

LEARNING, BECOMING, LEADING: THE EXPERIENCES OF INTERNATIONAL SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

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Abstract

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In recent years there has been huge growth in the number of international schools, both worldwide and in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur. International education may be an increasingly rich area for research, but leadership in international schools remains a relatively unexplored phenomenon. Our understanding of what constitutes successful educational leadership is derived mainly from national settings or comparative international research. This thesis shows that although there are similarities in experience the world over, leadership is deeply contextual.

A core strand of this research is to identify and analyse the core leadership practices and styles of international school Principals in Kuala Lumpur and what knowledge and competencies they need to successfully lead. It explores how Principals develop their leadership, their self-concept and identity, including the interrelationships between the three key distinct but deeply interwoven concepts of learning, becoming and leading.

The research adopts a qualitative, interpretivist epistemology and in order to generate answers to the research questions, I conducted twelve semi-structured interviews with international school Principals.

The findings highlight two important and far-reaching themes that influence Principals' experience in this context: impermanence and isolation. In addition to generic leadership strategies, Principals in this study navigate complex intercultural situations and acknowledge and embrace their role in creating a supportive community. They use a range of styles including learning-centred, transformational and distributed leadership, placing a very high value on relationships and demonstrating a significant ethic of care. They value reading, coaching, experience and reflection as means of learning, and also make use of social media, creating virtual communities of practice. Finally, a new model is presented to understand and analyse the dynamic and iterative interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading.

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Glossary of Common Terms and Acronyms

AIMS	Association of International Malaysian Schools
BSO	British Schools Overseas
CIE	Cambridge International Examinations
CIS	Council of International Schools
CPD	Continuous Professional Development
EARCOS	East Asian Regional Council of Schools
EHP	Early Headship Provision
EQ	Emotional Intelligence
ETP	Economic Transformation Programme
FOBISIA	Federation of British International Schools in Asia
GCSE	General Certificate of Secondary Education
IB (O)	International Baccalaureate (Organisation)
ILMP	International Leadership and Management Programme
ISQM	International Schools Quality Mark
ISSPP	International Successful School Principal Project
LEA	Local Education Authority
LGBT	Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender
MBA	Master of Business Administration
NCSL	National College for School Leadership
NPQH	National Professional Qualification for Headship
Ofsted	Office for Standards in Education (UK)
PGCE	Post Graduate Certificate in Education
PLC	Professional Learning Community
SEF	Self Evaluation Form
TA	Teaching Assistant
TCK	Third Culture Kid
WASC	Western Association of Schools and Colleges

Chapter 1: Introduction

Research rationale

‘All research is researching yourself’ (Walford, 2001: 98)

The initial impetus for this research was my own personal experience. I have been an international school Principal for five years with the last three as the Principal of a British international school in Malaysia. I have worked internationally as a teacher and leader for seventeen years, in five very different countries. I have always had a thirst for knowledge and as an educator the process of learning has been at the forefront of my mind. My professional learning has always been self-directed, consisting of an MBA in Educational Management, action research and reflection, being a mentor and a coach and being mentored and coached, reading and attending conferences. However, my most valuable leadership learning has come as a result of experiences I have had, often through challenging situations.

Through a process of internal and sometimes externally-guided reflection with a colleague or mentor, I began to develop my knowledge and understanding through experience in a range of scenarios. My confidence grew and my self-concept and identity as a leader began to take shape. The experiences and challenges I had in my first headship are very different to the ones I face now, and yet I face these with a greater degree of confidence and self-assuredness. I often reflect on my experiences with curiosity. How have I learnt? How have I become the Principal I am today? How has this learning influenced my behaviours and actions as a leader? This, together with my experience of being a Principal of two very different schools on two very different continents, led to a further appreciation of context and its influence on leadership.

My doctoral studies opened my eyes to further research and the importance of methodology, and broadened and deepened my understanding of theoretical perspectives. I began to think about how I could apply what I had learnt, read extensively on educational leadership and learning, and an intellectual puzzle started forming: What are the experiences of international school Principals?

How do they learn, lead and 'become' Principals? What are the interrelationships between these concepts? What is the influence of context? These questions are at the heart of this study and through this chapter we will explore how they have been refined and shaped into research questions within theoretical and methodological frameworks.

There has been growing interest in educational leadership as a field of research in the last few decades. There are a number of reasons for this. Firstly, schools are becoming more complex places (Huber, 2010) and due to this the role of the school leader is changing dramatically with the number and range of tasks expanding. Furthermore, leadership performance is now being linked with the success of schools (Huber 2010; Huber and Muijs, 2010; Leithwood and Day, 2007) and it is now increasingly accepted that school leadership is a central factor in school quality and student learning. Much of this research has focused on successful school leadership, the practices and leadership typologies, and there is growing international research on the skills and attributes that successful educational school leaders need (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Huber, 2010; ISSPP, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2006; Leithwood, Sun and Pollock, 2017). However, even the international research focuses on schools in the domestic context in which the research takes place and not in international schools.

With this increase in attention to, and complexity in, the role of the leader, there is recognition that school leaders require specialist preparation and development to be successful in their roles (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Bush, 2012a; Fluckiger, Lovett and Dempster, 2014). A variety of leadership preparation and development programmes have emerged. However, despite this recognition and growth of these programmes, provision is seen as inadequate (Brundrett and Crawford, 2008; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; OECD, 2008) and the lack of acknowledgment and inclusion of informal and experiential learning is criticised (Hulsbos, Evers and Kessels, 2016). This is even more significant if we consider that Principals' learning is most effective

when it is engaged in a reciprocal relationship with practice (Bush, Glover and Harris, 2007; OECD, 2008; Smylie et al., 2005; Van Veelen et al., 2017). However, there is a paucity of research on how educational leaders actually learn and how they develop their personal leadership resources and identity as a leader, and even less in the context of international education.

As stated, there is a limited body of knowledge on leadership in international schools. With the number of international schools worldwide rising considerably in recent decades, from less than 1000 English-medium international schools worldwide in the 1970s to over 7500 in 2015 (ISC, 2015), there is an urgent need for research in this area. This study is set in Kuala Lumpur, the vibrant and multicultural capital of Malaysia, in South-East Asia where there are over 143 English-medium international schools (ISC, 2015). This number is increasing and it is in part driven by massive investment by western businesses and economic development in the region. However, the growth has also been driven by the increasing wealth of local families who embrace the concept of international education. This has led to significant expansion in the number of English-medium international schools and also to a very different demographic and more culturally diverse schools and communities.

School leadership is impossible to detach from school context and culture, and the relationship between leadership and context is dynamic and iterative (Fullan, 2003; Hallinger, 2016; Southworth, 2010). There is increasing knowledge about successful leadership and leadership learning in domestic contexts and in international comparative research. However, there is limited research that has sought to explore how Principals learn and lead in the context of international education. This study is therefore significant because although there is increasing clarity about what constitutes effective school leadership, leadership typologies and leadership learning, little, if any, attention has been paid to this in international education in Malaysia.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to explore how international school Principals in Kuala Lumpur learn, lead and 'become' Principals.

Research Aims and Objectives

As advised by Maxwell (1998) my research questions are intended to explore processes rather than discover differences and are therefore more adaptable to the changing emphases of the study as it progresses. The questions emerged from my initial engagement with the idea of, and relationship between, learning, becoming and leading. The overarching research questions for this study therefore are:

1. How can we understand the experiences of international school Principals in Kuala Lumpur and their core leadership practices?
2. How can we understand the leadership styles of the participant Principals?
3. What knowledge and personal leadership resources are needed for successful leadership in Kuala Lumpur international schools?
4. How do the Principals develop their leadership practices and personal leadership resources?
5. What does it mean to 'become' a Principal?
6. How can we better understand the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading?

