this section, the stories shared by the five participants with regard to both good and poor teaching are matched against these eight dimensions. The outcome of this comparison has been tabulated and can be found at Appendix F. The results are discussed in detail in this section.

#### ***Dimension 1: Teacher qualities***

This dimension can be split into seven sub-dimensions when looking at the participants’ data. It is generally noted that all five principals believe that teachers should have a good mastery of their subject area and of general pedagogy, but disagree significantly over a number of details.

Two participants are of the opinion that teachers should also have the specific knowledge of how to teach particular topics in the programme. Tim makes no difference between the concept of general pedagogy and subject-specific pedagogy, but believes that teachers have to conduct their teaching with effectiveness. John and Ben also insist that a good teacher must have assertiveness and proper communication skills. Jenny and Tina, for their part, suggest that planning before teaching is the key detail.

Two principals bring an additional element to this dimension: teaching is a calling. However, while John believes that this calling can be created in teachers, Tina thinks that there are qualities that are innate. Such beliefs have implications for the principal’s instructional leadership. A principal, who believes that good teaching is about innate qualities, may not try to develop their teachers. However, if a principal believes that calling can be instilled in a teacher, they may focus on developing this calling as opposed to improving pedagogy.

Another element brought on by a principal is ethnicity. According to John, there is an ethnic influence that shapes teacher attitudes and values. For him, Muslims tend to insist more on discipline and obedience as compared to non-Muslims.

***Dimension 2: Inner drive and motivation to teach***

The participants elaborated dimension 2 less than dimension 1. It is noted that John, Ben, Tim, and Tina believe that dedication to the job is important. This inner motivation can come in two ways. Teachers may have it by being passionate about teaching, or being committed to teaching, because of its impact on the life of students. Both John and Tim believe that teachers must be given incentives to sustain their motivation to teach.

According to Ben and Tim, teacher motivation is frequently lacking, and this is a serious problem in the schooling system. Tim, in particular, believes that this is especially true with the new generation of teachers. Only one principal, Jenny, has not expressed any ideas concerning this dimension of teaching. The picture that emerges is that, while ideally, the principals would like their teachers to be passionate about teaching, in practice they appear to want them to do the job seriously and effectively.

***Dimension 3: Learning from experience and practice***

As compared to dimension 2, dimension 3 is even less elaborated. Only two principals explicitly refer to teachers reflecting on their learning. According to John, teachers must constantly be looking at how to increase their knowledge of teaching. Teachers must also be willing to work hard to improve their skills. It is noted that John makes a clear distinction between theoretical knowledge and practical skills.

Jenny, for her part, draws attention to how teachers who are successful in a particular school, suddenly find themselves inadequate when they change school. She illustrates the issue with stories of teachers who were transferred from national schools to regional schools. In the Mauritian context, this points to the difficulty of learning to teach, when schools can be quite different.

What appears from looking into this dimension is that, generally speaking, the principals do not see teachers as engaged in professional learning. Moreover, they do not appear to consider it as important either.

#### ***Dimension 4: Activities before contact with students***

There is significant alignment of the principals on their understanding of this particular dimension. Four principals John, Jenny, Ben, and Tina believe that there should be planning ahead of teaching. According to John, Jenny and Ben, the planning exercise is about pitching the lesson adequately to the audience. A lesson needs to be adapted to the students, and the theme to be taught. This involves selecting the most appropriate teaching strategies. Tina, notes that for effective teaching and learning to take place, students should prepare for the lessons and be motivated. As discussed earlier, teachers should be knowledgeable about their subject. However, they are also expected to plan their lessons adequately, for a smooth and effective delivery.

#### ***Dimension 5: Activities in contact with students***

This dimension is well elaborated by the principals. There are multiple individual variations between the principals' perspectives. Nonetheless, they all believe that the process of teaching involves a dynamic interaction between the teacher and the students. The teacher should monitor the students and give them feedback. Eventually, remedial work should be carried out, on the difficulties noted.

John draws attention to the problem of time management. According to him, there is a tension between taking time for adequate lesson development, evaluating the learning of students, and then doing remedial work. John feels that illustrating the lesson with examples of daily life allows students to understand better. However, this approach takes more time. According to him, the visits of the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division are causing teachers to focus on completing the syllabus quickly, at the expense of adequate lesson development.

The principals make two very important distinctions concerning "good lessons". A first point made by Jenny concerns the large variety of quality lessons that are actually possible because of idiosyncratic choices of the teacher and the particular subject being taught. Principals would need to consider this before deciding how a particular lesson might be improved. A second distinction, made with great emphasis, by John and Tina, is that the students must be actively involved for best learning to take place. While the teacher may try to get the students engaged in the lesson, the latter should also strive to be purposeful learners. From the analysis of dimension 5, it is noted the participants appear to agree that the single most

important task of the teacher is getting and holding the attention of the students on the lesson.

***Dimension 6: Warmth of communication***

Only three principals share how it is important for teachers to establish a good rapport with students. John emphasises the importance of this dimension for girls. This is of high interest to instructional leadership in Mauritius because most state secondary schools are single sex. Generally, two elements stand out for all principals. First, there seems to be a concern for good communication between teachers and students. Secondly, this communication is more focused on getting the instructional message across, rather than addressing students' emotional needs, motivating them or bridging the power distance between teachers and students.

***Dimension 7: Ethical behaviour***

Four participants agree that teachers should have the right values. At a basic level, values make them come to work and go to class to teach. At a higher level, values make teachers feel committed to their students and want to deliver their best teaching. Ben and Tina note that many teachers do not develop their lessons adequately, because they assume that a significant proportion of their students take private tuition. Tim notes that some teachers are unethical, by systematically being late to class and wasting teaching time. Such beliefs necessarily have implications for instructional leadership because they can influence the appreciation of teacher qualities and activities carried out in contact with students.

Generally, while principals would have preferred teachers who love children and teaching, their practical ideal is simply teachers who show up at school on time, go to class on time and do their job. Furthermore, Jenny reflects that the teacher must also inculcate values in students. However, one can wonder if this particular comment is only rhetoric. Indeed, as discussed previously, teachers tend to focus on their subject because of perceived time constraints. Thus, again there is this tension between idealised models of good teaching, and more pragmatic models, that are based on the realities of the school context.

***Dimension 8: Professional responsibilities***

Only two principals include content relating to the notion of professional responsibilities in their discourse. One principal, John, seem to believe that teachers should be actively engaged in their own professional development. Tina, however,

makes a disturbing observation. Most teachers who have successfully completed professional courses such as a PGCE do not apply the knowledge gained in their regular teaching practice. Surprisingly, there also appeared to be no expectation from any of the principals that teachers should share good practices with each other. Thus, the dominant trend that emerges is that there is no expectation, on the part of the principals, that teachers actively engage in professional development activities and sharing with peers.

### *Discussion*

The dominant paradigm of quality teaching that emerges from the five participant principals appears to be built on three elements to which they all agree. Teachers need subject knowledge so as to be able to teach it. They also need to understand the principles of pedagogy, and to plan their teaching.

An important danger of learning on the job has been highlighted: teachers learning to perform well in one school may end up performing poorly in another. A very significant remark is that teachers who have undergone professional training do not make use of it. This is possibly strongly related to teaching practice being shaped by culture at various levels, as discussed in chapter 3.

A key issue is that there appears to be little or no expectation of improvement to be derived from the teacher's ongoing experience. In short, the teacher's skill set is not expected to expand significantly with experience. Thus, the dominant view of good teaching is that it proceeds from the application of a limited skill set, and the good teacher is thus the one who does so reliably. This approach focusses on what needs to be done to achieve a minimum level of quality. However, it is clearly not consistent with a policy directive that looks at continuously improving the quality of student outcomes. In the next section, the principals' views of instructional leadership are considered.

### **6.3.2 What stories of instructional leadership learning tell us**

An instructional leadership framework was formulated, with the intent of making it sensitive enough to capture the subtleties of the instructional leadership practice of the participants. The stories shared by the participants with respect to their instructional leadership are matched to the eight dimensions of the instructional leadership framework. The outcome of this comparison has been tabulated and can

be found at Appendix F. In this section, key findings and their implications are discussed.

***Dimension A: Creating a climate that encourages teacher learning***

This dimension is about creating an environment where there is sharing, by establishing a rapport with, and between, teachers. Tina in her current school focuses on debriefing teachers. For her part, Jenny focuses on recognising good teachers and endorsing their good practices as she comes across them. The other principals tend to use combinations of other measures. However, we note that only two principals report open discussions with teachers, concerning problems of classroom practice. The same two principals do also report that teachers, generally, do not welcome class visits and feedback given on their teaching. Just as they provide incentives for teachers to feel safe and collaborate, John and Jenny also report problem teachers to the MOEHR, whether formally or informally.

From considering this dimension, we note that the approaches that principals use vary along a continuum. Some principals are more involved and set out to actively build rapport with teachers. Others are more passive and limit themselves to encouraging existing behaviours that they approve of. There is clearly no common stand shared by the participants.

***Dimension B: Creating powerful motivation for the school***

This dimension is about establishing purpose and goals to gather the energies of the school community. While some principals focus on being very charismatic, other principals use motivations that are related to the school as an organisation and a community. There are three types of motivations that can be noted. First, there is a positive approach such as sharing a vision that is intended to bring out the best of teachers. Secondly, there is the setting up of external constraints such as committing the school to ISO 9001 certification. Finally, there are dis-incentives, such as calling on the Quality Assurance and Inspection Division to make more frequent checks and thus exert psychological pressure on specific teachers.

Furthermore, we note that only one principal uses a full range of measures. Even if four principals say they work on school culture, they have different ideas of how to work on it, and how to defend it. As Tina reflects, having teachers eager to collaborate significantly helps the principal initiate changes in school culture. John points out that teachers, especially new to the school, do have different cultural

luggage. He shares stories where he has used his full authority as a principal to defend the established school culture, eventually seeking the immediate transfer of non-compliant teachers. Tina, while encouraging activities at her school, is quite emphatic that the core business of the school remains teaching and learning, and she makes sure that this message is well disseminated.

Again, it is noted that there is no common stand for the principals. While they use the same tools, they do so in quite different ways. The levers used by each principal are seen to relate to their personality, career path, and to their experiences in their current school.

### ***Dimension C: Managing teaching within the school***

This dimension has to do with the monitoring of teaching in class and of the classroom climate. This practice is crucial because, in theory, if the principals can evaluate teaching in class, they can understand how teaching is improving in their school. Thus, they can decide on the effectiveness of their instructional leadership actions. However, the principals have quite different approaches to monitoring teaching, as illustrated by Ben, Tim and Tina.

Ben considers teaching in class from a wide perspective. He looks at the appropriateness of the lesson, its relation to previous lessons, the curriculum, the delivery, and the follow-up. This immediately sets the evaluation of teaching as complex and stretched in time. An immediate implication of such a framework is that the evaluation of one teacher becomes cumbersome. Moreover, Ben finds that classroom visits can be a very poor indication of a teacher's practice. Indeed, teachers can deliver a great teaching performance during class visits, that is quite different from what they will regularly do in class.

Tina, for her part, believes that to get a good indication of the teaching and learning, she needs to look at both teachers and students. According to her, when visiting a class, one must look at how the teaching is being conducted and how the students are studying in class. Such a conception relates us to Pitkäniemi's (2010) argument concerning "teaching-studying-learning". Indeed, students should be considered as active participants of the class and having the responsibility to study. Tim's practice is clearly the most restricted. He believes that the feedback that he obtains from the detailed observations he makes of students, as he walks by the class, gives him a good indication of the quality of the teaching.

A principal, who believes that class visits do not realistically detect the regular quality of teaching of a teacher, will be unlikely to indulge in frequent class visits. The diversity of practices noted among the principals is significant. Even as they may be guided by the policies of the MOEHR, the principals are very possibly attempting to be sensitive to the school culture and context, and therefore use the tools that are contextually more appropriate.

***Dimension D: Creating a supportive school climate and ethos***

This dimension examines what principals actually do, to set up an orderly and supportive environment within their school, and promote the desired values. Immediately, we note that John, Ben and Tim embrace, in one way or another, a paternalistic stance to establish or to reinforce their authority. These principals seem to feel the need to build or bolster their authority besides the formal authority that they do have by virtue of their position. Furthermore, John and Tim project this authority, by constantly walking around the school and being visible to the school community. One might consider whether these two principals are acting in line with their identities or engaging in some form of impression management (Goffman, 1990).

The challenges reported by the participants are very instructive about their perception of the school leader's agency. Ben notes that the quality of the student intake of the institution is quite determinant of the success of any initiative carried out by the school. The better the intake following grade 6 examination is, the better the school climate will be. Another key issue pointed out by Jenny, is the pernicious role that can be played by the parents-teachers association of a school.

It is immediately visible that principals set out differently to manage the school climate. For example, John seems to take a central position in leading culture change. Tina in comparison is interested in fostering teacher leadership (Crowther *et al.*, 2002; Riordian, 2003; Gigante & Firestone, 2007; Hameiri *et al.*, 2014). While it is clear that principals use different mixes of strategies, it appears that there is a dominant use of leader-centric approaches.

### ***Dimension G: Supporting professional development***

This dimension, which relates to how principals create opportunities for teachers to develop as professionals, has implications for the instructional leadership approach adopted by the principals. Only two principals, John and Jenny, speak of what can be done to support the professional development of teachers beyond giving direct feedback on teaching. Both believe that good teaching depends among other factors, on the attitude and personality of teachers. Moreover, they believe that attitude and personality can be improved.

Ben and Tina comment on the difficulty of giving valuable feedback to teachers. Jenny shares two major hurdles that she has experienced. First, complaints from students can be quite erratic and unfounded. Secondly, she fears reprisals from teacher unions. This threat is also echoed by Ben.

What stands out is that none of the principals believe that additional pedagogy, communication skills, classroom management skills, or subject-specific pedagogy are required. However, these two principals, who also talk about professional development, consider good teaching as essentially depending on the goodwill of teachers.

In chapter 3, it was discussed that teachers appeared to receive limited feedback on their work from principals (Martins *et al.*, 2015), and it was difficult to get reflective inquiry to work for teachers (Jones & Jones, 2013). It was also noted that teaching knowledge and skill appeared to be contextual (Bransford *et al.*, 2000; McTighe & Seif, 2003; Mourshed *et al.*, 2010). The stories shared by the participants seem to confirm these findings in their respective schools.

As a result, the five principals appear limited in their interventions because of their lack of preparation (Houchens and Keedy, 2009), the method of selection of teacher candidates (Çimer *et al.*, 2013) and a teaching culture that favours isolation of teachers (Cheng *et al.*, 2010).

### ***Dimension H: Leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions***

John believes that the two highest qualities of a school leader are their commitment to the job and their common sense in making decisions. Tim, the other principal who believes in a total commitment of the principal, focusses on strong but carefully controlled communication. While both John and Tim rely on honesty and

directness as a source of efficacy (Argyris & Schön, 1975; Combs *et al.*, 1999), they have different motivations. Indeed, John appears driven by his personal values, and Tim seems to rely on his core leadership principles.

As compared with the others, Jenny is the only participant who mentions that the learning acquired on the job is her greatest asset. However, this comment is perceived as rather rhetorical, given her multiple references to the difficulty of transitioning as principal to a new school. This also puts in perspective the difficulty of acquiring the complex skills associated with leadership (Mumford *et al.*, 2002). These are not acquired in a vacuum but against a background of contextual knowledge. Jenny and Ben observe that the principals have to find out what works in a particular school. Indeed, while much knowledge is gained from experience on the job (Wassink *et al.*, 2003; Clark *et al.*, 2009), for these principals it does not automatically translate into getting better on the job (Clark *et al.*, 2009) or doing a good job in the next school.

Tina's is the only participant who expresses satisfaction at the few professional development opportunities provided by the MOEHR, early in her career. Nonetheless, she also reports having constantly felt the need to go for further training on educational management, to find tools that she can adapt to the daily running of her school. She also comments that interesting solutions can be sought from the experience of educational systems of other countries.

Dimension H examines the knowledge, skills, and dispositions that principals need to display to be effective instructional leaders. While there are significant differences between the different principals, a common theme emerges from the stories of the participants. Indeed, the demands now being made upon school principals are such, that acquiring expertise can no longer be left to common sense and character alone. Management development support is needed (Bush & Oduro, 2006). In many countries, there is still an assumption that good teachers can become effective managers and leaders without specific preparation for their leadership and management roles (Evetts, 1994; Bush & Jackson, 2002; Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Bush & Oduro, 2006).

The two emerging notions: being a professional and meeting professional norms, appear to be quite important to this study and will be discussed further in the general discussion section.

### ***Dimension J: Solving complex problems at school***

This dimension looks at how principals engage their school community to discuss and help address problems of teaching and learning. As was discussed in section 6.2, trouble is quite central to a principal's work life. The difficulty of principals to bring improvement in teaching and learning has already been noted. Immediately Tim's stance stands apart. He believes that teaching well is the responsibility of teachers, and he will not engage them on the matter. In doing so, he certainly decreases the level of complexity of his challenges as a school leader. John's approach to decreasing complexity is to only attend to problems of teaching that are persistently reported. His rationale is that the quality of teaching is not constant, and that even good teachers have bad days. However, as Ben has noted, such an approach is problematic because students do not necessarily report the same problem again, even if it has not been resolved.

According to Ben, the principal must be seen as trustworthy, and attend to all complaints, even if there might not be solutions. As far as possible, Ben believes that all conflicts should be examined as calmly as possible, and win-win solutions be sought. John, Jenny, Ben, and Tina raise the problematic issue of failing teachers. Some teachers will not respond to requests to improve their work. The dominant paradigm for the principals again appears to be managing attitudes and expectations, rather than finding long-term solutions within the school. Measures are taken to mitigate the problems reported.

The absence of long-term engagement of the approach to the complex problem of teaching and learning could be explained by mismatch between the actual authority of the principal and what is expected from them (Ferrandino and Tirozzi, 2000). Moreover, the relatively short tenures probably do not allow the principals to engage the changes in school culture required (Barth, 2002; Marks and Printy, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Gurr, 2008) to make the solutions possible.

### ***Dimension K: Creating contextually meaningful tools to manage the school***

All five participants are crucially aware of the importance of the school context. John, who is still in his first tenure as principal, has not yet faced the problem of adapting to a second school. Yet, he is faced with the converse problem of having to get new teachers adapted to the culture and ways of his existing school. Adapting to a new school is difficult.

Tim explains that his self-imposed moratorium of one week is crucial because it allows him to observe the functioning of the school and the problems, before starting to take measures. Tina shares how, if the school culture allows, she will try to brainstorm her staff to come up with ideas. Otherwise, she will try to adopt what she has seen to work in other schools, an approach which the other participants seem to follow. She has discovered that teachers' collaboration with the principal is not necessarily acquired.

One important difficulty highlighted by Ben is that development targets, which can be realistically achieved, differ from one school to another. As he notes, the development path of a school tends to be very strongly determined by the academic ability of the incoming students, together with contextual factors. Indeed, all the participants have shared stories relating to school reputation or quality of students as significant.

Jenny's experience in her current school tells a very powerful tale about finding meaningful tools to address the problems of teaching and learning. Her attempt to introduce some new measures to monitor the assessment of student learning had earlier been rebuffed by the teaching staff. She then found out that a particular assessment practice developed by one teacher had spontaneously been adopted by some other teachers. After she shared this practice during a staff meeting, Jenny was surprised that all teachers decided to adopt this practice, even if it demanded a lot of work from them. Admittedly, this new practice decreased student complaints to some extent, while satisfying teachers. However, Jenny had mixed feelings. She was not convinced of the value of the practice in improving learning outcomes, even if allowing it to diffuse throughout the school showed that, as a leader, she had been taking actions.

The literature reviewed in chapter 3 suggests that (Avolio *et al.*, 2009; Kemmis *et al.*, 2014) contextual influences may have a dynamic and strong influence on school management. Moreover, it was also noted that research suggests that principals have a limited ability to learn from their professional experience (Brewer, 1993; Elmore, 2008; Houchens & Keedy, 2009). The five participants seem to have experienced contextual influences that have affected their principalship, and also make it difficult for them to bring changes in the quality of the instructional outcomes. This can be related to the fact that they are not adequately trained and

need to rely on their own experience (Lessard, 1986; Rousseau & Van der Veen, 2005; Helena & Abrahão, 2002; Grodzki, 2011).

### ***Discussion***

Looking at the narratives of the participants, through the lens of the eight dimensions of instructional leadership, reveals that the five principals have quite different instructional leadership profiles, with nonetheless some common traits. They have adopted widely different approaches for the management of teaching. John tries to set standards of practice for the teachers but does little more. Jenny tries to keep track of teaching in class and also of student performance data. Ben, for his part, is so stuck in administrative issues that he conducts class visits only when serious issues are reported. Tim, as a matter of principle, does not interfere with teaching practice, even though he tries to keep an eye on it. Tina, for her part, looks at both teacher and student practices.

“Supporting professional development” is the weakest dimension for the principals. Only two principals, John and Jenny, talk of developing teacher personality. Attempts to set up school level systems, such as a community of practice or the sharing of best practices among teachers, are clearly absent. However, ultimately, all principals are faced with the inability to deal effectively with failing teachers who remain in the school system. This was confirmed in the Mauritian context by Peerthy (2018, unpublished) who found that principals are generally unable to contribute to teachers’ continuous professional development.

A second dimension where the principals appear weak is “creating contextually meaningful tools to manage schools”. The principals mostly seem to manage from a limited set of tools, which they may need to adapt to their school context. However, there seems to be an over-reliance on serendipitous findings. There is no systematic and efficacious process, run by the schools, to strategise and develop means to attain objectives. The principals also make very diverse use of organisational tools such as vision and mission statements. Depending on the principals, this might concern either teachers or students or both groups. Efforts to create a good climate are mostly principal-driven and are linked to maintaining discipline among students.

Beyond the wide variation between the styles and tools used by the five principals, there is nonetheless the common result that they are unable to change teaching

practice significantly. While some monitoring of teaching and learning is attempted in the short-term, it is clear that the principals fail to bring long-term solutions to problems noted. This clearly poses the problem of the ability and willingness of principals to intervene in the professional development of teachers. Fear of negative repercussions to themselves may lead the principals to focus their attention on feedback that is the least inconvenient for teachers, which may lead to little or no real progress.

### **6.3.3 Stories of teaching and instructional leadership ‘talk to each other’**

In sub-sections 6.3.1 and 6.3.2 the narratives of the participants were examined respectively in the lens of the reference frameworks for teaching and the instructional leadership. How principals work with teachers to improve the quality of instruction is expected to closely depend on what they believe good teaching is about, and what their role as instructional leaders is. Based on this premise, in section 3.5, the reference instructional leadership framework was closely formulated so that it dovetails the reference teaching framework. However, an argument was also laid out for the influence of context that regulates the instructional leadership of principals.

In this section, the implications for instructional leadership of the reference teaching practices noted in sub-section 6.3.1 are considered. Reciprocally, the implications for teaching and learning of the instructional leadership practices noted at 6.3.2 are considered. The findings indicate that the relationship between beliefs about teaching and actual instructional leadership practice is mediated by contextual factors. The complexity of the “good teaching” descriptions raised from the participants’ narratives precludes any simple classification. Nonetheless, these descriptions have allowed insights into the instructional leadership practices of the participants.

A first observation is that there are two additional dimensions to good teaching that can be found in the participants’ narratives. The first additional dimension, proposed by Tina, relates to the collaboration of students to the teaching process. Even if the teacher drives the teaching process, the student is not a passive recipient of knowledge. An active engagement of the student in the teaching processes is

seen as crucial to optimal student learning (Finn, 1989; Skinner *et al.*, 2008). This particular dimension will be taken up later, after the discussion on instructional leadership dimensions. A second additional dimension to good teaching, according to several participants, relates to long-term benefits such as the acquisition of desirable values, attitudes, and ambitions. Thus, John focuses on students acquiring the skills for life-long learning, Jenny on moral values, Ben on students desiring to complete their secondary schooling, and Tina on balanced development.

A second observation concerns the notion of teaching as a skilled performance (Hirst & Peters, 1970; Freeman, 1973, Bengtsson, 2001). This is taken up in two of the three models of teaching considered at section 3.2 (Danielson, 2007; Stronge, 2007) but is rather absent from the participants' narratives. The notion that teaching requires knowledge of the subject, and a small number of fairly simple techniques, that can be picked up on the job, has been much criticised but nonetheless found to be popular among laypersons and policymakers (Darling-Hammond, 2006). While all five principals hold it that good teaching requires good teachers executing good procedures, it is noted that only two principals, John and Tim, actually insist that an adequate level of skill is required for executing the teaching process efficaciously. This particular finding appears to indicate important differences in how principals define teacher professionalism, with implication for instructional leadership.

A third observation concerns learning from experience, which is considered an important aspect of teacher professionalism. Reflective practice (Argyris & Schön, 1975; Schön 1983) is included in many initial teacher-training programmes (Loughran, 2002) because of its potential for enhancing teacher learning. It is understandably a component of the reference teaching framework formulated. Teacher collaboration is also emphasised as an important part of a modern concept of teacher professionalism (Danielson, 2007, Schleicher; 2012). However, only one principal, John, viewed teaching as a craft (Singh, 2006; Crawford, 2014), where teachers are expected to learn from reflecting on their own work. What emerges is that the participants do not value reflective practice and professional sharing, which are recognised as good practices in education. The finding appears to be a strong indicator that the change in policy orientation concerning quality has not made its way into educational practice at the level of school leaders.

A fourth observation is that the principals tend to shift focus from genuinely addressing problems to showing that they are taking action, possibly to avoid stigmatisation (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Since teaching and learning issues are less visible, they become less critical. An evaluation of the stories of the principals against the eight dimensions of the reference instructional leadership framework indicates a considerable variation in the instructional leadership profiles of the participants. In the reference instructional leadership framework, it is noted that three dimensions are directly related to monitoring and improving the teaching processes of the school. These dimensions are C: managing teaching within the school, J: solving complex problems at school, and K: creating contextually meaningful tools to manage schools. It immediately appears that the monitoring of teaching in class does not give rise to a systematic follow up on problems, and thus ensure improvement. As Tina, John and Ben explain, since they can hardly do anything about systematically poor performing teachers, they focus on mitigating the impact or the public's perception of the problem.

A fifth observation is that the principals' approach to supporting teacher development is mostly passive. The professional learning dimension of the reference teaching framework relate to two dimensions of instructional leadership D: creating a supportive school climate and ethos, and G: supporting professional development. The role of the principal in creating a supporting professional learning environment is crucial (Fullan, 2001b). Moreover, in chapter 1, the responsibility of principals of secondary schools (MOEHR, 2008; MOEHR, 2009a) to ensure the pedagogical improvement of teachers was highlighted. In spite of the official policy narrative of the Ministry, two principals, John and Jenny, suggest that only the personality of teachers can actually be improved, through a process of collaboration. It is also noted with concern that John believes that it is to the teachers to develop themselves through reflection.

A sixth observation is that an apparent focus of the principals' instructional leadership is the management of the behaviour of students. As discussed in the literature review, there is evidence that students should not be considered as passive participants (Kansanen, 1997; Atherton, 1999; Candy, 2004, Cornelius-White & Harbaugh, 2010; Pitkäniemi, 2010). It is noted that the participants seek to develop students' collaboration by laying emphasis on student discipline, good

communication with students, and activities to create positive emotions associated with the school. The participants also seek to discourage students from adopting behaviours that can negatively affect their learning.

A seventh observation is that the principals give more attention to dimensions other than managing teaching and learning, or the professional development of their teachers. This has been found in other contexts as well (Goldring *et al.*, 2008; May *et al.*, 2012; Shaked, 2019) where principals tend to give secondary importance to monitoring instruction. The intervention of the principals on teaching is relatively limited as per their description. Most participants admit directly or tacitly that they do not have the competence to evaluate all aspects of teaching, beyond the application of general pedagogical principles. It is also noted that the principals are more observers of teaching than agents of transformation of teaching. There is only one principal, Jenny, who actually gives an example of good teaching situated in the school where she is currently working. This relative paucity in stories of good teaching suggests that the principals cannot make good teachers even if they can spot good teaching. Significantly, all four principals who speak of debriefing teachers tend to be rather generic in their intervention in the sense that they focus on general pedagogical principles.

An eighth observation is the strong belief that good teaching can be monitored quickly and from a distance, by student behaviours and signs of student engagement during class. Even as two principals believe that there is no substitute for actual class visits to take note of teaching, three principals do actually claim that they can detect good teaching as they walk by a class in progress. The monitoring approach proposed by John, Tim and Tina poses two significant problems. Firstly, it generates little actionable feedback for teachers, because it is not based on their actual teaching process. The second problem, as Jenny notes, is that students might not appreciate a teacher even when good quality teaching is being delivered. However, the apparent simplicity of this approach can lead principals to adopt it despite its serious shortcomings.

A ninth and final observation is that even when the principals conduct class visits, they do have significant difficulties in evaluating the effectiveness of teachers and teaching. As John points out, the performance of teachers is not constant and may vary from day to day, depending on the class they teach to, the topic of the lesson

or their personal mood. Ben notes that teachers can deliberately regulate their own performance as well. When he conducts class visits following complaints received, he usually finds that these teachers have efficient classroom procedures. Unfortunately, the same teachers may lapse back into poor teaching after the class visits. This appears to confirm what was found in other contexts by Weisberg *et al.* (2009) and Hamre *et al.* (2010).

Earlier, it was noted that the participants generally find it difficult to actually give honest and detailed feedback to teachers on class visits because teachers do not usually welcome it. To the extent that the principals are not encouraged to provide elaborate feedback, they probably do not invest time in developing sophisticated skills to do so. Thus, understandably, the principals may find it reliable and safe to depend on student satisfaction about teachers to get a feel of what is usually happening in class. However, as some participants have noted, their personal appreciation of a teacher's performance can be different from that of the students. Using students' complaints as a measure of teaching quality poses an additional problem. There are only two levels of quality i.e. students are satisfied, or they are not. Moreover, this does not allow the principals to decide if there has been "lack of success in teaching" or "failure in teaching" (Ericson & Ellett, 1987).

## **6.4 Around the day in five schools**

"Around the day in five schools" is about the meta-narrative of five principals living dangerous lives in their respective schools, each a world in itself. It brings together the narratives arising from the findings at chapters 5 and the earlier sections of chapter 6. Seven themes, representing the synthesis of the three separate narrative analyses, were identified and are discussed in subsection 6.4.1 below.

### **6.4.1 What we learn from the principals' narratives**

#### ***6.4.1.1 A life filled with trouble***

A significant insight gained is that the lives of the principals are strongly influenced by trouble. This appears to correlate with observations, discussed in chapter 1, that the practices of principals is affected by pressures from the school contexts (Dimmock, 1999; Leithwood *et al.*, 1999; Maxwell, 2011; Robertson & Timperley, 2011). The troubles described by the participants mostly arise from the difficulties

of day to day management related to students, staff or school context. A number of these troubles are described in section 6.2.