The first question attempts to bring the extant literature on successful school leadership in domestic contexts into focus in this specific international context to investigate Principals' experiences in leading. The second is in many ways a continuation of the first and seeks to explore the ways in which participants put their leadership practices into action: whilst the first question more explores the 'what' the second explores the 'how'. As leadership is dependent on context the third question seeks to examine what knowledge and personal leadership resources are necessary in this context. Personal leadership resources are the skills and attributes that a leader requires to be successful (such as problem-

solving, managing emotions and optimism). The fourth question is closely related to the third and seeks to discover how Principals learn this knowledge and acquire the personal leadership resources. The fifth research question is developed to gain an understanding of how leading, learning and the context, contribute to participants 'becoming' Principals. It is prudent at this point to offer an explanation of 'becoming' for the purpose of this study. I define 'becoming' as a process, which is the combination of a leader developing themselves (including their personal leadership resources, their strategies and actions), and developing their self-concept and identity as a leader based on attributes, beliefs, values, motives, and experiences.

The questions are clear in their purpose yet sufficiently broad to allow an exploration of a variety of areas. Finally, it is evident that the concepts of learning, becoming and leading are not linear, sequential or separate activities; rather, they are clearly interrelated, and research question six explores these interrelationships.

An overview of the theoretical framework

This research has a clear focus on the learning, becoming and leading of international school Principals. As such it is grounded in the field of educational research in domestic settings, together with international comparative research and limited international school research.

School Leadership

There has been considerable research into successful school leadership in national settings (for example, Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Day et al., 2010; Leithwood et al., 2006; OECD, 2008; Sammons, 2007). There is now widespread acknowledgement that Principals achieve success by progressively combining and layering strategies and actions over a period of time depending on the needs of the school and four core practices have been identified as strategies of successful leaders independent of context: building the vision and direction, understanding and developing people, developing the

organisation, and managing learning and teaching (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Leithwood, 1994; Leithwood and Day, 2007; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; OECD, 2008;).

Furthermore, it is now commonly understood that even though Principal leadership has a large effect on school culture and student outcomes, school leaders cannot work alone and they must invest in the leadership of others. The literature on models of leadership introduces us to the growing influence of teamwork, relationships, values and beliefs (for example, Bush, 2008, 2012a; Bush and Glover, 2003, 2014; Harris, 2008; Spillane, 2006; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009) through the typologies of learning-centred, transformational, authentic and distributed leadership.

There is a growing body of research into the knowledge and competencies required by school leaders. Although there is not a definitive laundry list of skills and qualities, there are increasing common areas of agreement. It is understood that Principals need to have considerable professional knowledge of educational practice, and theories and models of leadership and management. For example, knowledge is required in the areas of instructional leadership, law, financial management, educational policy, and people and team leadership (Bush, 2008; Moorosi and Bush, 2011). In addition, it is recognised that personal qualities and competencies are also required for successful leadership (Goleman, 2009) and specifically school leadership (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Dimmock, 2012; Fink, 2010; Leithwood and Day, 2007; Loader, 2010; Scott, 2003), such as political acumen, problem-solving, emotional intelligence, and intra- and interpersonal skills.

Successful school leadership is context-sensitive and the relationship between the leader and school is reciprocal and dynamic. This research focuses on the contextual and seeks to understand the knowledge and skills required for successful international school leadership in Kuala Lumpur, together with leaders' core practices and strategies and how they are enacted.

Leadership learning and development

The theoretical framework for leadership learning and development draws on theories of learning, socialisation and identity, together with research into principals' professional development. Principalship is a specialised occupation and OECD (2008) structures the stages of learning and development to include initial training and preparation, induction, and continuous professional learning. Although leadership development programmes are multiplying, preparation and induction are generally considered insufficient (Crow, 2006, 2007; Daresh and Male, 2000; Earley et al., 2011).

Adult learners, including Principals, learn best when they are co-constructors of their learning (Bush, Glover and Harris, 2007; Smylie et al., 2005) and when their learning is brought into a reciprocal relationship with practice (see Bush, 2009; Huber, 2011; OECD, 2008; Southworth, 2010). The case for situated learning is therefore strong and learning takes place in the actual process of school leadership (Lambert, 2002). Kolb (1984) introduces us to a theory of experiential learning and the power of reflection in changing leaders' mental models and actions, and this is a useful lens through which to explore such on-the-job learning. This research shows how leaders learn through experience mediated by reflection, inquiry and social interaction; shaping their learning and developing their practice for the Kuala Lumpur context.

Finally, there is a strong relationship between leadership and learning, and between identity and practice. Personal socialisation and identity formation (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Loader, 2010; Matthews and Crow, 2003; Tubin, 2017) are the theories that underpin the concept of becoming in this thesis. Therefore, if we understand learning as a process of social participation, identity formation and belonging (Lave and Wenger, 1991; Wenger, 1998), the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading explored in this thesis are pivotal to understanding the person in the Principal's office and their experiences.

The full review of theoretical literature on leadership, leadership development and identity formation follows in Chapters 2 and 3.

An overview of the research design and methodology

The aim of this thesis is to explore leadership in international schools in Kuala Lumpur and how school leaders learn, lead and become Principals. The focus is on the practice of leadership and learning: the nature of the leadership role in a successful international school, how a diverse group of Principals learn and develop their self-concept and professional identity through leading, and what the relationships are between leading, learning and becoming. For such research that will explore experiences, interrelatedness and complexity with a focus on Principals' voices, a qualitative approach is required as it enables in-depth, rich and nuanced data and interpretations about how things work in a particular context (Mason, 2002: 1).

This study also adopts an interpretivist theoretical perspective as it attempts to develop an understanding of a complex situational set of data. It also attempts to understand the experience of school Principals - their practice and learning - from their own perspective, and identify and construct meaning. The research is, therefore, rooted in phenomenology. Denzin (2001: 39) posits that 'all interpretive studies are biographical and historical' and two further theoretical perspectives underpinning this study are narrative enquiry and life history approaches. They are both useful in understanding the stories the Principals tell in recounting their experiences. Elements of a life history approach have been woven into interviews and subsequent analysis to enable connections between accounts of the past and present, and help to understand the complexity of the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading.

This epistemological and theoretical framework is supported by a participatory methodology and together they lead to the choice of data generation and method of analysis. Face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were

selected as the research tool in order to understand the experiences of the participants and the meaning they make of their experiences. Furthermore, narrative, or storytelling, is an effective tool for reflective thinking (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). Twelve international school Principals participated and were interviewed in this research. The transcripts were then coded and analysed. Throughout the research process, at each stage, ethical considerations were kept firmly in mind and a full description can be found in Chapter 5.

The structure of the thesis

The thesis is divided into eight chapters that develop different elements of the research project. This introduction forms Chapter 1. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the extant literature and provide generic theoretical lenses for this study. More specifically, Chapter 2 focuses on leadership and explores what we know about successful leadership practices, models of leadership, and the knowledge and competencies Principals need to be effective in their roles. In Chapter 3, the focus moves to learning as we examine the theoretical framework for adult learning, followed by the professional development of Principals. The chapter concludes with an exploration of research into experiential learning and the development of professional identity. Through these two chapters we begin to see how the concepts of learning, leading and becoming are intertwined and Chapter 4 moves us closer to a contextual and conceptual framework. The international school context is presented, including an exploration of the limited literature on international school leadership, and the spotlight falls on the international school context in Kuala Lumpur. The second part of Chapter 4 discusses and presents the initial framework through which to explore the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading.

Chapter 5 is a methodological discussion that justifies the qualitative and interpretative approach for this research and explains in detail the research process and the decisions made at each stage of the journey, including ethical

considerations. Chapter 6 presents the interview data with reference to contextual leadership and learning themes that emerged from the theoretical literature. The narratives of the Principals are key to this chapter as each conversation stands in its own right. However, equally, this chapter identifies and begins to analyse commonalities across all conversations and themes of this research. Chapter 7 analyses and synthesises the data, highlighting two important themes that cut across the research, and a new model is proposed to conceptualise and understand the interrelationships between learning, becoming, leading and context. Chapter 8 answers the research questions posed at the outset of this thesis and develops conclusions that illuminate leadership of international schools in this context. The chapter then explores the wider implications and limitations of this study, and future areas for research are explored.