Distinct patterns in the narration of the principals were noted. The period where the participants are novices is quite clearly visible. They are seen to acquire confidence, and they start to feel in control of the school. However, as the principals move into a new school, there is likely to be high levels of stress, anxiety and frustration. They find themselves ineffective and they need to work out ways to get their schools running. To a certain extent, the principals become novices each time they join a new school.

John set apart, all the other principals, are in at least their third tenure. It is generally noted for the four other participants that the quality of their reported experience declines after their first school. They describe having their best experience in the first school when they were only novices. However, they do not seem to be able to reproduce results systematically in successive schools, which raises four issues.

Firstly, this appears to confirm that there is no systematic approach that principals can use from one school to another, to improve teaching (Willms, 1992; Marzano, 2007). Secondly, as discussed in chapter 1, the principals might be having difficulty in assessing the efficacy of their leadership actions (Brewer, 1993; Elmore, 2008). Thirdly, this points to the participants being significantly engaged in impression management concerning their successes as school leaders. This could be due to the principals being expected to meet the norm of “strong leaders” (Ah-Teck & Starr, 2014) that was earlier described. Indeed, the intimate nature of the social context surrounding schools in SIDS can create strong social pressures. The principals know about each other from informal social networks, and it is clear they do engage in rhetoric (Goffman, 1990; Shulman, 2017) to present themselves favourably. Fourthly, this poses the concern that although the life of the participants is eventful, those numerous experiences do not necessarily contribute to meaningful learning.

#### ***6.4.1.2 A life shaped by trouble***

As expected from the literature reviewed, the work life of the participants is shaped by the dynamic interactions (Kemmis et al., 2014) with the different stakeholders. In their stories, all the participants report that their normal workdays are full of problems, demanding immediate attention, pointing to schools being indeed

“messy” contexts (Jackson & Sherriff, 2013). Moreover, the role overload, observed in other contexts (Hamre *et al.*, 2008, Hamre *et al.*, 2010; Abu-Nasser, 2011), seems verified for our five participants.

From the stories collected, it is noted that shouldering the responsibilities quickly transforms the principals, and elicits from them certain qualities (Buffie, 1989; Day *et al.*, 2001; Campbell *et al.*, 2003; Robinson 2010) that are required for the job. Moreover, the principals clearly seem under pressure, and with little time for planning, strategising and working to improve instruction at school (Hamre *et al.*, 2008; Hamre *et al.*, 2010; Abu-Nasser, 2011), as generally noted in the literature reviewed.

One coping strategy noted was to work outside the office. Indeed, two principals do spend a lot of time walking around and sorting out difficulties. This is also possibly related to the need to be visible in the execution of the job (Goffman, 1990; Shulman, 2017). Jenny seems now extremely cautious about any changes that she wishes to bring to school procedures. Ben and Tim, for their part, routinely focus on non-instructional aspects of the school (Macneill *et al.*, 2005). Tina now appears very pessimistic about improving teachers, which concurs with findings by Congo-Poottaren (2015) concerning school principals in the Mauritian context.

The participants also confirm the need for an adaptation period before they are fully accepted by the school community, and teachers start to collaborate. This points to the notion that the principals might have little structural power (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004) to transform the school, as discussed in chapter 3. They appear to be unwilling to risk direct confrontation with teachers to minimise social pressures (Arkin, 1981; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991) as discussed in the literature review.

The participants all seem transformed and to have adopted strategies or approaches to minimise the discomfort associated with school management. They seem to have decreased the scope of their attention, and focused on issues on which they can take actions. Looking at the participants’ stories, we note different ways in which they respond and eventually adapt. Even if the principals talk about their strength of character or motivation, the constant pressure that they experience correlates with the apparent decrease in their expectations and sense of agency. All five principals, to different degrees, seem to feel isolated from the school community and

experience emotional and mental fatigue (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004), as discussed in the literature reviewed.

#### **6.4.1.3 Learning on the job**

The literature reviewed noted the debate concerning how principals might be prepared (Stein & Nelson, 2003) or unprepared (Eden, 2001), at the start of their career, to lead their schools. Similarly, there is a debate whether principals can learn more effectively on the job (Guthrie & Schuermann, 2010; Hamre *et al.*, 2010) or can only learn in limited ways (Elmore, 2008, Houchens & Keedy, 2009).

The participants appear to occasionally change their mindsets through engaging in reflective practice (Argyris & Schön, 1975, 1978). One example of changing mindset is John realising that being a principal is about leading people rather than writing documents. Another one is Ben discovering that being an effective school leader implies acknowledging emotions (Ciulla, 2008), and engaging the emotional intelligence of the school's stakeholders. The two above-mentioned examples of learning by reflective practice belong to the segment 3 of the life stages described in Figure 1.

In chapter 3, the difficulty for principals to learn from their instructional leadership actions was discussed. Tina exhibits reflective practice by reviewing her assumptions concerning teaching and learning, while in stage 4 of her career. Nonetheless, the participants appear to be mostly involved in reviewing their behaviours, rather than their mindsets, according to the circumstances that they find. A key problem is that the effects of the instructional leadership actions of the principals take a long time to become apparent (Elmore, 2008). Of the five principals interviewed, only Tina has had long tenures (five years or more) throughout her career until now. For the other principals, the normal tenure duration is on average less than three years. The rather limited on-the-job learning, discussed above, could reasonably be attributed to the inability of principals to reap the benefit of their work because of the short tenures.

Mauritian state secondary school principals are expected to learn their job as they do it. Moreover, the relative impossibility of seeing the benefits of instructional leadership actions may have a serious influence on the principals' choices of strategies. All the participants had no idea how long they might be working in a

school. This, certainly, has implications for the choice of strategies by the principals, as school leaders. The participants all describe how they gained significant knowledge and competency from their tenures. However, it appears that this acquired expertise does not appear to be in a form that is transferable from one tenure to another. Just as reflective practice is difficult to instil in teachers (Jones & Jones, 2013), the job context appears to make it very difficult for the principals to develop a reflective practice.

From the individual stories of the principals, it appears that they may be focussing on organisational goals that appear more achievable. This point is further discussed in sub-section 6.4.1.6 “Principals setting the standards for their success as instructional leaders”.

#### ***6.4.1.4 Schools as organic and diverse contexts***

Looking at the stories of the principals regarding their transitions from one school to another, a number of contextual factors are noted as very significant to the leadership and management of schools, as discussed in the literature review. Despite a deceptive familiarity, schools have distinctly different cultures that modulate the effect of the school leaders’ actions (Barth, 2002; Marks and Printy, 2003; Fullan, 2005; Gurr, 2008).

It is found to be very significant that the four principals with several tenures have not been able to replicate the same successes in their successive schools. The schools are in a way so different that the principals cannot apply the same management recipes from one school to another. However, the cooperation of the students, the teaching staff or of the administrative staff with the principal is not assured. Moreover, as Jenny, Ben and Tim report, when there is already inter-ethnic tension or strife within the school community, the collaboration of the different stakeholders with the principal may also depend on ethnicity.

This contrasts with models proposed by Qian *et al.* (2017), Hallinger *et al.* (2017) or Robinson *et al.* (2009), where teacher collaboration is viewed as essential. Indeed, the authority of the principal may often be challenged, which appears to confirm reviewed literature (Ackerman & Maslin-Ostrowski, 2004) that principals have little formal authority. From the individual stories, we note that principals negotiate the co-operation of key stakeholders, and rely more on diffuse power (Collins,

2005). Part of the problem of resistance to a new principal is quite possibly related to informal networking within the school and the school community adjusting to the principal. According to the participants, this resistance period may last between one year and four years. This appears to correspond to Kemmis *et al.* (2014) who propose that there is a dynamic adjustment between the teaching staff and the procedures that a principal tries to set up.

The stories of the five participants seems to indicate that for them, schools are messy contexts (Jackson & Sherriff, 2013). The effect of non-school contextual factors (Sergiovanni, 1995; Creemers, 1996) appear more significant than the school contextual factors (Wendell, 2000). There is the strong influence of the national culture (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, Ripley, 2013) and the professional culture of teaching (Keedy & Achilles, 1997; Keedy, 2005; Barber & Mourshed, 2007; Houchens & Keedy, 2009; Wallace, 2009; Stewart, 2012). This points to schools being much more than formal organisations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977; Orton & Weick, 1990), where improvements can be driven by changes of procedures (Stone, 2002). Such complexity creates unpredictability to which the principals have adapted their leadership.

#### ***6.4.1.5 Students as stakeholders in the teaching and learning process***

The statement that the “central business of schools is teaching and learning”, implies a strong underlying narrative that the school stakeholders are committed to this process. The role of the students in this process is significant, and it is noted that the beliefs of the principals, concerning the role of students in the schooling process, vary along a continuum. There are two possible extremes. On one hand, students are passive; they are a material to be worked on and transformed by schooling. On the other hand, students are active participants in the schooling process, interacting dynamically with teachers and taking responsibility for their own learning.

The perception of principals, regarding the role of the students in the teaching and learning process, determines how they may wish to influence the school. John, Ben, and Tim tend to see students as more passive and focus on creating a climate favourable for learning at school. In contrast, Tina sees students involved in a “teaching-studying-learning” process (Pitkäniemi, 2010), and believes in actively

encouraging students to study by monitoring their class work, homework and by checking copybooks.

However, the attitude of students towards teaching and learning at school seems culturally embedded (Stigler & Hiebert, 1999, Ripley, 2013). Admittedly, the principals do not overtly challenge an implicit master narrative present in the EHRSP, of students being victims (Sikes, 2015) within the school system. Nonetheless, the principals express dissatisfaction with the current level of students' engagement with their studies.

#### ***6.4.1.6 Principals setting the standards for their success as instructional leaders***

The MOEHR set standards, in term of student outcomes in standardised tests, for measuring the quality of teaching and learning in schools. However, the five principals have additional personal standards for measuring success in their schools. What also appears in the stories of the five principals is that they tend to dissociate themselves from the quality of instruction delivered by the teachers.

The second observation in section 6.3.3 is that the principals mostly view good teaching as the application of a limited set of techniques. Nonetheless, they seem to find some difficulties (Weisberg *et al.*, 2009; Hamre *et al.*, 2010) in assessing the quality of teaching of their teachers. Where possible, the principals avail themselves of the services of the Quality Assurance and Inspection teams for follow up, because of the difficulty of evaluating teachers beyond their own domains of subject expertise (Shulman, 1986). The stories collected from the five principals suggest that they do recognise cases of sub-standard teaching. Yet, it is noted that teaching tends to be conflated into only two categories: standard and sub-standard, a phenomenon noted by Weisberg *et al.* (2009) in other contexts.

An issue discussed in chapter 3 is the ability of principals to provide support to teachers of different levels of needs and requirements (Drago-Severson, 2007). An important corollary of the model of limited teacher professionalism is that good teachers would be those knowledgeable of the teaching techniques, and diligent in their application. This makes the teachers responsible for upholding the quality of their own teaching. Thus, as we find, the intervention of principals on teaching and learning is found to mostly focus on convincing teachers to do their job. In addition, the principals value teachers not only from the perspective of the quality of the

instruction in class, but also from other elements such as regular attendance, punctuality to work and participation to various school activities. Such an approach decreases the importance of class visits in teacher appraisal, and diminishes problems of time management (Hamre *et al.*, 2010; Abu-Nasser, 2011) and social pressures arising from criticising teachers (Arkin, 1981; Dutton & Dukerich, 1991).

To present themselves and their schools as successful, the principals look at different measures. Tim defines good school functioning as good student discipline and teacher satisfaction. Ben defines it as the smooth functioning of the school. John sees it as a strong and visible extracurricular programme. For Tina, it is a climate promoting holistic student development. Despite the focus of the MOEHR on student outcomes, the principals use more complex approaches, involving general leadership strategies, in an attempt to reconcile incompatible institutional and technical pressures (Meyer & Rowan, 1977). A consequence of this strategy is that even if the principals can develop better models to understand teaching with time, such a knowledge is not valued and not leveraged in school leadership.

#### ***6.4.1.7 What principals bring to the job***

One common experience for the five participants is that, as assistant principals, they had to replace established principals who were on leave. These multiple experiences, although short ones, appear to have been quite formative for the participants. The problem with this kind of on-the-job training is that it might have contributed to the principals developing a tendency of taking actions that have results in the short-term. Actually, this inclination to view schools in the short-term would only be further reinforced by the tendency for rather short principal tenures.

In chapter 1, it was reported how two earlier studies (Ah-Teck & Starr, 2012; 2014) in the Mauritian context painted a picture of strong and confident school leaders. In their stories, the participants tried to project a strong image, either by foregrounding their strength of character or their technical competence. Yet, in chapter 3, it was noted that principals were expected to build strong relationships with their teaching staff to promote learning (Robinson *et al.*, 2009; Qian *et al.*, 2017; Hallinger *et al.*, 2017). This implies them having listening, communication, empathy, and coaching skills that are, however, not necessarily associated with strong leaders. Yet, in

Mauritius, the scheme of service for principals of state Secondary school does appear to emphasise strong personality over interpersonal skills.

It has been suggested that teamwork is an individual skill (Avery *et al.*, 2001) and that only selected individuals appear possess it to a high level (Kotler & Wheal, 2017). Moreover, the ability to form and work in teams is possibly very crucial to effective instructional leadership (Robinson *et al.*, 2009; Hallinger *et al.*, 2017; Qian *et al.*, 2017). However, what stands out from the principals, as a dominant narrative, is that they feel lonely, estranged from their parent Ministry, and find it difficult to work with teachers. Principals are traditionally selected by interviews which bring to the fore self-presentation skills, such that selected candidates might not have some important people skills. This poses the problem of selecting principals by using other means, such that crucial team-relating and team-building skills can be evidenced and evaluated.

## **6.5 Chapter Summary**

In this chapter, I have developed a collective analysis of the stories of the participants to whom I gave voice in chapter 5. The stories of the principals were made to ‘talk’ to each other, and to talk back to the literature reviewed on teaching and instructional leadership. The findings from individual and collective analysis of the participant’s stories were brought together to provide insights into instructional leadership in the Mauritian context.

The discussion in section 6.4 is placed under the title “Around the day in five schools”. The five principals work in the same educational system. However, even as there are some common elements to their stories, they seem to be having very different experiences as if the five schools were five different worlds. These principals are all very busy running their schools. Even if some principals try to follow teacher monitoring procedures, they seem to be quite unable to bring improvements to the quality of teaching in their schools.

In chapter 7, answers are brought to the research questions and the research process is reviewed. The implications of the findings for policy are discussed. Finally, two knowledge gaps, that have been identified in this research, are presented.

# Chapter 7 Conclusion

## 7.1 Introduction

Sikes (2006) describes, through a personal account of visiting a foreign city, how the experiences of travel may lead us to challenge many of our assumptions. Twain (1869) wrote:

*“Travel is fatal to prejudice, bigotry, and narrow-mindedness, and many of our people need it sorely on these accounts.”*

*Twain (1869): The Innocents Abroad*

Travelling through the experiences of the different principals was deeply transforming for me. It allowed me to see state secondary schools in new ways and engage in an enriching conversation with literature.

This research also allows an insight into the work of five principals and contributes to the theorising on educational leadership, by shedding light on some mechanisms that can explain contextual influences on school leadership. Indeed, how contexts affect the school leaders as individuals, and hence affect their leadership practice, is an area that has been significantly under-researched (Hallinger, 2018).