Chapter 2: Successful School Leadership

Introduction

As the skills and knowledge students require in the 21st century become more complex, together with globalisation and technological and demographic changes (Bush, 2010: 113), the range of issues facing schools expands (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010). In this era of unpredictability, the role of the school leader is increasing in complexity and scope. Fullan (2007: 168) identifies three thematic challenges for Principals: having to implement an external agenda, the complexity of instructional leadership, and the addition of new expectations to old ones with nothing being taken away. School leaders now have to be proficient in financial administration and human resource management as part and parcel of an ever-increasing and shifting landscape. It is, nonetheless, a landscape with which educationalists and researchers must engage.

There is much discussion about a direct link between the quality of Principals and improving schools and student outcomes (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Coles and Southworth, 2005; Huber, 2011; Leithwood and Day, 2007). This discussion is accompanied by an analysis of what makes successful leadership (Day et al., 2010; Sammons et al., 2011) with Gurr et al. (2005: 2) describing successful leadership as making 'important contributions to the improvement of student learning'. The corpus of research into this field encompasses educational leadership typologies as well as that which constitutes and determines successful leadership, including values, beliefs, attributes and development. Although there are many different foci for such research, what commonality there is focuses on the key themes of influence, values and vision. For example, for Dimmock (2012: 20) leadership is:

A social influence process guided by a moral purpose with the aim of building capacity by optimising the use of available resources to achieve shared goals.

Bush and Glover (2003: 5) describe leadership as 'a process of influence leading to the achievement of desired purposes'. Alongside influence, leadership is increasingly linked with values (Day, Harris and Hadfield, 2001) and a third element, commonly regarded as a key component of effective leadership, is vision (Bush and Glover, 2014). Furthermore, Gunter (2004) suggests how the language used to describe this field has developed over time from educational 'administration' to 'management' to 'leadership', demonstrating a focus on change, improvement and challenging the status quo.

Although much of the research is western-centric (specifically USA and UK) (Walker, Hallinger and Quian, 2007), there are international comparative studies being undertaken, such as the International Successful School Principal Project (ISSPP). There is limited academic research into leadership in international schools, however, common ground is emerging in relation to agreed core practices of successful school leaders and their competencies in a range of different domestic contexts. This Chapter therefore explores these key themes. It begins with an examination of the literature on leadership practices in successful schools - *what* successful leaders do. It is followed by a discussion of common leadership typologies to further understand *how* leaders may achieve success. Finally, the chapter seeks to present emerging research on the knowledge and competencies required to successfully lead, and concludes with a summary of salient points resulting from the chapter.

Successful school leadership practices

Although what constitutes successful school leadership remains contested, there is an emerging coalescence from educational research about its key core components. Four key practices are suggested by the literature for successful leadership:

- Building the vision, values and setting direction
- Understanding and developing people

- Developing the organisation
- Managing the teaching and learning programme

(Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Leithwood and Day, 2007; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; OECD, 2008)

According to Leithwood and Day (2007) the set of leadership practices that has the most impact on student learning is that of defining the vision, values and setting the direction. Identifying and articulating the vision, aligning individual and organisational goals, inspiring and motivating staff and students, and developing a culture of high expectations and achievement are key practices. This is because they build the foundations for further growth and improvement (Leithwood et al., 2006) by focusing and coordinating the work of teachers (Robinson and Timperley, 2007). This clear sense of direction and purpose for the school is shared widely, understood and supported, and used to ground decision-making at each stage of development in successful and improving schools (Day et al., 2010).

Such vision-building rests on trust and this highlights how leaders must use a combination and accumulation of strategies and actions alongside the four key practices to develop and improve their schools (Day et al., 2010). A culture of trust has the potential to enhance the performance of a school through shared purpose; developing collaborative relationships between the Principal and teachers and improving teaching and learning (Harris, Caldwell and Longmuir, 2013). In this way, successful school leaders recognise the need to develop and sustain positive relationships with staff, making them feel valued and involved (Day et al., 2010: 6).

A culture of trust and strong professional relationships underpins the Principal's role of understanding and developing people, thus facilitating the second of the key leadership practices. Developing teachers' capacities is an integral element of learning-centred leadership (Dimmock, 2012; NCSL, 2007; Sammons et al., 2011). This is also highlighted by Day et al., (2010) with

successful leaders continuously looking for ways to improve practice and teachers' sense of professionalism and self-efficacy, and enhancing teaching quality by providing rich professional development and collaborative opportunities.

Internally-led professional learning and the development of professional learning communities (PLCs) tick all such boxes by providing the space and opportunity for collaborative inquiry, peer observation, sharing best practice, reflection and celebrations of achievement. Among the skills required by a successful leader in this area, would be coaching and a willingness to work alongside staff in developing their practice and being willing and ready to challenge poor performance (NCSL, 2008). Furthermore, there is a clear link between these actions and the concept of a learning organisation, popularised by Senge (2006), in which all members of the organisation engage in learning, rather than one single leader.

In the same way that building a culture of trust facilitates the four key practices, so too does improving conditions for teaching and learning (Day et al., 2010). For example, improving the physical environment creates positive conditions for teaching and learning and, in doing so, connects and reaffirms the link between high quality experiences and staff and student well-being and achievement (Day et al., 2010: 5). This thus links to the core practice of redesigning and restructuring the organisation - reshaping structures and roles that over time enable greater collaborative and distributed leadership, promoting greater staff engagement and ownership (Day et al., 2010: 5).

Managing the teaching and learning programme - the fourth key leadership practice - may include direct involvement in the planning, monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice, centring on lesson observations and feedback to teachers (Dimmock, 2012), book scrutiny and dialogue, and increasingly the use of student voice (Lewis and Murphy, 2008). High-performing Principals are more likely to see their biggest challenge as

improving teaching and the curriculum, and they spend more time coaching teachers to improve practice than other Principals (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010). According to Robinson and Timperley (2007), promoting and participating in teacher learning and planning, coordinating and evaluating teaching and the curriculum, especially through lesson observation and feedback, has considerable impact on teacher quality and student outcomes.

Inextricably linked with promoting teacher learning and development is the use of data and research, as it enables a critical analysis of areas of strength and weakness in current performance. Within successful schools there is a strong culture of using data to inform practice by identifying areas in need of change and subsequently designing strategies to make the changes needed (Day et al., 2010; Sammons et al., 2011). Day et al. (2010) and Day, Gu and Sammons (2016) found that Principals in successful schools encourage the use of data and research; this being one of the most frequently cited strategies by Principals to positively influence student outcomes. It also leads to evidence-based dialogue with a focus on improving practice, something particularly pertinent to the development of middle leaders (such as Heads of Department) and their use of data to inform critical reflection. It also encourages openness in debates about teaching practices and student outcomes (Lewis and Murphy, 2008). Furthermore, according to Dimmock (2012), leaders and teachers using data to inform their practice is a key principle in PLCs and a 'central tenet underpinning the emergence of the future 'research-engaged' school' (p. 86).

Therefore, successful leaders use a range of complementary strategies and practices to build and sustain successful schools and student outcomes. For such leaders, the first step involves building the vision and establishing the core purpose. Through this process they achieve engagement and motivation, and at the same time build trust and relationships. In learning-centred schools this all supports student outcomes and each of these strategies are crafted and layered depending on context. This tapestry of leadership actions

supports Southworth's (2010: 181) idea of leadership being 'multi-faceted and polyphonic'.

In this study we explore whether these experiences and practices can be understood similarly through the narratives of international school Principals in Kuala Lumpur.

Leadership Typologies

The core set of practices and strategies that successful school leaders use and layer has been presented. However, Dimmock (2012) suggests that research should now be moving beyond the '*what*' to investigate the '*how*'. Since leadership styles address the *how* alongside the *what*, an overview of such typologies follows. The typologies of leadership to be presented here reflect my synthesis of the literature but are framed mainly by the work of Bush and Glover (2003, 2014) and Bush (2008, 2012a).