This research looked into four gaps in knowledge, described in chapter 1, concerning how principals exert their instructional leadership, and how this affects the implementation of educational policies, using a narrative approach. The data has expectedly been complex, rich and difficult to analyse. The analysis of the stories collected from the participants has clearly revealed strong personal narratives. In addition, common narratives about school leadership were also identified, which could be used to inform theory and policymaking.

In this chapter, the answers to the research sub-questions will be summarised. Then, sitting on the data, we will look at some implications of the findings, and the limitations of the study. Next, there is a reflection on the research process and the EdD journey. The chapter concludes with a consideration of the new gaps of knowledge that have been evidenced by this research.

## **7.2 Talking back to the research problem**

In chapter 1, the research question was presented as follows:

“How does the principals’ understanding of quality of teaching inform their instructional leadership practice and affect policy implementation?”

The research question was further analysed into four sub-questions. In the following segments, I review the response to each of the sub-questions, drawing from the findings of the research.

### **7.2.1 “How does the school context affect the principals’ understanding of quality of teaching and learning?”**

An important finding is that the principals tend to view the quality of teaching and learning relative to the school context, rather than in terms of an absolute or a national standard. They tend to focus on situations where the quality of teaching is reported as problematic, for example, when there are persistent and repeated complaints. As such, the practical view of quality that emerges from the principals’ practice, is the absence of reported problems more than the actual presence of a certain number of desirable qualities. There is a clear cut-off between acceptable and not-acceptable teaching. However, as long as teaching is acceptable, there is a tendency for the principals to make no further distinction. Acceptable, good or excellent teaching become conflated in one broad category as discussed in chapter 1 (Weisberg *et al.*, 2009).

It is very significant that a clear distinction is also made between teaching in ideal circumstances where pedagogy is central, and teaching in practice. In the school context, factors such as completing the syllabus or saving time for conducting remedial work for failing students prevail. Such factors preclude the development of lesson plans in ways that would allow students to learn best. Moreover, teaching is predominantly viewed by the principals in terms of a restricted professional code. It is the application of a number of tools and “tricks of the trade” that makes a good teacher. However, to assess the performance of teachers, the principals also tend to consider other factors such as participation to extracurricular activities, and support to administration rather than solely relying on quality of instruction.

### **7.2.2 “What do principals do to improve or maintain the quality of teaching and learning in their schools?”**

The findings of this research point to the principals not being in control of the quality of teaching and learning in their schools. These findings contrast with earlier findings proposed by Ah-Teck & Starr (2012; 2014). First, the principals tend to spend a relatively small proportion of their daily practice in looking at teaching and learning. They will usually attend to teaching that is sub-standard only when it creates problems for the school. There is no notion of improving teaching if it is already acceptable, or continuously improving teaching practice. Secondly, it also appears quite clearly that the principals’ evaluation of good teaching tends to be strongly informed by good class management skills. Indeed, in the eyes of the principals, these tend to dominate other skills such as good lesson development.

The principals also seem to find it difficult to relate to teachers concerning their teaching practice and giving feedback. Teachers, as a stakeholder group, can be problematic for the principals to handle. Thus, with a view of minimising tensions with teachers, the principals appear to keep interventions on teaching to a minimum, thereby reducing risks to themselves. The principals also have a strong concern about their personal reputation as school leaders and tend to focus on other more achievable targets than improving instruction.

In view of the above, it is felt that the principals actually contribute little to improve the quality of instruction in class. They focus their actions on managing discipline and extracurricular activities. These can contribute to school climate, and may thus indirectly affect teaching and learning. It appears quite reasonable to state that the principals are unable, whether for personal or practical reasons, to bring significant changes in the teaching practice of teachers.

### **7.2.3 “How does the instructional leadership practice of principals relate to their pedagogical knowledge and beliefs”?**

The principals use their understanding of pedagogy to evaluate the practices of teachers, and to inform their instructional leadership actions. However, there is a tendency for the principals to define their instructional leadership role narrowly, by focusing only on a limited inventory of actions to influence instructional outcomes. It is noted that there are two key pedagogical concepts that inform the principals.

Firstly, effective teaching requires a good interaction between the teacher and the learner. Secondly, there is an important difference between subject knowledge and the applied knowledge required to teach a particular subject effectively.

A direct consequence of this on the practice of the principals is that they pay attention to teacher-student interactions when they observe a teacher in class. There is an expectation that the teachers will be able to pace their lessons according to ability of the students. The teachers are also expected to plan their work ahead of teaching and be prepared to deliver effectively. The principals pay careful attention to how well teachers communicate, with a special focus on the fluency and coherence of speech, and effective use of the whiteboard. However, there was no indication that, beyond their own subject specialisation, the principals are able to look critically at lesson planning and lesson plans. They rely on their tacit knowledge of teaching, and do not make use of explicit frameworks to evaluate lessons and lesson development.

Moreover, the research indicates that the principals' practice evolves with time. In the initial part of the career, the instructional leadership might be informed by the beliefs and knowledge of the principal. However, in the later years, they seem to be informed by on the job experiences and school context. The general trend observed is that the principals become more cautious about the number and scope of interventions with teachers. This is possibly related to changes in the belief concerning their ability to bring change in teachers, or the support from their supervising directors.

#### **7.2.4 “What are the implications of the principals’ instructional leadership for educational policy?”**

The principals mostly attempt to influence student outcomes by indirect means such as discipline and co-curricular activities, according to their personal preferences and beliefs. This is in line with the limited conceptions of the professionalism of teachers and principals. Furthermore, the principals appear to be quite constrained by the various contexts (school, cultural and social) in which they operate. Moreover, and more importantly, it is noted that the sense of agency of the principals appears to decrease with their length of service as principals.

It also appears that the principals tend to be satisfied with the status quo, provided that quality stays above a certain level. They do not attempt interventions in teaching unless they have no other alternatives. This results in the principals not being effective instructional leaders, with their influence decreasing with the number of years in service. Under such conditions, the principals are unable to service the instructional improvement roles that are ascribed to them in the relevant policies. In the initial period of their career, the principals seem to diverge because of their personal views, they eventually turn out to be very conventional, and attempt less and less instructional change.

For the successful implementation of policies that rely on strong instructional leadership, it appears quite important that two areas must be attended. First, principals must be accompanied during their early years to be able to achieve smooth transitions of leadership in their new schools. Second, principals must be supported throughout their career to maintain their leadership edge. Moreover, there should be better mechanisms for listening to principals. They should be considered as partners in policy implementation rather than mere implementers.

### **7.3 Pushing back the boundaries**

In Mauritius, the notion of “world-class quality education” has entered the national policy narratives, and is apparently here to stay. An underlying premise for the first research sub-question is that in its policy documents, the MOEHR has not provided for a clear understanding of this notion of quality. In a positivist approach, the MOEHR has adopted a notion of quality that is attached to the level of student outcomes. This research points to the principals understanding and defining quality of teaching and learning contextually. Furthermore, quality is operationalised as the absence of reported problems.

Measuring the quality of teaching and learning produced by schools, by looking at cases of poor teaching and learning, can be construed as a recognition that the outcome of teaching and learning is emergent and not controlled. While the national policy narratives talk about quality, they do make underlying assumptions about the nature of schools as organisations, and the schooling system, that need to be challenged. There is an assumption that schools, as organisations, behave as they are intended to do, and that teaching and learning is a well-tamed process. The data,

however, suggests that schools as well as teaching and learning, can be quite messy and unpredictable. The principals also have a concept of what teaching could be if there were ideal conditions in their school. However, they also seem aware that the conditions prevailing in their school do not promote the highest quality of teaching.

It is noted that the policymakers appear unwilling to see the school as a complex system that delivers on the teaching and learning. They seem to hold the model that quality is achievable by tweaking only factors relating to teachers and principals. However, the research data points to teaching quality and principal leadership quality being dependent on the system, and the quality of learning outcomes being determined by a number of elements of the system. Indeed, the principals appear unable to replicate their success because of an ensemble of school factors beyond their control.

Prior to the introduction of this new language on “quality education” in the EHRSP, there was already the notion of good schools and good teachers. “Good teachers” are those teachers who apply the good techniques and who know their subject area. They are, therefore, trusted to deliver good quality teaching. However, the performance of teachers is not necessarily the same throughout the school year or their career. An implication of this approach is that good teaching is not necessarily always of a high standard, or at par with the norm. There is evidence that the notion of good teachers, good schools and quality education co-exist for the participants.

Thus, each successive narrative such as “good teachers”, “good schools” and “good school processes” adds to the previous one. This appears to have produced an aggregate concept that is unintended by the policymakers. Defining quality teaching as the absence of bad teaching is, probably, the most practical way that the principals can negotiate the multiple and conflicting expectations made of schools. Principals may find dealing with negative traits more practical to work with, because in a way they set the priorities for action. Issues then become obvious and principals do not need to engage any complex analysis to determine where to act.

An important assumption underlying the second research sub-question is the notion of personal agency that a principal has within the schooling system. This agency is constrained both by external and internal factors. On the side of external factors, there are the involvement of teacher unions, the influence of parents, and the management approach of the MOEHR. These represent risks of lengthy procedures,

hassles, and loss of reputation. On the side of the internal factors, there are the principals' understanding of their role as an instructional leader, their previous experiences and their disposition at handling risks.

The data points to the principals weighing the consequences of both taking and not taking action in terms of risks to themselves, before initiating any measure that affects teaching. The principals tend to focus their intervention on reported problems because then, the risk of not acting for them becomes larger than the risk of acting. Thus, any strong complaint gives a sufficient justification to conduct class visits and engage in debriefing sessions. The principals hold teachers responsible for improving their own performance, and intervene strictly on cases that are brought to their attention. In doing so, they avoid engaging teachers in the classrooms, and hence decrease personal risk.

Whereas the principals have, as per policy, a mandate to monitor teachers and teaching closely, they are possibly not seen by the school stakeholders as having the necessary legitimacy. The principals' perception of their own role, and their willingness to endorse risks is then very significant. It determines the tipping point when the principals initiate corrective measures. One of the outcomes of such a balancing exercise is that the principal would routinely tend to the issues that create the lowest risk actions and keep the rest out of the agenda.

The way quality of teaching and learning is operationalised in schools by the principals, also appears to be an approach for handling risks. When there are strong expressions of dissatisfaction concerning a teacher's work, then the risk for the intervening principal is at its lowest. In such a situation, there is implicit support from other school stakeholders for an intervention. Incidentally, the principal's perception of the balance of risks to himself sets the norm of quality teaching for the school. There is a tendency for teachers to regulate the quality of their teaching and make it acceptable, to decrease the risk of the principals intervening. However, if the quality of teaching were already deemed acceptable by the principal, then teachers would have little incentive to improve their teaching further.

Moreover, the master narrative of "quality teacher", earlier discussed, is seen to be useful to the principal. Teachers may acquire, by virtue of their long experience on the job, the recognition of being seen as "quality teachers". This gives to the principals the necessary legitimacy, despite existing regulations, not to conduct

class visits. This contributes to decreasing the number of class visits that the principals have to conduct, in a context of risk minimisation or avoidance.

Another way in which the principals manipulate the notion of quality is by factoring in elements such as co-curricular activities. The school derives a better reputation, and is seen as a good institution when it is successful in an extra-curricular activity. The improved perception of the school is then expected to give a better impression of all activities conducted there, including teaching and learning. The principals bring into the mix areas in which they can more easily intervene, and thus reclaim more agency.

However, quite apart from the different ways of defining and operationalising quality, the principals can minimise risks to themselves by defining their own role as instructional leaders. An important premise that underpins the third sub-question is the principals have a conceptual map that they use for running the school and, in particular, for instructional leadership. This particular sub-question, therefore, explores how the conceptual map is shaped by the experience, knowledge, and beliefs of the principals. The findings note an evolution in their practice. With time, they appear to become less inclined to take risks, and to restrict the number and scope of the actions that they take.

Early in their practice, the principals seem inclined to take actions according to their ideals. However, with experience, they are more bound by practical constraints arising from within the school context. This may explain the dual notion of quality held by the principals: quality in the ideal situation as opposed to quality in the messy reality of the school. The principals might still entertain beliefs about an ideal way in which they would like to see the school operating. However, they do learn about the drawbacks of attempting to bring certain changes. As a result, they become less inclined to disturb the existing practice. Even if the principals come across new management approaches to managing their school, they are likely to be more cautious about attempting changes as they progress along their career.

As noted in chapter 6, the principals tend to focus on short time frames when planning their interventions. They also appear isolated from their teachers and staff, and quite conservative in their approaches. This can be interpreted in two ways. Firstly, there is a possibility that the principals, having a long experience as a teacher, have enduringly acquired these mindsets. Secondly, there is the possibility

that the school context itself actually shapes the staff that work there to have such mindsets. The findings of this research do relate to very similar findings by Lortie (1975) concerning school teachers (Lortie, 1975, Hargreaves & Woods, 1984).

There is a strong indication that teachers learn about teaching from being at school (Lortie 1975, Bruner, 1996). Nonetheless, this form of apprenticeship (Lortie, 1975) does not allow an observer to enter the world of the teacher. Teaching, in that respect, may seem deceptively easy (Labaree, 2000). However, once a person enters the world of teaching and actually becomes an insider, the complexity of the profession unfolds. The dominant perspective expressed by the principals is that teaching and learning is of low complexity. This would be normally expected from outsiders, and not from people who have been through the system. A possible explanation is that in transitioning from the classrooms to the school leader's office, the principals lose contact with teaching, and eventually revert to the status of outsider. However, from the perspective of the minimisation of risks, there are definite advantages for the principals to adopt the outsider perspective. Since teaching is simple, poor teaching can be related to lack of efforts on the part of teachers, and thus be construed as their responsibility.

Another significant issue, posed by how principals' respond to risk, is determining the most appropriate method of selection of principals among candidates. Teaching experience and strong personality might be apparent to an interview panel. However, emotional resilience, ability to take risks, and to relate powerfully to a diverse school community are crucially important. Yet, these factors are not necessarily apparent during an interview. For principals already in service, the problem poses itself in terms of how they can develop resilience and courage. Principals seem to become more conservative in their mindset. Thus, the practical knowledge that they may accumulate during their career may not be leveraged, because of the problems associated with implementation at school level. As the principals disengage from the job, they would tend to become at best passive implementers and there would be no talking back to the policymakers. Thus, the issue of risk appears to be a structural challenge in the education system.

As discussed earlier, this research contributes to the discussion of the impact of school contexts on school leadership (Hallinger, 2018). It also contributes to the reflection on the master narrative of 'leadership'. In chapter 3, the enduring myth

of the strong school leader (Elmore, 2005) was noted. This study challenges this romanticised conception of leadership (Meindl *et al.*, 1985; Elmore, 2005) that has found its way into policy narratives. It produces compelling evidence that schools are complex arenas, where the collaboration of students, teachers, parents and even that of officials of the Ministry need to be negotiated. Attributing the credit for successes, and blames for failures, to school leaders arises from the illusion that control of the school within the context is possible (Salancik & Meindl, 1984). However, the romance of leadership also exists in the school stakeholders to some extent. This allows school leadership to exist, though with constraints (Schyns & Sanders, 2007).

## **7.4 Limitations of the study**

The study is concerned with how principals of state secondary schools in Mauritius talk about improving teaching and learning. Two interviews were conducted for the five participants, who were chosen on the basis of six factors. The first four factors concern the school context. They are the leadership practice of the zone director overseeing the school, the school location, the existing student level and the gender of the student population. The two other factors are about the principal namely: gender and length of tenure in the school considered.

There are two contextual factors described in chapters 1 and 2 that appear significant in the light of the findings. There is a strong pressure towards a culture of performativity exerted by the MOEHR, and a strong social pressure on principals arising from Mauritius being a SIDS. There are two key findings that emerge when considering the ten interviews. First, there are stages in the professional lives of the principals as the principals learn about the job and accumulate experiences. Second, as the principals progress through the life, they become more aware of personal risk and this becomes factored into their instructional leadership.

One observation about the realised sample is that four principals out of five have had at the time of the interviews known three tenures. This is possibly significant because these four principals have reported a number of adverse experiences during some of their previous tenures, that have shaped their outlook on school leadership towards impression management. The individual ability of the participants to handle risks and their actual competency at leading a school are elements that were

not accounted for in the data collection, but had important influences on the reported experiences. Moreover, four out of the five principals have Eastern roots, and their propensity to use impression management could also be related to their ethnic influences.

Thus, the findings are probably not directly generalisable to all the principals within the state secondary school system. The five participants have contributed to a thick description of the schooling system and its administration and what kinds of contextual influences that the principals may be faced with. This study gives us an insight into a factor that may mediate the relationship between instructional leadership and principal knowledge, when principals are placed in high stakes situations. It contributes to theorising about school leadership by showing that the resilience skills of the principals are important contributors to the instructional leadership equation.

Another limitation of the study relates to the comparatively low proportion of the data collected that related to certain dimension of instructional leadership, as compared to more general leadership issues. Coupled with the small number of participants, this did not allow the study to reach data saturation for the potential findings noted. Thus, no generalisation was possible for the participants' instructional leadership profile, based on the collected data. Additional data based either on more participants to the study, or additional interviews from each participant, might have shed more light on the research problem.

## **7.5 Looking at the research process**

In this section, I undertake a review of my own research narrative through the lens of Bruner's (1996) narrative universals. The thesis is organised along the codes expected of an EdD thesis. Each chapter of the thesis constitutes a time period reflecting the unfolding of the argument, in the search for answers to the questions set in chapter 1. However, the research actually breaks that norm by progressing iteratively as described below: Ideation of research problem → Literature review → Development of methodology → Fieldwork → Transcription and analysis → Describing the various contexts foregrounding the research problem → Reviewing literature → Analysis → Reviewing methodology → Analysis →

Discussions and recommendations → Reviewing positionality → Reviewing analysis → Reviewing literature → Reviewing discussions and recommendations.

The first iterative loop in the research process happened after the first part of the analysis. When the interaction between school context, the practices of teaching and learning, and instructional leadership became clear, it was obvious that the review of literature had to be revisited. Indeed, the frameworks used to examine teaching and instructional leadership had to be adjusted to reflect how the practices of principals were contextualised. A second major iteration in the unfolding of the research occurred in the middle of the research process. While the extraordinary richness of the individual narratives had at this point been made clear, it was important to look at ways to synthesise data and develop meta-narratives. The third major iteration was driven by the need for new presentation of the research data. The narrative portraits of the participants were reworked to give them more voice, and the collective analysis was reorganised to a thematic format.

The research process was driven by a number of tensions. One tension that drove the research narrative is answering the questions that are set in chapter 1. A second tension that is addressed is the blending of different methods involving narrative, such that the overall project appears integrated. A third tension that is addressed, arising from the use of the narrative approach, is balancing the voice of the participants and that of the researcher. A fourth tension that underpins this research is the tension between being exhaustive and being concise. The battle to keep the word count down was also fought to the last paragraph of the thesis.

The answers to the research questions are woven into a larger narrative that draws on literature, on the participants' voice, and the research findings. Each tier of analysis adds to the story about instructional leadership in state secondary schools in Mauritius. The first tier starts with individual portraits. The next tiers take us further from the details but brings attention to deeper narrative structures, layer by layer, through the use of methodological tools, and comparison to the theoretical frameworks. Moreover, the research narrative took a life of its own as it challenged some master narratives that underlie key educational policies in Mauritius. As Twain (1897) puts it "Truth is stranger than fiction". Developing new insights sometimes goes against accepted canons of thinking about the world. This requires

a way of seeing the world that makes the familiar strange again, but which makes it difficult to write about.

## **7.6 My EdD journey**

### ***The challenge of thinking differently***

The first assignment marked the beginning of this unique journey. Very early on, one of my supervisors posed the problem of putting our arguments in a nutshell. It was extraordinarily difficult for me to identify core ideas. I had always thought of ideas as unique species living within a complex ecosystem. I had to examine my ontological and epistemological positions. If I were to be more critical, I had to understand the world in new ways. However, the outcome was worthwhile. Apart from writing more clearly, it also allowed me to start challenging ideas and assumptions in my readings. The learning continued throughout the assignments of the first stage of the EdD. Being reflexive is a skill that I have been able to carry onto other aspects of my life. Indeed, I regularly find myself asking the question: “what do I gain or lose by adopting this perspective?”

### ***Daring to be examined***

The most difficult experience of the EdD, by far, was getting to understand what “critical friends” are to an academic. In the beginning of the process, I was very uncomfortable with “why” and “so what” questions from my supervisors. Eventually, by the time I had reached the second stage of the EdD, I was looking for such opportunities because it allowed me to gain some distance from my ideas and thought processes. Once I was able to move beyond the stress of being “boxed into a corner”, I found myself “switched on”, with new perspectives just appearing into my mind. It would certainly be very exciting to be that effective and objective all the time, but with much less stress.

### ***Meeting “doctoralness”***

One distressing finding during the EdD journey was that my “wish” reading list got longer by the week. I ultimately realised that I would never get to the end of it. There were so many ways of looking at my chosen topics (principal leadership, teaching and learning) that it was clearly not possible to go into the details of all that research. This had the merit of making me focus, more precisely, on locating my area of research. I had to re-examine my ontological, epistemological and

methodological grounding, and consider what I was striving to contribute as new knowledge to the field.

As I persevered in my data analysis, new insights and new findings, which I had not suspected or given thought to before, came to light. At the same time, it was somehow frightening to let the findings emerge because I had no idea where they would be taking me. There were many alternating moments of apparent clarity and deepest confusion. Eventually, an apparent order and narrative became visible. I realised that I had drilled into my data much more deeply than I would have anticipated. Perhaps, what is more exciting, is that there are clearly more nuggets to be explored.

### ***A learning journey from personal meaning to contributing to the world***

Ever since I had learnt to tie them, I had been plagued by shoelaces that would become untied. In February 2018, I learnt about a formal research that had been conducted on tying shoelaces (Daily-Diamond *et al.*, 2017). This revealed why shoelaces may come untied, depending on how we tie them. Suddenly it made the familiar, tying shoelaces, unfamiliar. I was amazed how, despite my scientific background, I had never examined tying shoelaces objectively nor tried to do things differently. This research solved for me the mystery of shoelaces getting untied all the time. In a progressively transformative way, whether at home or at work, I had begun to examine my assumptions or practices, and question them.

However, the most significant take away for me for this EdD is finally understanding the power of my own positionality in my research, and by extension in all aspects of my life. It was certainly the challenge of my examiners during the Viva that prompted me to look deeper. Admittedly, it was a very difficult experience, but it was a journey that had to be taken. It came as a sudden realisation how my research-related decisions, starting from the choice of research problem, had been shaped by my positionality. As a researcher, I am now in a position to appreciate the research of others more clearly, and to formulate and execute my own research more effectively. I also realised that my positionality affected my professional choices. It certainly felt very uneasy not to be fully in control of one's decisions. However, it led me to realise that the leadership development of principals must also involve an understanding of positionality and reflexivity.

Engaging with an EdD has been for me hugely transformative. It leaves me with the feeling of having been able to make a meaningful contribution to knowledge, which is accessible to the community of researchers and also to the principals and the schools as well. In a sense, it is just like applying physics to the tying of shoelaces. By giving the proper narrative to back good practices and good policy measures, they are easier to accept, adopt and adapt, and things can change for the better.

This inspires me to add a twist to Eliot's (1943) "Little Gidding"

*"We shall not cease from exploration  
And the end of all our exploring  
Will be to arrive where we started  
And know the place for the first time."*

And so

*And through the stories that we shall tell  
We will walk our friends through the same journey  
And change the world to their eyes too...*

## **7.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I have provided some answers to the four gaps in knowledge that triggered this dissertation. This research is able to make a contribution to knowledge in these areas by identifying how principals, in certain circumstances, may manage personal risk by defining quality and teaching in ways that decrease their responsibility, and by focusing on actions that enhance school reputation. The school context by its complexity, uncertainty, high stakes, and constant pressure on principals, actually affect how they define themselves as professionals and shapes their practice in fundamental ways.

Principals may become increasingly averse to personal risks as their careers progress, because of the increasing emotional and mental fatigue. They may also adopt restricted conceptions of the process and quality of teaching. This would limit their responsibility and roles in the improvement of the quality of teaching at schools. Principals may focus school-level actions on objectives that are highly visible, that can be accomplished in the short-term, and improve the school's reputation, even if they do not bring visible instructional benefits. In light of the

issues discussed in chapter 6 and summarised above, the following three ideas are proposed as avenues to be explored for improving the practice of principals in Mauritian state secondary schools.

The first proposal concerns the professional development of principals. Principals manage their schools in significantly different ways. At school level, this creates problems during the transition from one principal to another. New principals should, therefore, be well trained into administrative procedures, and in the interpretation of key documents such as the school management manual. Principals should also be supported at different stages in their career to ensure that they remain emotionally resilient and able to face professional risks. Furthermore, failing principals should be supported in their school.

The second proposal concerns the understanding of concepts of quality teaching and instructional leadership in state secondary schools. There are different ways of conceptualising quality within the schooling system. This contributes to making principals lead their schools in ways that are not necessarily aligned with the vision of the MOEHR. These concepts should be well defined and operationalised to principals so that there is a shared understanding between them and the educational authorities.

The third proposal concerns administrative arrangements surrounding school management. Principals should be allowed a longer tenure, for example, between five and six years. This would give them more time to adapt to a school context and work out long-term projects of school transformation. Furthermore, principals should be assisted in handling administrative work at school level by strengthening the support staff in areas such as facilities maintenance, discipline, and student counselling. This will provide the principals with more time to attend to instructional matters.

To conclude this dissertation, I will consider the two gaps in knowledge that have been identified by this research project. The first gap concerns how school leaders conceptualise risk. It appears quite important to know what are the different types of risk that they perceive. More needs to be known on how the school environment contributes to risk. It is also pertinent to understand how the personal traits of principals affect how they handle risk. Finally, the strategies and leadership styles principals use to handle risks in the school context must be better understood.

The second gap that appears interesting to explore is how the school context shapes leadership of principals. It is important to understand the effect of constant pressure on a principal during any particular tenure and over a career, how school context affects adaptation of principals, and how experiences as assistant principals shape the mindsets of principals. Such knowledge would help improve the preparation of principals and provide better support for them throughout their careers.

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# APPENDIX A Scheme of service of principals of state secondary schools

## **PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION CIRCULAR NOTE NO. 41 OF 2016**

### **Vacancies for Post of Rector** **Ministry of Education and Human Resources,** **Tertiary Education and Scientific Research**

Applications are invited from qualified officers of the Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research who wish to be considered for appointment as Rector in the Ministry.

#### **II. QUALIFICATIONS**

**A.** By selection from among officers in the grades of -

- (i) Administrator (Education); and
- (ii) Deputy Rector who reckon at least three years' service in a substantive capacity in the grade

who possess the Postgraduate Certificate or Diploma in Education from a recognised institution

or

have successfully completed a one year full-time (or equivalent part-time) course leading to a postgraduate certificate or diploma in a subject relevant to education at a recognised institution.

**B.** Candidates should -

- (i) have strong leadership skills;
- (ii) possess good communication skills, both written and oral;
- (iii) possess organising and managerial skills; and
- (iv) have the ability to work under pressure and to motivate staff and students to achieve the highest level of attainment and performance in fulfilling the vision of the school.

#### **III. ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

To implement educational policies in State Secondary Schools/State Colleges and to ensure the provision of quality education to all students.

2/...

**IV. DUTIES AND SALARY**

1. **MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS**

- (i) To be responsible for the overall management of a State Secondary School/State College including Pre-Vocational Education Stream.
- (ii) To prepare School Development Plans.
- (iii) To prepare school time-tables with due respect to optimal utilisation of human resources.
- (iv) To monitor the rate of absenteeism of students and staff and come up with corrective measures.
- (v) To devise strategies to maintain overall discipline at school level and beyond school premises regarding participation of students in co-curricular and extra-curricular activities.
- (vi) To be responsible for all internal examinations.
- (vii) To ensure that all school related data, records, files and correspondence are collected, maintained and updated.
- (viii) To ensure that the standards of Occupational Safety and Health in schools are properly maintained.

2. **CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY**

- (i) To plan, organise and monitor educational activities, including sports and co-curricular activities of the school and to report thereupon to the Director of Zone, as and when required.
- (ii) To keep abreast of current educational thinking and developments, relevant to secondary schooling in order to promote good practice.
- (iii) To develop a high standard of cultural and social values.
- (iv) To monitor and review the special learning needs policy for all students.
- (v) To oversee the implementation of the curriculum such that it responds to the needs of students with varying abilities of learning.

3. **MONITORING OF PERFORMANCE**

- (i) To monitor and report on performance of personnel and students and provide necessary assistance and support.
- (ii) To seek through close collaboration of parents and the Zone Directorate, ways and means for the effective assessment of students' progress, both formative and summative.
- (iii) To oversee progress in all areas of School Performance through agreed indicators and monitoring progress towards their achievement.

3/...

4. **MANAGEMENT OF RESOURCES**

- (i) To be responsible for the overall provision, auditing and maintenance of equipment, materials and furniture.
- (ii) To develop and implement a yearly performance schedule for the school infrastructure, in collaboration with the Directorate.
- (iii) To ensure optimum utilisation of human, financial, material and infrastructural resources of the school to continuously improve the quality of education and secure value for money.
- (iv) To seek opportunities for contributing to the sustainable development of the school environment.

5. **STAFF MANAGEMENT**

- (i) To lead, inspire and ensure the development of staff to secure excellence in teaching, learning and pastoral care.
  - (ii) To implement and sustain the Performance Management System.
  - (iii) To ensure that newly appointed staff have appropriate induction and support.
  - (iv) To prepare schedule of duties of non-teaching staff, allocate and clarify responsibilities assigned and provide necessary technical assistance.
6. To establish effective liaison with different stakeholders.
7. To be accountable to the Director of the Zone for the effectiveness of the school.
8. To use ICT in the performance of his duties.
9. To perform such other duties directly related to the main duties listed above or related to the delivery of the output and results expected from the Rector in the roles ascribed to him.

The permanent and pensionable post carries salary in scale Rs 49,950 x 1,625 – 62,950 x 1,850 – 68,500 X 1,950 – 74,350 a month.

4/...