Managerial Leadership

Managerial leadership is suggestive of rationality and hierarchy (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999) in its behaviour and structures, with a focus on functions, tasks, systems and processes (Bush, 2012a). A Principal drives the cycle of goal setting, planning, budgeting, priority setting, implementing and evaluating (Caldwell, 1992: 16-17 in Bush, 2012a: 373). Thus the focus is on maintenance and the management of existing activities rather than visioning. Also missing from this typology are the concepts of interpersonal relationships, influence and collaboration that leadership of educational institutions require. There would be difficulties in applying this system singularly and rigidly because of the professional role of teachers. If teachers are simply required to implement changes rather than contribute to the development of and feel part of initiatives, they are likely to be less motivated and enthusiastic, leading to possible failure (Bush, 2003; Bush, 2012a).

There is no denying that these functions are important parts of an educational leader's role and these activities feature within the successful leadership practices previously discussed (Day et al., 2010; NCSL, 2007). Effective management is essential but enacted exclusively, and without vision and values, managerialism can be inappropriate and damaging (Bush, 2008).

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership suggests that the central focus of leadership should be the 'commitments and capacities of organisational members' (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999: 9) and is focused primarily on the processes by which leaders seek to influence school outcomes (Bush, 2012a). Leithwood (1994) conceptualises these processes as building the vision, establishing goals and a positive, collaborative culture, providing intellectual stimulation and support, modelling best practices and values, and having high expectations.

Echoing the previous discussion on the practices and strategies of leadership, they highlight collaboration, participation and engagement with others in a way managerial leadership does not. For success, it implies leaders must employ a high degree of interpersonal and cultural intelligence, coupled with awareness and understanding of others (West-Burnham, 2001). It assumes that there are shared values and is consistent with the collegial model. However, it has connotations of a strong, charismatic leader who drives and influences change and when policies and initiatives for implementation are externally enforced or centrally directed, transformational leadership can be viewed as a 'vehicle for control' of teachers and become a political rather than collegial process (Bush, 2012a). In such a situation, teachers can easily feel manipulated by the force of character exercised by the transformational leader and this is why the building of trust and positive relationships is crucial to maintaining the leader's integrity.

Transformational leadership was seen as *the* leadership model to employ during the 1990s. Interestingly, although there is some evidence of its impact on staff attitudes (Griffith, 2004; Robinson and Timperley, 2007), there is limited evidence of it positively impacting student achievement (Silins et al., 2000). However, successful leaders are seen to draw equally on transformational and instructional leadership, developing staff and building relationships alongside focusing on the pedagogical work of schools (Day et al., 2010; Day, Gu and Sammons, 2016; Leithwood and Sun, 2012).

Moral and Authentic Leadership

As Bush (2012a) highlights, we can all make reference to a charismatic and transformational leader whose intentions were less than worthy. Moral and authentic leadership is transformational but in addition it is integrity-driven and suggests that the focus of leadership should be on the values, beliefs and ethics of leaders themselves. The concept resonates with values-based and ethical leadership. Such leaders have a strong moral compass and live their values, beliefs and principles through their words and deeds – inclusivity, equal opportunities, justice and teamwork. Moral and authentic leadership can often be at odds within centralised systems of education and Gold et al. (2003: 127) highlight inconsistency between the managerial view of school leadership required by some governments and education authorities, and the leader's focus on values, learning communities and shared leadership.

Learning-Centred Leadership

The concept of instructional leadership originated in American research in the 1970s and early 1980s (see Rutter et al., 1979). Although the model of instructional leadership highlighted the pivotal role the Principal had in shaping teaching, it has more recently been criticised for its focus on teaching rather than learning (Bush, 2013) and is also suggestive of the Principal as the centre of expertise and power to the exclusion of other leaders in the school (Hallinger, 2003). Taking this into account this model has now expanded and broadened. Being alternatively described as instructional leadership or

leadership for learning, this model is concerned with the learning of students, staff and the community – building collaborative cultures and increasing capacity and capital (Southworth, 2010; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009).

Such leaders commonly establish goals and set high expectations, build trust and relationships, promote teacher learning and development through collaborative inquiry, use research evidence to manage the learning and teaching process and share leadership (Day et al., 2010; Dimmock, 2012; NCSL, 2004, 2007)

There are striking similarities here with what has already been presented as strategies of successful school leaders.

Distributed Leadership

As various typologies of leadership have ebbed and flowed in favour and deepened and broadened their scope, distributed leadership seems to have grown in popularity. For Harris it 'represents one of the most influential ideas to emerge in the field of educational leadership in the past decade' (2010: 55). It has become clear that no matter how charismatic and influential a leader is, it is not possible for a Head to navigate the stormy waters of educational change single-handedly, and as such it divorces itself from the concept of the heroic leader or the 'superhead'.

Evidence is mounting (Day et al., 2010; Hallinger and Heck, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2006), to suggest that successful Principals progressively distribute leadership and that this distributed leadership improves student outcomes and facilitates 'organisational development and change' (Harris, 2008: 183). However, further research is needed until 'a causal relationship can be established with confidence' (Bush and Glover, 2014: 561).

In trying to settle on a definition or at least develop a greater understanding of distributed leadership, as noted with other leadership typologies, it is worth

briefly exploring similarities and differences. Distributed leadership shares similarities with ‘collaborative’, ‘participative’, ‘shared’, ‘democratic’ (Harris, 2008) and ‘collegial’ (Bush, 2003) as many of these terms have elements that are distributed in nature. However, it is not simply a process of delegated leadership or ‘old wine in new bottles’ (Spillane, 2006: 20), it is a way to look at the practice of leadership – the *how* of school leadership – and not simply on roles and positions. It is not a style that is restricted to set processes and steps but more of a dynamic framework that ‘involves the interaction of multiple leaders’ (Dimmock 2012: 113). This requires a Principal to work collaboratively with a team of senior and middle leaders, with clarity of roles, good structures and clear communication (Lewis and Murphy, 2008).

Distributed leadership does not only play a part in school improvement relating to student outcomes, it is also a key component in capacity building, providing opportunities for emerging leaders to develop leadership capabilities; this will be explored in Chapter 3.

Contingent Leadership

Each school’s context is a construct of a range of factors. Socio-economic, demographic, geographic, cultural and historical factors combine as determiners of context (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003). Additional factors such as type, phase, size, staffing and governors all interact to influence context. The situational leadership theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1982) provides us with a theoretical foundation for contingent leadership and contingency theories emphasise the important role that context plays. These theories argue that a leader’s effectiveness is increased when they make their practices contingent on the situations in which they work. Furthermore, Day et al. (2010) suggest that there are significant leadership differences according to socio-economic context, experience and leadership tenure – linking closely with phases of leadership and a leader’s experience and competencies.

This model is of particular interest as this study is concerned with the way in which contextual factors influence the experience of international school leaders and their practice. However, the contingency model is criticised for its failure to acknowledge ‘the complex range and combinations of strategies actions and behaviours’ (Day, Gu and Sammons, 2016: 226) used by successful Principals.

Integrated Leadership

The leadership models discussed to this point are therefore only partial and none provide a complete picture of school leadership. Although there is an emerging agreement on the core practices of successful leaders, Bush (2008: 332) states ‘there is no single all-embracing theory of educational leadership’ and Day et al. (2010: 8) argue that successful Principals:

Draw equally on elements of both instructional and transformational leadership. They work intuitively and from experience, tailoring their leadership strategies to their particular school and context.

The combined effects of shared instructional and transformational leadership appear effective and this combination is termed ‘integrated leadership’ (Marks and Printy, 2003; Printy, Marks and Bowers, 2009), which is argued has a positive influence on both pedagogical quality and academic achievement. A complementary and symbiotic relationship between the two leadership typologies is suggested (Day, Gu and Sammons, 2016). By being transformational, Principals are able to engage and motivate teachers, building trust and relationships, and if they are seen to be strong instructional leaders, teachers start to ‘grow in commitment, professional involvement and willingness to innovate’ (Marks and Printy, 2003: 393).

Each of the leadership typologies discussed in this section is partial with the exception of contingent and integrated leadership. They provide important but nonetheless one-dimensional perspectives of school leadership. They are also

artificial distinctions, or 'ideal types', in that most successful leaders are likely to employ most or all of these approaches in their work. For example, in an early phase of leadership, a head may seek to employ managerial leadership, creating systems and structures, followed by the development of increasingly distributed learning-centred leadership.