**V. MODE OF APPLICATION**

1. Qualified candidates should submit their application on **PSC Form 7** which may be obtained **either** from the Enquiry Counter of the Ministry of Civil Service and Administrative Reforms, Ground Floor, Emmanuel Anquetil Building, Port Louis **or** from the Enquiry Counter of the Public Service Commission, 7, Louis Pasteur Street, Forest Side **or** from the Chief Commissioner's Office, Port Mathurin, Rodrigues **or** from the offices of the Mauritius High Commission/Embassies overseas.
2. Applications should be submitted **in duplicate**, the original to be sent directly to the Secretary, Public Service Commission and the duplicate through the Senior Chief Executive, Ministry of Education and Human Resources, Tertiary Education and Scientific Research.
3. This circular together with the application form (PSC Form 7) are available on the website of the Public Service Commission at **<http://psc.govmu.org>**
4. Candidates are encouraged to submit on-line application through the government web portal at **<http://www.govmu.org>**
5. Acknowledgement of applications will be made, as far as possible, by **e-mail**. Candidates are therefore advised to submit their e-mail address.
6. Candidates are also advised to read carefully the **"NOTES AND INSTRUCTIONS TO CANDIDATES"** before filling in the application form. Care should be taken to fill in the application form correctly. **Incomplete, inadequate or inaccurate filling of the application form may entail elimination of the applicant .**

**VI. CLOSING DATE**

Applications should reach the Secretary, Public Service Commission, 7, Louis Pasteur Street, Forest Side, **not later than 3.00 p.m. on Tuesday 23 August 2016.**

**Date:03 August 2016**

Public Service Commission,  
7, Louis Pasteur Street,  
**FOREST SIDE.**

## APPENDIX B Sample transcription from participant John

The first 7 pages of the working document based on the transcription of John's interviews are here included.

1	<b>Jean-Noel:</b> So, tell me your life experience and how you became a rector	
2	<b>John:</b> Let alone the first two years that I did at XXX during the years 19XX and 19XX, I started as educator in the public service in the school opposite. On my first day, I came across my former secondary school teacher who was now school principal. He immediately embarked me in the office to help him with the timetable.	John was trusting and willing to take on... did he only realise what challenge
3	So just like Moby Dick, I fell in the cooking pot as from the first day. Over the years, I found myself always helping the school administration and the principal, always involved in the school activities (technical planning of examinations timetable, PTA treasurer, and responsible for other school activities). As from 1980, I've always been a teacher + something else.  Over the years, all school principals always adopted me. By word of mouth, any outgoing principal always told his successor to contact John for help.	
4	<b>Jean-Noel:</b> So, it's something that you have adopted over the years.	
5	<b>John:</b> Yes, it is a style of work that I have adopted. Even if I was transferred to another school, everyone knew that I was a technician always willing to help.	
6	From technician, I am happy to have been promoted to school principal.	
7	So, my history has no beginning. Because what prompted me to become administrator one day, well I cannot say. I've been drawn into that.	
8	With the Mauritian system, I had to wait for a long time before getting promoted. Maybe	

	other people are thinking that after some years, they don't want to remain teachers, and it's high time to think ahead and get a promotion.	
9	<b>Jean-Noel:</b> You have been a technician for a long period of time, when did you feel the impulse and thought it was time to hold the baton and become the captain?	
10	<b>John:</b> This has started in the years 2002/2003. I was still that technician from whom help was asked in all the schools where I worked. I was at XXX SSS and a new rector came in. After two days, he came beside me in the staff room and told me "John, I need someone to help in the senior management team, and I will make space for you in the deputy rector's office"... which was vacant at that time. In fact, there was no deputy rector posted at XXX SSS during that period. There was a team around the school principal, and I felt at ease within that senior management team.	Looks like story of Jenny, who enjoyed working in administration and was eventually drawn into making it "full time"
11	Every time there was a change in rector, I never used to go ahead to say that I used to help. It is from word of mouth that they happened to know about me. So, that rector came to ask me directly to get settled in the deputy rector's office. I had no more my place in the staff room	Was pushed forward by the rector in his school... the notion that the rector needs support... But what if the rector had not found John?
12	By the end of one year, the senior most educator had left. And, I found myself being the senior most of the school. So, it is as from the years .... that I came to taste that new role of senior most educator in the school. I was not only doing technical work. But I was also involved in meeting parents.	There was a tradition of relying on the senior most teacher to help the rector?
13	I was therefore deeply involved in administrative work. You remember at one point in time, each educator had to opt for two optional leaves (two hours off for religious purposes). I did not feel the need to do that. I was so deeply engrossed in the work and I was thinking that I was the one who had control over the school and held the reigns. At one moment I was preparing everything and was putting it in front of the rector. And, he just had to sign.	Did John have the time to teach during that period? His focus was not on teaching... Did he have time to reflect on his own teaching?

14	Then, one day I started to wonder “when will I put my signature?” Because all documents I was preparing was being done on behalf of someone else. The rector always asked me to cast a glance on some paper. I did the job. I retyped, updated the paper and put it before the rector for him to sign. Similarly, for a project, I planned and worked it out. I put up the principal’s name, passed it around among members of staff and then completed the job.	He was not being given due consideration?
14	<b>(Jean-Noel):</b> Then, there’s this declic where you tell yourself that you want to cross the barrier.	
15	<b>John:</b> Yes. I told myself I was working for others. But I would like to work for my own school	
16	<b>Jean-Noel:</b> And this is where you have to apply for the post of deputy rector.	
17	<b>John:</b> Yes. And this is when I start to be interested and applied for the post. It took time and I had to improve my knowledge and experience about the different issues that are linked with the post of deputy rector/ administrator.	So, John made a number of applications and eventually did succeed...
18	For instance, I did not know anything about the scheme of duties of the different categories of people employed in the school. I was not aware about the rights of an employee concerning casual and sick leaves; procedures relating to human resources, etc.	
19	It is only when I was offered the opportunity at XXX SSS that I started to get interested in administrative procedures. I used to ask lots of questions to the Higher Executive officer and even to the word processing officer. That person is usually aware of many things because she is the one who types all of the school’s documents. So, I started to learn that way.	Shaped himself to be a good candidate for the upcoming selection exercise...
20	I took a copy of the school’s database because I was one of the main actors responsible for the maintenance of that database. So, each time the word processing operator made a backup, I asked her to give	Looked at the workings of the school in detail, what the school has to do on a daily basis

	me an updated copy. In that backup, there was an archiving system. With that system, I started to get interested in everything concerning the school, even the infrastructure.	
21	I had the pleasure to receive a phone call from my wife earlier today. She has come across an ex-student of XXX SSS in the morning. That person (YYY) had made a comment “Your husband is a star on Facebook!”	Close relationship with spouse ...A strength for the rector! a personal source of influence for rector in his work
22	XXX is a young person who has done his degree in Information Systems. He has left secondary school during the period 2003/4. He was handicapped from birth and had to move around on a wheelchair. He lived at XXX. XXX SSS was the nearest secondary school to his place of residence. I was personally responsible to help make arrangements to facilitate his mobility within the school premises (access ramps, etc.). Given that I was involved in the preparation of the timetable, I had to ensure that all his classes were held on the ground floor. So, YYY was someone that I have had nurtured. We cared about him. He grew up. He has completed his secondary school education and is now a graduate. He has even been selected for conferences for young handicapped people.	A physically handicapped but academically gifted student...
23	So, it is YYY who posted a comment on me on Facebook, concerning my participation to a radio show on Radio Plus. It seems there are lots of comments on me on Facebook.	
24	The parents of that ex-student have always been grateful towards me for having cared for their son. My mother in law is their neighbour, and every time I go to visit her, they express their gratitude. This is one of the moments of satisfaction that I have received for having helped a student to overcome obstacles during his school days.	
25	<b>Jean-Noel:</b> So, it’s a bit this kind of thing that is your motivation?	Driven by the desire to make a difference in the person’s life...not necessarily the achievement of

		academic excellence...
26	<b>John:</b> Yes, because what I am actually doing now in my actual school, is the culmination of what I had started with Y.	
27	As a school principal, I have to oversee the wellbeing and the security of all students. Some students, especially from the prevocational sections, come from difficult background. They have problems in their area of residence and their immediate environment around XXX. The school even has students coming from XXX. It is clear that the principal's role is not merely to manage the school premises, but also ensure the wellbeing of these students.	The ongoing story with YYY.  He wants to be an inspiration to all those who would be like YYY
28	The principal has to get involved in activities that are convenient for this category of students. The aim is to reassure the prevocational students so that they do not feel different from those of the mainstream sections. This is in line with the ministry's policy, which is "to take them on board along with mainstream". They wear the same uniform (as in all Mauritian state secondary schools), so they should be given the same treatment.	John is strongly concerned about helping "Prevoc" students.... What about mainstream....? Strong concern for equity... so focuses on "under-privileged students"... narrative: there is an imperative to
29	I have worked a lot with social workers. There is a counselling desk at school to support the students. I also encourage these kids to represent the school in culinary and artisanal competitions. They even perform dancing representations during cultural festivals. By being engaged in these events, the principal does more than technical work. Supporting the prevocational students is work over and above timetabling, scheduling of examinations and maintenance of the school premises.	Strong effort and time towards development of child's personality.
30	There is already a change of how I used to define myself during the 1980's, compared to during the years 2000, where I started to have both feet in school administration. I have come to master all this.	Feels accomplished and is currently doing a life project...he is accomplishing himself through his work.
31	I remember Mr. XXX, who was president of the teachers' union and then got promoted to the post of deputy rector. And when he went to deposit requests and expectations in	A story about the versatility that is required of a

	<p>front of the Pay Research Bureau (PRB), he had proposed that the secondary school principal's salary be brought in line with that of a manager of a prevocational institution. At the IVTB, there is a manager for academic matters, a manager for infrastructure, etc. But, at secondary school level, the principal had to cumulate the duties of all these managers at the same time. And the salary is much lower than a manager of one section, posted at the IVTB.</p> <p>The secondary school principal has to attend to multiple tasks. When infrastructure is concerned, I have no problem since personally I like to tinker. There have been lots of infrastructural upgrades in the school premises.</p>	<p>secondary school principal...</p> <p>However, this is a story about the multiple competencies that are required but are not recognised.</p> <p>Issue about PRB.... Rectors have attempted to explain the complexity of their job, to no avail...</p> <p>Narrative: He feels lucky to have the interests and aptitudes to help him overcome the difficulties in the school.</p>
32	<p>(19:10) <b>Jean-Noel:</b> I have seen things like sheds with benches, to protect students during rainy periods.</p>	
33	<p>(19:23) <b>John:</b> Yes. I was interested with everything concerned with construction and setting up of new infrastructure. When there is a problem with the water pump, I feel concerned because I know how it works. I believe that the personal background and interests of a school principal has a direct incidence on the way he reacts at school level as regards his work.</p>	<p>John's personal story about how personal background influences work life....</p>
34	<p>For me, once a principal starts to manage the school alone, he has to be properly surrounded by staff members willing to help, just as I was one of the members of the school management team at XXX SSS. The new principal has to construct his team also. We must never think that we have gone through all these stages, that we know everything, and that we can do everything on our own.</p>	<p>A story/ script that John holds...It means that he will always try to build up a team since there is no deputy rector</p> <p><i>There is a problem with the absence of Drs in school. The rector has to bring in "teacher leaders" or helpers to assist him. What is his feedback</i></p>

		<p><i>to them as to regards teaching?</i></p> <p><i>Do we have good teachers willing to help or bad teachers willing to help?</i></p> <p><i>Can the principal take on a proactive approach and visit all classes?</i></p>
35	<p>Everything that the principal has learnt should be shared with others. “You have to transmit that knowledge; you have to transmit the skills; transmit your philosophy, and transmit your values”. If one principal insists that he knows everything and can do everything, he is totally wrong. I have always told my teachers: “you know that chair over there, is a seat where a person feels alone”.</p>	<p>Can we transmit values and philosophy?</p> <p>John believes so!</p> <p><i>John’s leadership is about inspiration...</i></p>
36	<p>It is a philosophy that has to be put in place for the principal to be happy in his work.</p>	
37	<p>Right now, I am sitting with you, I do not have to worry about what is happening outside. And, I know that since staff members know that I am taken up, they automatically put themselves in a state so as to be available to cope with any problem that crops up. They know that the principal is busy, so they automatically take up the responsibility and the initiative.</p>	<p>John has stories about a principal leading a team, even in his everyday life...as he is giving the interview...</p> <p>John is also building up a narrative that good teachers help in the daily running of the school, beyond teaching</p>
38	<p>To come back to my path in the secondary education sector, I have mentioned the beginning of my career in the 1980’s; the change that took place during the years 2002/3 (where I became aware that I was doing all the work of someone else); the feeling that I would one day like to create a model school according to my principles, and my personal dreams.</p>	<p>It would seem that he is expecting educators working for him to do the same as he did as an educator, even if his case was more exceptional than in the norm.</p>

## **APPENDIX C Contact with participants and informed consent**

01 October 2014

Dear Sir/ Madam,

I am currently working on a Professional Doctorate in Education with the University of Brighton. I will be conducting a research into the leadership of rectors of state secondary schools and how they assist their teachers to perform better. Please note that the Ministry of Education and Human Resources has given its permission for the research to be conducted (please see overleaf.)

I write to know if you would agree to participate in the research. Your participation is entirely on a voluntary basis. There are no financial incentives to participate in this research process. Should you agree to participating, two interviews will also be scheduled and will each last about one hour. I am happy to interview you at any location where you are most comfortable, even if I would prefer the interview to be conducted at your school.

The research does not require the disclosure of sensitive or confidential material. All information collected from you in the context of this research will be treated anonymously and confidentially. You have the right to withdraw from the research at any time without prejudice. The data obtained from the interview will be used solely for the doctoral dissertation. The data will otherwise be accessible only to my tutors and will be disposed after a period of three months after the acceptance of the thesis.

According to the ethical standards to which the research needs to comply to (BERA, 2011), it is essential that you submit your consent to participating in writing. Also, as part of the research strategies selected for the research, the interview will be audiotaped. This will allow an accurate transcription the dialogue and ensures that the data you provide is not misreported.

If you have any queries regarding this research project, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Attached is a copy of the Participant Consent Form. I shall be grateful to you to fill it in and send it back to me in the event to decide to participate in the project.

Regards

Jean-Noel Genevieve

Mobile: 57675323



REPUBLIC OF MAURITIUS  
**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND HUMAN RESOURCES, TERTIARY  
EDUCATION AND SCIENTIFIC RESEARCH**

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Our Ref: ME/305/3 V4

30 September 2014

Mr Guy-Jean Noel Genevieve  
6D Avenue Couvent de Lorette  
Vacoas

Dear Sir,

**Subject:** Permission to Collect Data from State Secondary Schools and MGSSs

Please refer to your letter dated 9 September 2014 in connection with the above.

2. I am pleased to inform you that you have been granted permission to access the State Secondary Schools and MGSSs of your choice to collect data for the research study mentioned in the letter under reference.
3. It is understood that you will submit a brief of your findings to this Ministry at a later stage.
4. You are kindly advised to liaise with the Rectors concerned prior to collecting your data.

Yours faithfully,

E. Pillay (Mrs)

*for Supervising Officer*

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MITD House, Phoenix 73544 - MAURITIUS  
Tel. No: 601 3458 Fax No: (230) 697 5305

**Participant consent form**

Name of researcher: Guy jean Noel Genevieve

Mail: gjng10@uni.brighton.ac.uk

Phone numbers: 57675323 (mobile), 4272639 (office)

Research Tutors: Dr. Hyleen Mariaye (MIE), Prof. David Stephens (University of Brighton)

### Agreements of participant

- I agree to take part in this research, which is to explore ways in which Rectors come to understand quality of teaching and learning within their school context, and try to improve it.
- The researcher has explained to my satisfaction the purpose, principles, and procedures of the study and the possible risks involved.
- I have read the information sheet and I understand the purpose, principles, and procedures of the study and the possible risks involved.
- I am aware that I will be required to answer questions through an interview.
- I understand how the data collected will be used, and that any confidential information will normally be seen by only the researchers and will not be revealed to anyone else.
- I understand that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time and without incurring consequences for doing so.
- I agree that should I withdraw from the study, the data collected up to that point may be used by the researcher for the purpose described in the information sheet.

Please tick

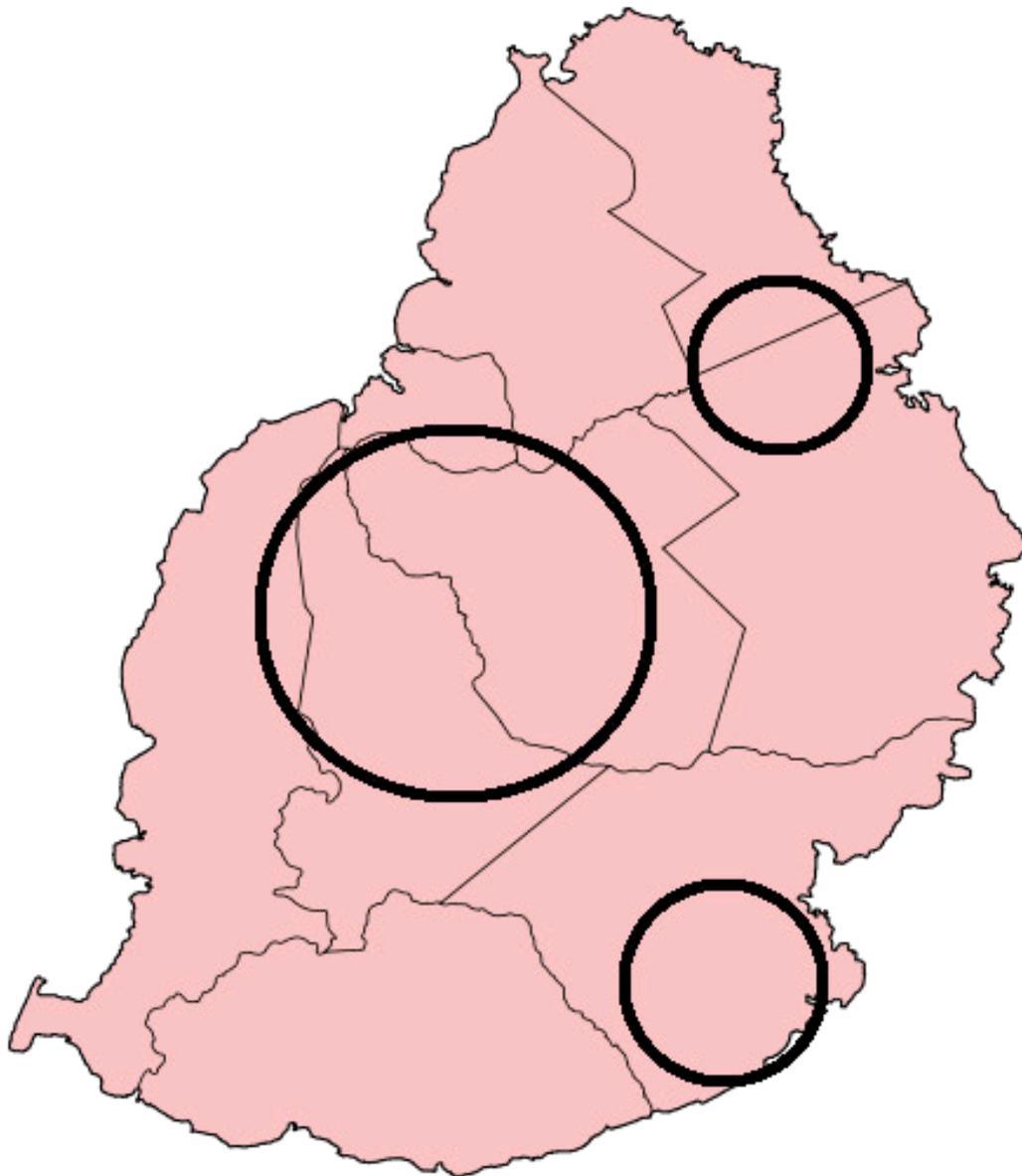
	Yes	No
I agree to be audio-taped	.....	.....

Name: (please print):.....

Signed:.....Date.....

## **APPENDIX D Approximate location of schools of participants**

One school was selected from within each of the 2 smaller circles and 3 schools from within the larger circle.



## APPENDIX E Cross-comparison of participants' narratives

Sn	Main narrative	Sub-narrative	John	Jenny	Ben	Tim	Tina
1	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Entry into profession		learnt the job alone, loss of naivety		easy entry	was given an adequate induction as initial training
2	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Entry into profession				<i>Following a friend, being mentored</i>	
3	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Personal Ambition	had the ambition to become a principal for a long time	personal ambition motivation to do the job			
4	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Learning the ropes: learning the job in a practical way	learnt everything on his own	drew from previous learning: experience as teacher carried forward	Becoming sensitive to school cultures	<i>a smooth transition from teaching to administration</i>	shaped by being assistant principal and acting principal over 6 years
5	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Learning the ropes: learning the job in a practical way	no significant training received from the Ministry	<i>sees all experiences as learning experiences</i>		being an acting principal as training	discovered the value of teamwork as a teacher
6	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Learning the ropes: learning the job in a practical way			directors criticise but do not help improve	being mentored	
7	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Learning the ropes: learning the job in a practical way			in-service training is scarce and of poor quality	Drawing from principles acquired from previous principals he worked with as a teacher	

8	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Learning the ropes: learning the job in a practical way			Taught himself the tools	learning the job by being an assistant principal	
9	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Learning the ropes: learning the job through theoretical insights		used a few notions of leadership			
10	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Early Breakthrough Experience	realising that he had to make difficult decisions. More than "technical acts"		need to build a team to do the job; build the team		
11	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Had technical competence on joining the post	used to see managing schools as performing technical acts				
12	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Had technical competence on joining the post	was embarked into helping administration from day 1 at school				
13	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Finding the resilience to be a principal			Built confidence in approached by successes	Believed in own ability	
14	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Traits-theory of good principal	being a principal is vocation	personal values influencing actions: leadership is led by caring for others	Developing character	principles of principal	<i>blending theory and practice has allowed her to grow</i>
15	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	Traits-theory of good principal	story of less able student	has always been interested in organising activities and pastoral care, and is still interested	effective principal needs strong communication skills	values of principal: a principal needs to have values	has a penchant for organising activities to benefit students

16	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing people			managing school: balance between directive and supportive roles	Creating win-win transactions between principal and teachers {2 offs}	similar processes used in MG SS schools
17	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing people	focus on involving PVE students in activities		manage using emotional intelligence	negotiations and transactions	forum for sharing of good practices
18	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing people	his family background is a key shaper of his practices		emotional management works best in rural schools	placating teachers/ keeping them appeased/ minimising complaints	will entertain projects driven by teachers
19	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: addressing problems in teaching and learning	model of good teaching	there are black sheep teachers	it is difficult to improve TL because teacher often unwilling to learn or change	resolving all complaints against teachers before they become issues	
20	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: addressing problems in teaching and learning	is heavily involved in activities	use written complaints to create pressure for educators to improve	looking at the system, policies for instructional management unrealistic	some teachers playing their part in the transaction but others not	
21	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: addressing problems in teaching and learning			principals cannot address teachers who deliberately underperform	lack of professionalism of teachers creates difficulty in improving teaching and learning	

22	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: addressing problems in teaching and learning	looking at the system, pupil teacher ration should be low enough		looking at the school system, principal feels that a mix of factors contributing to decline in performance	unable to fix teachers; teachers do not have the vocation these days	
23	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: addressing problems in teaching and learning	looking at the system, teachers not encourage to get additional training		Teachers afraid of QAID; will therefore use QAID as a last resort		
24	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: addressing problems in teaching and learning	teachers with problems are moved around the system, not improved				
25	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: continuous professional development					principals and assistants in regular training
26	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: continuous professional development					Teachers in workshops at end of each term
27	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: discipline		discipline first at school is core principle		avoid calling in the parents	discipline is not a problem: there is a

							need to give clear messages
28	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: discipline		using prefects to assist in monitoring school	using students to turn around discipline	understanding boys' psychology	
29	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: discipline		boy's psychology is different; boys are difficult		escalation of disciplinary measures	using adolescent psychology
30	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: discipline		Activities as core principle		there are few resources to enforce discipline on students	
31	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: discipline					
32	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing school culture	organises activities regularly	boys' schools perceived as more challenging	School transformation is hard because	positioning self as a fatherly figure	it takes time for principal to learn about the functioning of his school
33	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing school culture	wants to involve all in the school in activities	gender aspect to school culture: believes that fundamentally boys and girls will behave differently	students often display lack of seriousness	awareness of the school as a social context: principal is a role model... principle needs to act the good example	school culture as a constraint for goal setting
34	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing school culture		school size affects handling of schools	private tuition affects teacher professionalism and students' interest in school.		expects vision, mission, to endure

35	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing school culture		rector believes that she is modelling good behaviour for staff			it takes time to build a team
36	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing school culture		a school has life cycles: it took 2 years to gain trust of staff			school cultures are significantly different
37	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing school culture					school is embedded within MGI where focus is holistic development
38	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing school culture					teachers in urban areas are different from teachers in rural areas
39	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing school culture					it takes time for teachers to adapt to new principal, especially in urban regions, as compared to rural regions
40	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing school environment					
41	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing student performance	will focus on achieving best student achieve higher grades	nationwide problem in mathematics in regional schools			

42	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: managing the curriculum	wants the school to develop life skills				equal priority given to improving teaching and organising activities
43	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: measuring success			looking at system, principal is powerless to change teachers	happiness of staff as measure of school success	
44	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: measuring success	was called to provide his views			principal helplessness: can only talk	
45	Becoming a fully-fledged principal	core principles or strategies: measuring success		<i>sees all experiences as learning experiences</i>			are my actions helping learning?
46	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: motivating students		Activities as core principle		work at creating a core feeling of belonging for students	
47	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: obtaining support from the school community		principal has to learn about school and find what works in each school	the expectations of students and parents have changed; their attitude towards school is different	lack of support from parents	parents must be involved in monitoring the work of students
48	instructional leadership	core principles or strategies: obtaining support from the school community		parents as difficult stakeholders			
49	instructional leadership	monitoring of teaching and learning: model of intervention		has to use psychology when giving feedback to	reforming teacher mentality	teaching is left to teachers, responsibility of teaching/ good	quality of teachers in many schools is not satisfactory

				teachers because of their attitude		teaching is on teachers	
50	instructional leadership	monitoring of teaching and learning: model of intervention		need for a second opinion for a teacher evaluation during class vista	does not have confidence outside area of teaching competence	relies on student report of poor teaching	HODs are expected to mentor teachers in their department
51	instructional leadership	monitoring of teaching and learning: model of intervention	focuses class visits on evaluation of new teacher		has little time for monitoring quality		teachers should have right mentality, or they cannot be improved
52	instructional leadership	monitoring of teaching and learning: model of intervention	principals assess teacher on communication and interaction with students		limited class visits only when students complain		absence of culture of reflective practice
53	instructional leadership	monitoring of teaching and learning: model of intervention	relies on QAID to do the monitoring		principal can offer only generic/general advice		
54	instructional leadership	monitoring of teaching and learning: model of intervention	uses his intuition, his interests, experience, and common sense to evaluate teachers		teachers not responsive to class visit-debrief process		principal can only "talk"
55	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: improving teaching: monitoring teacher's work	teacher performance can be uneven; some can be consistently poor	class visits do not give true idea of usual teacher's teaching: dog and pony show	looking at systemic issues, in particular, staffing process, teachers are weak point of state schools, and issue will remain	"conventional approach" to evaluating quality of teaching i.e.: looking at examination results	

56	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: improving teaching: monitoring teacher's work	teachers appear active in class and yet are not delivering appropriate content	school cultures can be strong and resist change	teachers playing the system; they defeat the monitoring system		
57	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: improving teaching: monitoring teacher's work	teachers not interested in learning on their own.	school needs to adapt to new rector	using QAID because they are more competent		
58	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: improving teaching: monitoring teacher's work	evaluates teachers from teaching and participation in school activities	satisfaction of student is sometimes not related to teacher quality or performance			walking about to get a good picture; but getting complaints straight is good also
59	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: improving teaching: monitoring teacher's work	better trained teacher performs better		students do not necessarily report poor teaching	Good teaching is visible	regular class visits with Deputy Rector and debriefs teachers
60	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: improving	difficult for principals to monitor teachers outside their own	need for vigilance as not all complaints are valid ones	Teacher mobility makes investing time in teachers problematic	monitoring teacher's work by taking feedback from students and parents	

		teaching: monitoring teacher's work	field of specialisation				
61	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching	believes that his ideal teaching model is unrealistic with curricular load constraints	good teaching is systematically planned	teachers to be recruited among individuals with right mindset	looks at examination results as a measure of teacher performance	good teaching is grounded in love for children
62	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching	good teaching seen from planning and student engagement	new teachers come unprepared		ideal model of good teacher: keeps class working	practice is informed by theory and
63	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching	teaching is the transmission of knowledge				important to look at right candidates because teaching is demanding job
64	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching	has recently found that "minorities" perform better academically				school has many constraints affecting quality of results
65	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching					effective class management contributes to overall quality of teaching
66	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching	QAID has an adverse effect, teacher cover syllabus but not deep enough		good teachers do their own remedial work	good class management is a prerequisite to good teaching and discipline	parents use SC/HSC pass rates as measure of quality of teaching
67	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and			good teachers have ethics	teachers are responsible for good	systemic factors are affecting learning

		learning: model of good teaching				teaching: principal get students in class	outcomes powerfully and negatively
68	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching		teachers coming from “star schools” perform very poorly in regional school	good teachers have technical knowledge and communication skills		length of service as teacher does not make for good teaching
69	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching			model of teaching: remedial work		teachers are not professional enough
70	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching			good teaching includes it remedial work as an ongoing process		teaching is planned, and students should come to learn
71	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching			Ideally, teachers should be open to feedback, and problems of TL be discussed openly		qualifications and attitudes are important plus developing a good practice
72	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching			possibly half of teachers are not up to it.	good student engagement	instructional leadership founded on love for children
73	instructional leadership	monitoring teaching and learning: model of good teaching			unexplained decrease in quality of teaching and learning		monitoring that students are learning as well
74	Work life of the principal	Adapting to the current workplace				understanding and adapting to your new school	

75	Work life of the principal	breaking down the task				Delegates administrative duties	
76	Work life of the principal	breakthrough experience			had the breakthrough experience as a new principal		
77	Work life of the principal	challenges to principalship			unethical behaviour of replacing principals	dealing with sick school culture	
78	Work life of the principal	challenges to principalship			students try to collectively influence principal	erosion of traditional teacher values	
79	Work life of the principal	challenges to principalship			principal must adhere to school management manual or face trouble	finding unconventional approaches to maintaining discipline	
80	Work life of the principal	challenges to principalship				traditional measures; non-conventional	
81	Work life of the principal	challenges to principalship: PTAs as difficult stakeholders		PTAs can be very difficult to deal and may attempt to manage the school			
82	Work life of the principal	challenges to principalship: student indiscipline		ran into difficulties over girls not wanting to wear proper school uniform	emotional management works well with difficult students	principals may have to face very difficult situations such as strikes or threats of strikes from students	

83	Work life of the principal	core principles or strategies	principal gets to know school by walking about	principal as team leader		creating a school culture that promotes discipline	
84	Work life of the principal	core principles or strategies	principals see himself as a change leader			enlisting students to assist discipline	
85	Work life of the principal	core principles or strategies				when students own the school, there are less problems of discipline	
86	Work life of the principal	core principles or strategies: core team	surrounded himself with a core team to assist				
87	Work life of the principal	core principles or strategies: discipline				Limited range and effectiveness of disciplinary measures	
88	Work life of the principal	core principles or strategies: Setting vision for school	making school recognised				
89	Work life of the principal	Emotional labour			heavy emotional labour		
90	Work life of the principal	Emotional labour					
91	Work life of the principal	Facing challenges to principalship				Not being supported by the Ministry of education	
92	Work life of the principal	Fire-fighting mode			daily management takes precedence	hectic daily schedule	
93	Work life of the principal	Fire-fighting mode				unplanned events?	