We expect Principals to behave differently in different contexts. Is there enough similarity to expect patterns of behaviour to emerge and to what extent do Principals in international schools in Kuala Lumpur adopt these leadership models in their practice?

Leadership Knowledge and Competencies

The overview of theoretical and empirical research presented above has explored common leadership practices found in schools deemed to be successful and improving; it has also sought to outline how leadership practices can be implemented and experienced in schools. Although contingent leadership is researched and presented, it was not generated from research in schools (Day, Gu and Sammons, 2016: 226) and there appears to be a paucity of research into the role that context has on leadership practices and the dynamic interplay between individuals and context. In what the NCSL (2007) terms 'contextual literacy', Principals are expected to be able to analyse and understand their school context, prioritise leadership actions and respond appropriately, thus demonstrating wisdom and practical intelligence. It is not a stretch to assert that the interplay between a leader's characteristics and context is a critical determiner of practice. Hallinger and Heck (2011) describe leaders' characteristics as 'personal antecedents' and Leithwood and Day (2007) term them 'internal antecedents'. In this study we adopt the term 'personal leadership resources' (OLF, 2013). They are thus competencies in the broad sense and can include values, beliefs, knowledge, experiences, skills and dispositions.

Recent empirical studies in educational leadership are beginning to identify the competencies required for successful principalship (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Leithwood and Day, 2007; NCSL, 2007) at the same time as calling for a greater understanding of context and its influence on leadership. As Hallinger (2016: 14) observes, individual and organisational factors are not separate forces, there is a dynamic interaction between the two and research should shift from simply describing what leaders do towards a focus on how they do it (Dimmock, 2012; Leithwood, Sun and Pollock, 2017).

There is growing research that helps us to understand the competencies required by Principals to successfully lead schools. In reaching my own synthesis of this research and the knowledge perceived as necessary for school leaders, the literature reviewed covers comparative research on international curriculum for leadership development (for example, Huber, 2004 and OECD, 2008) and studies including perspectives of practising Headteachers (for example, Cave and Wilkinson, 1992; Gurr and Day, 2014; Leithwood et al., 2006; Reeves, Moos and Forrest, 1998).

Principals need to have considerable professional knowledge of educational practice, and theories and models of leadership and management. Within this professional knowledge is the theoretical underpinning of the following core topics:

- Instructional leadership
- Law
- Financial management
- Educational policy and administration
- Managing people
- Team leadership

(Bush, 2008; Moorosi and Bush, 2011)

Furthermore, knowledge also relates to the specialised information pertaining to a school's context, functions and processes, and its social, political and

legal context that is critical for a leader to possess or have access to (Cave and Wilkinson, 1992; Hallinger, 2016). This contextualised knowledge is increasingly important due to the ever-changing landscape of educational provision. Within the UK, for example, schools may be part of a consortium, or be a free school or an academy, whilst in Malaysia, international schools may be part of a 'for-profit' group of schools or a stand-alone 'not-for-profit' school.

Fink (2010) provides a useful framework for redefining leadership skills for the 21st century and in addition to contextual knowledge already examined above, he identifies 'political acumen'. Schools and school communities are made up of groups, individuals and different interests, and will inevitably breed conflict. Leaders need to be able to use political methods such as negotiation and coalition building (Fink, 2010) in order to coalesce groups around common goals. Political acumen is closely related to timing and the ability of a leader to know when to act and to think on their feet, all the time reading the situation and responding appropriately (Cave and Wilkinson, 1992).

What seems to differentiate successful leaders from ineffective ones is the quality of their judgements and their ability to think critically, creatively and laterally (Fink, 2010; Leithwood and Day, 2007). This is closely related to problem-solving expertise. Once a situation or problem has arisen, leaders need to be able to collect, analyse and evaluate evidence, weigh up advantages and disadvantages and use 'intuition', defined by Cave and Wilkinson (1992: 41) as stored knowledge and experience, rather than just a gut feeling. As an extension of critical thinking, leaders also need to be able to think laterally and holistically, make connections, provide coherence for those within the community and support others in seeing the bigger picture.

Research also demonstrates the need for what Fink (2010) terms 'emotional understanding'. These terms include myriad competencies and skills interwoven into leadership actions and practices and therefore require significant examination.

There are compelling arguments for the need for emotional and social intelligence in the work of leaders (Boyatzis and Saatchioglou, 2008; Goleman, 2009) and these intelligences are increasingly suggested as necessary skills or qualities for principalship. Leaders do emotional work; they lead change and in doing so take colleagues into uncharted territories. This requires the ability to read emotional responses, build trust and develop relationships (Fink, 2010; Leithwood and Day, 2007) termed 'emotional stability' (Zaccaro, Kemp and Bader, 2004) or 'emotional sensitivity' (Leithwood, 2005). As Goleman (2009: 24) states 'the most powerful arguments speak to the heart as well as the head' and this requires intra- and interpersonal skills.

The work of Goleman (2009) provides a framework for emotional intelligence, which he claims, is 'particularly central to leadership' (2009: 31) and is a useful lens to begin to further explore the competencies of successful leaders. Loader (2010: 202) argues 'leadership begins with the self', and emotional intelligence begins with three dimensions relating to intra-personal skills and self-management: self-awareness, self-regulation and motivation.

Self-awareness includes knowing one's internal states and preferences. People with self-awareness are mindful of what emotions they are feeling and why; they are mindful of the links between their feelings, thoughts and actions and are able to step back and reflect before acting. Self-aware leaders are often successful as they intentionally seek out feedback in order to improve (Goleman, 2009: 66).

Self-regulation relates to managing one's internal states and handling impulsive feelings and distressing emotions well. This 'internal locus of control' (Leithwood and Day, 2007; Zaccaro, Kemp and Bader, 2004) is an important leadership skill enabling leaders to stay calm and composed and to continue to think clearly under pressure. Scott (2003) ranks the ability to remain calm and

collected in the face of challenge as the most important personal capability of emotional intelligence.

Self-regulation can be viewed negatively with the concept of emotional labour (see Hochschild, 2012) and the oppression or commercialisation of feelings and emotions. However, emotional self-control is not the same as over-control and stifling or pretence of emotions (Goleman, 2009: 81). Self-awareness and regulation implies that once we are mindful of an emotion there is choice about how it is expressed. There are considerable cultural differences present in this dimension – what is an acceptable display of emotion or feeling in one culture is not in another. What does this mean for the actions of the Principals in this study, with three main cultures within Malaysia, together with many more present in international schools?

Motivation is the third dimension and reflects the emotional tendencies that guide or facilitate reaching goals. Successful leaders are motivated, passionate, committed, determined and industrious (Zacarro, Kemp and Bader, 2004). High-performing educational leaders are focused on student achievement, persistent in reaching their goals and willing to take risks whilst demonstrating enthusiasm and optimism (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010: 6), and motivation is key.

Further dimensions of emotional intelligence move from intra- towards interpersonal skills. The first is empathy, which according to Goleman (2009) is our social radar - it is our awareness of others' feelings, needs and concerns. It can thus be identified in most leaders deemed to be successful since it also includes developing others, sensing development needs, and is closely related to what Cave and Wilkinson (1992) termed 'reading the situation' and 'political acumen'. In other words, the ability of a leader to anticipate and meet needs, cultivate a variety of opportunities through a diverse range of people and to read a group's emotional state (Leithwood and Day, 2007). The artful leader is

attuned to the subtle undercurrent of emotion and able to act on it (Goleman, 2009)

However, used conversely, empathy can be a tool for manipulation and a leader's values and integrity need to underpin practice in a culture of trust (Harris, Caldwell and Longmuir, 2013). In addition, understanding someone's perspective does not necessarily mean agreeing with it or embracing it, but it does open the door for dialogue, negotiation and finding solutions.

The importance of developing staff has been presented and examined as a core practice of leaders in successful schools, whether it be through a instructional, transformational or distributed model. The skill of developing others is something that needs learning (Dimmock, 2012) and is often pursued through a leader's coaching and mentoring of staff. Empathy involves excellent listening skills and is a cornerstone of coaching and mentoring, as is giving authentic and meaningful feedback for improvement. Goleman (2009: 164) talks about the art of influence being 'handling emotions effectively in others as well as self' and educational leaders need to be skilled in winning people over with careful planning, building consensus and support, nurturing collaboration and building bonds. The complex layering and interweaving of the dimensions of emotional intelligence is apparent here. Empathy is crucial for all of these practices as the first step is building rapport and connecting emotionally with others.

In these changing educational times, school leaders need not only to lead change but also be change catalysts and challenge the status quo. Both intra- and interpersonal skills are needed in this endeavour. This is especially so within learning-centred, transformational and distributed leadership models where building a culture of trust and developing relationships are cornerstones. Although the evidence base for traits, attributes and dispositions pertinent to school leadership is weak (Dimmock, 2012: 25), it is clear that Principals need to be responsive and have an increasingly broad knowledge base.

Conclusion

School leadership has changed significantly over the last few decades with the role of the Principal expanding and becoming more complex. Despite this, researchers have identified four key practices that successful leaders engage in irrespective of their context. These key practices need to be underpinned by a culture of trust and strong relationships and there is a layering of strategies over time. There is no single model of successful school leadership as leaders adapt to both situation and context. However, successful leaders are most likely to exhibit a combination of transformational, distributed and learning-centred leadership. Moreover, successful leaders' competencies must also be considered for their impact on leadership practices. There are commonly identified skills and attributes required for successful school leadership such as political acumen, creative thinking and problem solving, whilst emotional and social intelligence are also increasingly necessary.

The more that is understood about successful school leadership, the better leaders can be supported in their roles to improve student outcomes. Although there is growing research about the competencies Principals need to be successful, there is still a scarcity of research about what is needed for successful leadership in different contexts. What research does exist is predominantly located in the United Kingdom, the USA or Australia, or from smaller scale research projects in domestic settings in different countries. At the point of writing I have been unable to find any research about leadership in international schools in Kuala Lumpur. With the many different cultures represented within the staff, student and parent body of an international school and present in Malaysia itself, coupled with the need for a leader to value insights brought by people of such diverse experiences and backgrounds, what added complexity does this bring to a leader's role in scanning, understanding and acting on the emotions of others? This investigation contributes to the body of knowledge by investigating what is needed in the context of successful English-medium international schools in Malaysia.

Chapter 3: Principals' Learning and Professional Development

Introduction

In Chapter 2 the research surrounding the changing nature of school leadership was explored, together with successful school leadership practices, typologies and competencies. This chapter focuses on professional development and learning. There is emerging empirical evidence to support an interrelationship between Principals' practice and student outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004; Waters, Marzano and McNulty, 2003) and, together with this research, there has been an inevitable and complementary interest in leadership development (for example, Bush, 2008; Hallinger, 2003; Huber, 2010; Smylie et al., 2005; Watson, 2003).

However, this interest in leadership development has emerged for three additional reasons. Firstly, there is a growing realisation that headship is a specialist occupation. With evidence from 23 countries, OECD (2008) stress that school leaders require specific preparation to be successful. Simply being effective in, or qualified for, the role of teacher can no longer be seen as the only requirement for headship. Bush (2012a: 666) employs the analogies of a nurse becoming a surgeon or a flight attendant becoming a pilot with no additional training in making the point that:

Requiring individuals to lead schools, manage staff, care for children, without specific preparation, may be seen as foolish, even reckless, as well as being manifestly unfair on a new incumbent. (Bush, 2012a: 666)

Secondly, leadership development analyses have been prompted by the evolution of the role and scope of educational leadership and the increasing complexity of school context (Bush, 2008). This includes growing accountability and expectations from government, parents and the wider public (Crow, 2006). Research suggests that the complexity, intensity and demands

of the role will intensify further in the years ahead, providing even greater impetus for future planning (Dimmock, 2012; Southworth, 2010).

Thirdly, leadership development research has been necessitated by the increasingly apparent rate of stress and strain faced by newly-appointed Principals. Research (Crow, 2006, 2007; Daresh and Male, 2000; Earley et al., 2011) suggests that many are not prepared for the pace of the job, the range and amount of tasks, or the loneliness and culture shock. Research further suggests that Principals would benefit from preparation, development and support in the early stages of their promotion to headship (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Daresh and Male, 2000; Sackney and Walker, 2006). Although Heck (2003) found that the socialisation process accounted for a significant variance in leaders' performance and Bush, Briggs and Middlewood (2006) suggest that pre-role preparation has a positive impact, there is limited empirical evidence to support the widespread belief that leadership preparation makes a difference (Bush, 2012; Darling-Hammond et al., 2007).

Interestingly, leadership development programmes themselves have come under recent scrutiny (see below), however, it is argued that there is limited evidence about how to prepare and develop Principals for school leadership (Davies et al., 2005; Van Veelen, Sleegers and Enderdijk, 2017). Therefore, although it is now recognised that preparation and development are necessary, there is a paucity of research on what this ought to look like. The issue is often viewed as contentious because of the complexity of professional learning itself, but also the relationship between leadership development and practice in schools (Forde, 2011: 355). This is coupled with philosophical and political disagreements about the kind of Principals, skills and attributes that are needed (Cowie and Crawford, 2007: 132). The cumulative effect has been a degree of uncertainty about what preparation and development is required.

This Chapter begins by exploring the theoretical framework for adult learning to anchor the literature on leadership learning and professional development.

This leads onto a discussion of three stages of Principals' professional learning, including the important concept of socialisation. Experiential learning and the development of self and professional identity formation will follow. The conclusion then draws together emerging themes in preparation for Chapter 4 and the contextualisation and conceptualisation of this research.

The Theoretical Framework for Adult Learning

In this section we explore theories of adult learning that have relevance to leadership learning and professional development. Knowles' (1980) theory of andragogy suggests that adult learners are self-directed, ready to learn when learning is needed, life and task-centred, and problem-oriented. He proposes that adults are highly motivated by internal rewards such as self-esteem, confidence and growth. Barber, Whelan and Clark (2010: 20) confirm this in a review and synthesis of 25 theories of adult learning, suggesting that adults learn best through action and experience, in their own learning style, when they are motivated, in charge and at the edge of their comfort zone, from role models and peers and when supported by effective systems and process.

Adults have their own motivations for learning, which are related to their lives, practices and roles (Tusting and Barton, 2006). Therefore, they have an increased drive towards self-direction, which facilitates autonomy in learning. Learning the art of school leadership is an on-going process that begins long before an individual becomes a school leader. Principals bring their own experiences to bear and their learning is 'follow-up' learning, building on existing knowledge and experience (Bush, 2012a; Huber, 2011; Polizzi and Frick, 2012).

Bennis (2009: 136) asserts that a particular trait of leaders is that they 'learn by doing' and theories of learning and literature about leaders' learning are increasingly placing experience at the centre of the learning process, notably in the form of experiential and situated learning models. Just having experiences, however, does not automatically lead to learning, as it is the

meaning that an individual makes of their experiences that leads to learning, development and change, rather than the experiences in and of themselves. It should be noted, however, that experiences in themselves can be valuable learning opportunities (Eraut, 2004).

We will first briefly explore experiential learning theories that ground thinking on educational leadership development. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model is typically represented by a four stage mutually supportive learning cycle, which can be entered at any stage.