94	Work life of the principal	Fire-fighting mode		the principal is under pressure			
95	Work life of the principal	Fire-fighting mode: wear and tear			discouragement slipping in		
96	Work life of the principal	Learning about the school				adapting to a new school	
97	Work life of the principal	Little support from teaching staff			principals may get little support from teaching staff; however, in rural areas, there is a culture of collaboration		
98	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues			school implantation affects functioning of school	differences between issues arising in national and regional schools	
99	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues			terrifying reputation of some schools	grades of students on entering school affects performance	
100	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues			rural school communities are more supportive	maintaining discipline as an important task	
101	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues			principal needs to be accepted into school community	Need for schools to focus heavily on discipline	
102	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues			the rector has no power to force compliance	quality of infrastructure makes for better school	
103	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues			Close monitoring possible but exhausting	School culture is related to geographical	

						location and to student intake to school; better student intakes lead to "good schools"	
104	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues			higher proportion of lady teachers leads to more bickering	school culture not serving school objectives	
105	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues				school is embedded in a complex social life where inter-religious tensions can lead to flare-ups.	
106	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues				schools affected by evolution of society	
107	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues				societal problems influencing the school functioning	
108	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues				unhappy about professionalism of fellow principals	
109	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues	holds himself			working on despite the odds	
110	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues: effectiveness of principal					is aware of the school as a system:effectiveness of principal depends on school
111	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues: HR			unequal treatment for principals		

		management of principals					
112	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues: HR management of principals		learning each school and tenure at school can be too short	lack of DR		
113	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues: poor school infrastructure		several schools have poor infrastructure			
114	Work life of the principal	looking at systemic issues: school reputation		reputation of school determines how stakeholders interact with it.			
115	Work life of the principal	measuring success of school management				school reputation is an important success criterion	Principal is coping with work and reports that is enjoying the life of a principal
116	Work life of the principal	measuring success of school management	being officially cited as a role model			school reputation is an important success criterion	
117	Work life of the principal	Monitoring the school				knowing what is happening in the school at all times	
118	Work life of the principal	Monitoring the school				walking about to manage school	
119	Work life of the principal	National Culture			established hierarchy of schools		
120	Work life of the principal	Poor professionalism of administrative staff		administrative staff can be unsupportive	difficult student culture can lead teachers to unite	Bad experiences with his former assistant principals	

121	Work life of the principal	Poor professionalism of administrative staff		principal must be well supported by administrative staff			
122	Work life of the principal	Poor professionalism of teaching staff	<i>finds that delegation fails in some occasions and has to step in</i>	principal relying on small team of teachers to help	lack of professionalism of supply teachers		
123	Work life of the principal	Poor professionalism of teaching staff	pastoral care for teachers				
124	Work life of the principal	professionalism of assistant principals		has had poor experience of two deputy rectors			delegates and partners with DR
125	Work life of the principal	professionalism of principals			failing principals not supported		
126	Work life of the principal	Reflection on self				Doubts about achieving objectives	a story of personal transformation: feels that she grew within the job
127	Work life of the principal	Regional culture			handling rural schools facilitated by culture of respect and obedience in rural areas		
128	Work life of the principal	school culture			toxic school cultures		
129	Work life of the principal	school culture			authority of principal has been sapped		
130	Work life of the principal	school culture			improving school culture		

131	Work life of the principal	School Life Cycles			students attempting to sap principals' authority by strike		
132	Work life of the principal	student culture					
133	Work life of the principal	teacher culture			lack of trust of teachers as an impediment		
134	Work life of the principal	team building	engaged in socializing with staff during and after school hours (school barbecue)				
135	Work life of the principal	Tenure				Long tenure	
136	other rectors	story of other rectors	as a short-term replacing principal, attempted to change	very critical of some previous principals	critical of previous rector of his current school for his unethical behaviour	very critical of some previous rectors to his current school	
137	other rectors	story of other rectors	John is very critical of principals that he has replaced over years		critical of rectors: not being competent		
138	private tuition	private tuition affects			private tuition affects teacher professionalism and students' interest in school.		
139	career as teacher	practices as teachers		as a teacher was involved in participating with administration			

140	personal philosophy	quality of life		quality of work life better working closer to residence			
141	How principals are managed as a key resource		thinks should have got promotion earlier				
142	Core teacher team as a Long-standing practice in schools		principals tend to rely on teachers for administrative help				
143	Core teacher team as a Long-standing practice in schools		was used as resource person by many of his principals				
144	Core teacher team as a Long-standing practice in schools		too many things delegated to him as a teacher				
146			teachers used for administration and not improved as teachers				

# APPENDIX F Analysis of principals' narratives using frameworks for Quality Teaching and Quality Instructional Leadership

## *Framework for Quality Teaching*

### *Dimension 1: Teacher Qualities*

<i>From model</i>	<b>John</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Tina</b>
<b>Subject knowledge</b>	Yes [A283]	[B197] Yes	[C69] know the subject	[D81] must know the subject	[E28] Good subject knowledge
<b>General pedagogy</b>	[A142] To know how to explain	[B197] Yes	[C70] [C71] good pedagogy	[D81] must deliver the goods	[E28] Good pedagogy
<b>Subject-specific pedagogy</b>	[A142] To know how and in what sequence to explain	[B111] preparing for teaching,	[C69] know the subject and know how to teach	[D81] must deliver the goods	[E28] plan work
<b>Communication skills</b>	[A134] Good elocution, assertive		[C154] good personality		
Knowledge of adolescents					[E28] Good understanding of students
<i>From participants</i>					
<b>* Cultural baggage</b>	[A250] upbringing shapes class management				
<b>*Has calling</b>	Has the calling [A272]				[E62] love the kids; [E92] some innate characteristics

Table 1 *Teacher qualities*

### *Dimension 2: Inner driver and motivation to teach*

	<b>John</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Tina</b>
<b>Passion for job</b>	[A171] [A172] Yes				
<b>Personal commitment</b>			[C174]yes	[D92] dedication to teaching required	[E92]yes
<i>From participants</i>					
<b>*Motivation sustained by incentives</b>	[A290] yes			[D97], [D98] give moral support, facilitate administrative arrangements	

Table 2 *Inner drive and motivation to teach*

*Dimension 3: Learning from experience and practice*

	John	Jenny	Ben	Tim	Tina
<b>Student of teaching</b>	[A133] Yes				
<b>Do SWOT analysis of own practice</b>	[A276]				
<b>Willingness to perfect skills</b>	[A286] important				
<b>Usefulness of learning by experience</b>		[B131] [B135] some teachers in “National Schools” acquire the reputation of “Laureate Makers” but fail regional school			

Table 7.3 *Learning from practice and experience*

*Dimension 4: Activities before contact with students*

	John	Jenny	Ben	Tim	Tina
<b>*Preparation of teaching aids</b>	[A125] Important				
<b>*Plan work</b>	[A106] adapt to different kinds of students	[B111] preparing for teaching, selection of strategies	[C 72] know about student and move from there		[E28] plan work
<b>*Student preparation</b>					[E28] students to be motivated and prepared, to do homework and prepare lessons ahead of class to interact better.

Table 4 *Activities before contact with students*

*Dimension 5: Activities in contact with students*

	<b>John</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Tina</b>
<i>Manage lesson/activity plan</i>	[A139] Logical flow of explanations, [A120] Good flow of lesson  [A139] Good pacing of class  [A146] issue clear instructions to students  [A110] Lesson development focusing on daily life application				
<i>Monitor engagement of students</i>	[A122] Students engaged	[B112] two-way interaction	[C152] good class control	[D82] students are actively engaged in doing something	[A58] interaction with students
<i>Teachers monitor student progress</i>	[A140], [A141] once students have explained, you do not need to explain again	[B112] teacher should check on learning of student  [B146] marking assessments quickly and returning to students  [B149] [B150] carry out remedial work	[C97] checks for learning, adjust teaching, remedial work		[A58] formative assessments: asking questions and finding out what students know
<i>Teacher manages student behaviour</i>		[B111] Appropriate class management technique	[C98] good class management	[D82] good class control	
<i>From participants</i>					
*student's participation	[A100] Make the child an independent learner				[E28] students to follow class, to be motivated,
*Typology of good lessons		[B115], [B116] Good teaching is personal to teacher and depends on the subject!			

**Table 5** *Activities in contact with students*

Dimension 6: Warmth of communication

	John	Jenny	Ben	Tim	Tina
Create rapport	[A255] right attitude towards students		[C73] create rapport		[E28] establish rapport with students
Gender difference	[A254] need to establish good communication especially with girls				

Table 6 *Warmth of communication with students*

Dimension 7: ethical values

	John	Jenny	Ben	Tim	Tina
<i>Teachers treat students with fairness and respect</i>	Has the calling [A272]		[C77] teachers do not develop lessons adequately because of private tuition		[E96] values-minded person needed! To love the kids!  [E62] work for success of students because some cannot afford private tuition
<i>Teachers demonstrate integrity and comply with school regulations</i>	[A 273] Aware of duties and responsibilities		[C97] regular to work	[D35] teachers skipping class	
<b>From participants</b>					
Transmission of values to students		[B190] inculcate moral values [B191] modelling good behaviour for students			

Table 7 *Ethical behaviour of teacher*

Dimension 8: Professional responsibilities

	John	Jenny	Ben	Tim	Tina
<i>Teacher to be engaged in professional development</i>	[A133] student of teaching				[E96] many teachers do not use their training
<i>Teacher to be engaged in sharing with colleagues</i>					

Table 8 *Professional responsibilities*

## ***Framework for Quality Instructional leadership***

### ***Dimension A: Creating a climate that encourages teacher learning***

<b><i>Dimension</i></b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Tina</b>
<b><i>Build bridges</i></b>	[A185] create daily relationship with teachers and show you care		[C172] communicate charismatically	[D64] principal as a fatherly figure	
<b><i>Authentic conversations</i></b>			[C82] [C83] authentic conversations		[D68] debriefs teachers in the presence of assistant principal
<b><i>Provide incentives</i></b>	[A290] teachers need to be given incentives	[B155] endorses a good teaching practice so that it disseminates faster		[D67] rewards collaboration	

Table 9 ***Climate that encourages teacher learning***

### ***Dimension B: Creating powerful motivation for the school***

<b><i>Dimension</i></b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Tina</b>
<b><i>Create a vision for school</i></b>	[A42] create vision	[B177] School certified to ISO 9001... forces all to be compliant	[C113] QAID is creating pressure for better performance		[E9] create a vision statement
<b><i>Create school culture</i></b>	[A261] defend culture of school		[C106] use staff meetings to motivate staff	[D71] create belonging for school	[E6] young dynamic staff wanting to do something together
<b><i>Identify school mission</i></b>					[E28] Quality teaching and learning established as main business of school

Table 10 ***Motivation for the school***

*Dimension C: Managing teaching within the school*

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>John</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Tina</b>
<b>Inspection framework</b>			[C97] on time, covers syllabus, does remedial work	[D 108] focus on behaviour of student in class	[E56] whole picture of classroom situation
<b>Checks teaching documents</b>					[E40] [E56] checks plans
<b>Conducts class visits</b>	[A160] New teachers or start of year	[B201] Class visits and gives feedback	[C63] would do more class visits if possible		[E54]
<b>Conduct classroom walk-by</b>				[D82]Yes	[E30] Yes
<b>Checks students' documents</b>					[E56] checks copybooks, if students are attentive
<b>Checks assessments records</b>		[B129] 1 <sup>st</sup> term results do not give indication of student performance			
<b>Initiates measures that are sensitive to school culture</b>		[B157] Introduce culture-sensitive measures	[C160], [C161] find systems that can be adopted by the school		
<b>Giving feedback to teachers</b>			[C63] talks to teachers following complaints but teachers do not like it		[D68] debriefs teachers in the presence of assistant principal
<b>Challenges to principals</b>	[A147] is trying to understand teaching of different subjects	[B162] use effective tools to monitor student's performance	[C67] has no competencies to assess some classes		
<b>Reported shortcomings of system</b>			[C105] teacher delivers only during visits.		

Table 11 *Manage teaching within the school*

*Dimension D: Creating supportive school climate and ethos*

	<b>John</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Tina</b>
Presenting principal as authority figure	[A260] respond to challenges to authority		[C31] establish self as authoritative, strong person	[D20] paternalistic stance	
Be visible	[A185] Be everywhere			[D28] walk around, be present	
Find change leaders					[E19] find change leaders who will get others along
Create win-win			[C26] find solution where everyone wins		
Create school ownership			[C3] create rapport with students [C183] students not interested in school	[D50] create sense of ownership	[E72] give students space to express themselves
Manage discipline		[B41] maintain discipline		[D20] manage tension in conflict resolution and avoid resentments.	
Create academic press					[E26] students prefer activities to academic work
Challenges	[A203] identify good students and push them on	[B122] PTA intervention to transfer teachers creates stress! Cannot support good teachers	[C168] school intake is determinant	[D22] there are certain levers that can be used but are effective if used appropriately	[E13] [E72] give support to students having behavioural difficulties
Tapping favourable contexts			[C24] some rural schools have a lot of co-operation		

Table 12 *Create supportive school climate and ethos*

Dimension G: Supporting professional development

	John	Jenny	Ben	Tim	Tina
Create drive	[A291] What can I do to motivate them to be better...I can focus on the education...I can help my teachers become better educators	[B194] principal can improve attitude and personality			
Constraints		[B121] pupils' feedback on teacher is erratic  [B127] did not give feedback to teacher for fear of teacher union			

Table 13 *Supporting professional development*

Dimension H: Leadership knowledge, skills, and dispositions

	John	Jenny	Ben	Tim	Tina
Strong communication skills			[C41] need to have strong communication, to be persuasive	[D77] be flexible, keep things simple; never criticize in public	
Learning by experience on		[B179] experience accrues learning and is beneficial			[E50] studies practices in other countries
Academic training					[E48] took academic courses in educational management
Having strong temperament			[C54] do things that need to be done...even if you do not like it	[D8] strong temperament	
Personal commitment	[A223] I give all my time to the school			[D76] be invested in the school	

Table14 *Leadership knowledge skills and dispositions*

Dimension J: Solving complex problems at school

	<b>John</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Tina</b>
	[A161] looks into persistent rather than occasional complaints against teachers	Class visits and gives feedback [B201]  Sometimes improvements after feedback [B202]	[C26] find solution where everyone wins  [C29] remove drama from situations  [C38] keep your word  [C63] attend to student complaints on teaching  [C116] student satisfaction not a good indicator	[D77] be flexible, keep things simple	[E15] need to minimise indiscipline  [E6] deal with and mitigate problem is with failing teachers  [E90] trigger problem solving when come across.

Table 15 *Solving complex problems at school*

Dimension K: Creating contextually meaningful tools to manage school

	<b>John</b>	<b>Jenny</b>	<b>Ben</b>	<b>Tim</b>	<b>Tina</b>
		[A154] Procedure for students to retake test	[C102] different schools have different realistic possibilities according to quality of student intake	[D36] observe carefully before acting	[E7] brainstorming for idea  [E19] leader to adapt to tools already used by school

Table 16 *Creating contextually meaningful tools to manage school*