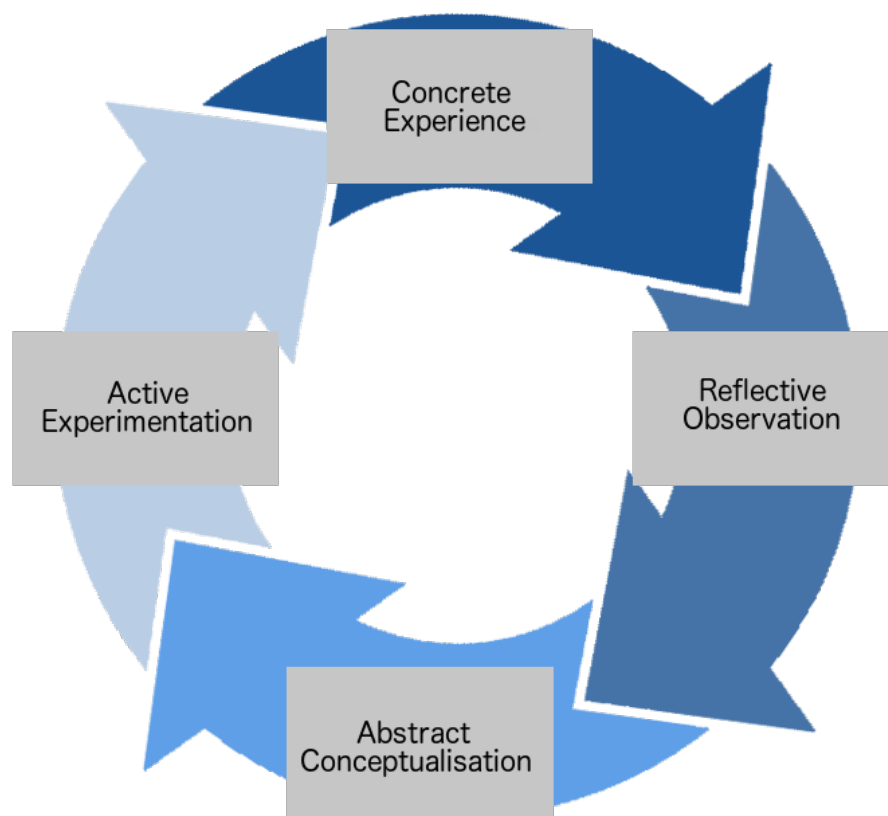


Figure 3.1: Kolb's experiential learning cycle (adapted from Kolb, 1984: 26-42)

Kolb views learning as an integrated process and argues that for learning to take place all four stages must be followed through in the cycle's logical sequence of:

- Concrete experience, which involves doing or having an experience

- Reflective observation of the new experience, ensuring awareness of any inconsistencies between experience and current knowledge and understanding
- Abstract conceptualisation following the reflective process providing a new idea or modification of an existing concept
- Active experimentation involving the application of new learning to see what results.

Reflection is an important stage of this cycle and critical reflection is a key part of the process of learning and development. Reflection is described as the practice of stepping back and thinking about the actions of oneself and others within one's environment (Bolman and Deal, 1997; Raelin, 2001). It is a useful tool to articulate knowledge or clarify actions and experiences (Lambert, 2002), especially since it is essentially a recursive learning process. Schön (1984) posits that the capacity to reflect both in and on action in order to engage in a process of learning is a defining characteristic of professional practice, with successful leaders being open to learning.

However, these learning theories are criticised for reducing learning to sequential, rational and purely cognitive processes, excluding emotions and feelings (Benozzo and Colley, 2012; Eraut, 2004; Fineman, 1997). Benozzo and Colley (2012: 307) argue that we need to conceive emotion and learning as two social processes that are inextricably linked and Fineman (1997:16) emphasises that 'thoughts are imbued with emotions and emotions with thoughts.' He suggests the need for a new term of 'cogmotion', as learning is both an interpretive and a sense-making process that requires both emotion and cognition. Le Doux (1998) suggests that cognitive science has limited itself as a study through its exclusion of emotions and MacBeath (2009) argues that emotions are an important part of the glue that makes learning happen.

Adult learning theories are continually developing and increasingly indicate that the process of learning is both complex and multi-dimensional, including

cognitive, reflective, emotional and social elements. They suggest that adults may learn better and transfer new knowledge when it is embedded in work and experience. Brown, Collins and Duguid (1989) see this learning process as situated cognition and, in theories of situated learning presented by Lave and Wenger (1991) and Wenger (1998), learning is conceptualised as a process of social participation, identity formation and belonging. This process is enabled through and by communities of practice, with observation, coaching, scaffolding and opportunities for reflection and collaborative problem solving.

If, as Lave (1993) claims, there is no separation between participation in work and learning, then it is important for us to explore the concept of learning at work, the workplace as a learning environment and an individual's interaction with it. Workplace learning is often categorised as formal or informal. However, this distinction is not particularly clear-cut or helpful (Eraut, 2004). It can also be negative, imprecise and ill focused (Billet, 2002), and an unnecessary dichotomy (Zhang and Brundrett, 2010). There is a need to recognise that there are elements of both in both, identify them and their interrelationships and analyse the implications (Benozzo and Colley, 2012).

Formal learning is seen as a structured and more traditional model of learning, often called training. It frequently takes place outside of the workplace, for example, a workshop or course, and consists of planned, intentional and often academic learning (Marsick and Watkins, 2001). On the other hand, informal learning is mainly unstructured and experiential, but can be both planned or unplanned and is often integrated and embedded into daily activity (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004). It often includes a process of action and reflection (as described in the experiential learning cycle) and is highly contingent on the context of the work setting (Marsick and Watkins, 2001).

Intentional or planned informal learning activities are easier to observe, recognise, share and research (Berg and Chyung, 2008) and can, for example, take the form of coaching and mentoring (Robertson, 2005) and networking

(Bush and Glover, 2005; Eraut, 2004). Unintentional or unplanned learning often takes place whilst carrying out everyday tasks and can develop tacit knowledge (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004). Polanyi (1967: 6) argues that tacit knowledge is not the activity of spontaneous perception, but rather the outcome of the 'shaping of experience performed in the pursuit of knowledge.' Tacit knowledge is grounded in experience and becomes 'practical wisdom' (Cave and Wilkinson, 1992; Sternberg, 2006; Zeira and Rosen, 2000) and is also untaught (St. Germain and Quinn, 2006). Eraut (1994) distinguishes between declarative and procedural, or technical knowledge, and conditional or craft based knowledge, such as knowing when and how to apply technical knowledge in different situations. This perhaps in some way explains why Bush (2010) considers that leadership cannot be taught, it can only be learned.

How the workplace supports or inhibits learning is termed as affordances by Billett (2001, 2004) and may take the form of guided learning with coaching, modelling or through participation in group activities, working alongside others, or tackling challenging tasks (Eraut, 2004: 266). However, individuals are not passive in their participatory practices and learning (Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2002) and it is also necessary to account for how individuals elect to engage with workplace affordances and the concept of co-participation (Billett, 2004). There is a two-way relationship between individual agency and social structures that shapes the quality of learning and must take into consideration an individual's attitudes, values and existing knowledge, ways of knowing and personal histories, which are shaped through participation in different social practice (Hodkinson and Bloomer, 2002). This will be explored below.

Having thus far presented key theories and research that ground adult and workplace learning, professional learning together with a review of relevant literature on Principals' preparation and continuing development will form the corpus of the next section of this chapter. The literature surrounding becoming a Principal and continuous professional learning will be drawn upon to inform our understanding of what this might be like in an international context. Despite

the paucity of research and understanding, leadership preparation and development programmes are increasing in number and influence (OECD, 2008) and we will first explore the international landscape of leadership development programmes.

There are a number of different approaches across the world to leadership preparation and development. OECD (2008) suggest a three-phase continuum of learning and development that we will use for framing our thinking and international comparisons:

1. Initial leadership training and preparation before beginning a role
2. Induction programmes for the early months and years of practice
3. Continuous professional learning that is relevant for career stage and context

Initial Leadership Training and Preparation

Initial leadership training and preparation is learning that takes place in preparation for becoming a Principal. This stage of learning is also known as professional or anticipatory socialisation. Socialisation is defined as the process of learning the values, attitudes, skills and knowledge of a profession and aspects of Principals' socialisation have been categorised as professional, organisational and personal (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Crow, 2007; Greenfield, 1985).

Professional socialisation refers to leadership learning, intentional or unintentional, by which Principals acquire the knowledge and skills required to lead schools (Bush, 2016). It includes the development of knowledge, skills and dispositions required to act as a Principal regardless of context (Cottrell and James, 2016; Crow, 2006).

Professional socialisation may include university preparation such as a post-graduate degree in educational leadership or England's National Professional

Qualification for Headship (NPQH). With the increasing realisation of the need to prepare Principals for the complex role, leadership qualifications are becoming more in vogue. Singapore was one of the first countries to introduce an educational leadership qualification in 1984 and a qualification remains mandatory before or soon after becoming a school leader. A qualification is also mandatory in the majority of US states, and a number of other countries including Canada, France, South Africa and Malta. In England the NPQH was introduced as mandatory but became optional in 2012 following an overhaul of the qualification. Programmes and qualifications are available but optional in a number of countries including Australia, Germany and the Netherlands, for example (Bush, 2008). In Malaysia, Principals in government schools take a localised version of the NPQH but leaders of international schools are not required to take the qualification, as they are not fully under the government's regulatory control. Although there is not an internationally consistent approach, there is a noticeable trend towards formal qualifications and an on-going focus on the professionalisation of educational leadership through qualifications and certification (Bush, 2012a: 673).

Where programmes do exist they differ in modes of delivery and type of provider, however, there are also striking similarities. There is not the scope here to discuss specific courses in detail, though it is noted that there is little difference in content despite diversity in culture and context (Bush and Jackson, 2002; Moorosi and Bush, 2011) with five common themes: leadership for learning, team leadership, managing people, financial management, and educational policy.

The differences between programmes mainly relate not to what is taught but to how they are designed and delivered, for example, highly theoretical, academic and knowledge-based styles of learning prevalent in the United States. This style of course is often criticised due to its lack of practical relevance (Lumby et al., 2009: 185). The theory and research is useful, but

there is an increasing trend in many countries towards a more blended approach with experiential-based learning and reflection (Huber, 2010: 240).

Whilst there are an increasing number of courses available, according to Scott (2003: 27) many Principals do not undertake any formal training programmes to become a school leader and professional socialisation may also include developing knowledge, skills, values and attributes through personal and professional experience in schools. These prior experiences and learning can be powerful socialisation mechanisms and opportunities to gain a rich understanding of educational practice. The majority of Principals have been teachers and this can form part of the leadership development process (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Hart, 1993).

Prior experiences in leadership roles, such as Assistant or Deputy Head, and witnessing Principals in action (Crow, 2007) are also considered useful and effective preparation for headship (Earley et al., 2011), particularly in developing intra- and interpersonal skills. Crow (2007: 64) reports that aspiring Heads learn three key skills from other Principals during professional socialisation: working with people, being innovative, political and determined, and the need to be a people person. Although the workplace learning of Principals is a relatively unexplored field (Hulsbos, Evers and Kessels, 2016: 23) it is evident that their learning is a process of social participation and this locates Principals' learning within the debates about situated learning and communities of practice. Furthermore, Crow and Glascock (1995) found aspiring Principals in the United States identified three sources of role conception through professional socialisation: witnessing Principals' work when they were teachers; their own expertise and other teachers'; and their non-education work experience. They draw heavily on these earlier professional learning experiences when they take up a principalship (Bush, 2016), emphasising the biographical nature of Principals' learning.

Principals' preparation or professional socialisation can therefore take two forms: academic or professional qualifications, which include relevant domain-specific knowledge, or learning from prior experiences, providing greater development in skills, attitudes and values. Building on this general overview of initial leadership training and development, this thesis seeks to explore how international school leaders prepare to become a Principal and the value they place on formal qualifications and prior experiences in doing so.

Induction

The induction of a new Principal may be a deliberate process designed and facilitated by the school, board of governors or related authority, or it may be incidental and determined by the newly-appointed Principal (Bush, 2008). New Principals in a number of countries, for example, Bulgaria, Cyprus and the Netherlands (Bush, 2008), are largely unsupported in their new role once appointed (Bush, 2008). They may only receive limited support perhaps in the form of mentoring, but this is often serendipitous rather than planned. In other countries there are planned induction programmes. For example, in both Finland and Sweden, a two-year course is provided; in Australia, induction is supported with conferences and networks; and in England there is a programme entitled Early Headship Provision (EHP), including networks, action learning and mentoring (Bush, 2008; Huber, 2011). The latter recognises that early headship is a critical phase in any leaders' development (NCSL, 2007) and requires specific support.

In general, research suggests that new Principals find most value in learning through experience and reflection, and personal, intensive and collaborative induction experiences with veteran senior leaders acting as mentors (Bush, Glover and Harris, 2007; Smylie et al., 2005) rather than more formal theory-based programmes, once again positioning Principals' learning within theories of social participation and situated learning. The fact that for many Principals the early stages of headship tend to be the most challenging (see below), in part explains why mentoring is a popular method of learning and support for

new Heads. The mentor - often a more experienced leader (Bush, 2012a) - provides individual support and challenge. Well-chosen and experienced mentors can offer considerable guided learning (Earley et al., 2011) with the aim of the relationship being to 'encourage formal and informal career development (and) reciprocal learning between mentors and mentees' (Barnett and O'Mahoney, 2008: 238). Furthermore, Hobson and Sharp (2005) found that many major studies of mentoring programmes for new Principals report benefits to both parties.

As mentioned above and evidenced in a number of studies, the early stage of headship can be challenging (Crow, 2006, 2007; Daresh and Male, 2000; Earley et al., 2011; Hobson et al., 2003; ISSPP, 2010). A general feeling of being overwhelmed and de-skilled results from the intensity of the role, the volume and diversity of tasks, and the learning needed to manage this (Daresh and Male, 2000). Many Principals talk about not being in control of events and being unable to manage their time, even experiencing high levels of stress and a sense of trauma (Crow, 2006, 2007).

These experiences have been shown to be independent of culture, geographical location, size or phase of school (Earley et al., 2011:11), with commonly-faced challenges including traumatic trigger events such as fires in school; significant budget and finance issues; and staff issues, such as underperformance, demotivation and conflict (Crow, 2006, 2007). A sense of unpreparedness (Daresh and Male, 2000) to navigate such difficult and complex issues permeates such studies, greatly contributing to the sense of trauma that left many Headteachers exhausted (Crow, 2007; Weindling and Earley, 1987).

Principals in these early stages of headship also experience organisational socialisation. Unlike professional socialisation, which socialises a leader to a conception of the profession, organisational socialisation involves the process of becoming an effective member of an organisation (Schein, 1988). It includes

learning the knowledge, values and practices necessary to become the leader of a specific school. According to Greenfield (1985), successful organisational socialisation enables a leader to develop into a functional and effective member of the school and is a reciprocal, two-way process (Crow and Matthews, 1998; Wentworth, 1980), concerned with the interplay between the individual and context and is a form of situational learning (Cottrell and James, 2016). Individuals play an important and active role in their own learning, bringing their previous learning and experiences into play.

Organisational socialisation of Principals changes over time. Acknowledging the potential variables, Weindling (1999) draws on the findings of a ten-year study of headship and other research (Day and Bakioğlu, 1996; Gronn, 1999; Ribbins, 1999), to identify a number of stages of Principal socialisation over the first eight years in position. According to Weindling (1999), the first four stages cover the first two years, often a period considered as induction. The first few months a Principal is in position frequently includes feelings of shock and surprise, and marks the beginning of a sense-making process, which includes building a cognitive map of the situation, people, problems and the school culture (Weindling and Dimmock, 2006).

The next stage is characterised by the new Headteacher 'taking hold' and includes deepening learning about the school and its community. In this phase new leaders may make some organisational changes that provide quick wins alongside managing the day-to-day interactions that legitimate and validate the new Principal, preparing the way for him or her to exert influence (Weindling and Dimmock, 2006). During this stage staff are more open to change, especially if the previous incumbent was not popular (Crow, 2007).

The third and fourth stages are defined as periods of reshaping, with the new leader 'taking off the L-plates' (Weindling and Dimmock, 2006: 334). Reciprocal socialisation has begun and continues to take place with the Principal trying to take charge and bring about school improvement, sharing

vision and values and putting plans into action at the same time as the school is changing the leader (Reeves, Moos and Forrest, 1998). The concurrent working of reciprocal socialisation and organisational socialisation at this point opens up the possibility of conflict. Both staff and the new leader have learnt about respective strengths and weaknesses, the leader learns that although they have considerable hopes and aspirations about what they would like to do, they need to work within the school's existing framework and structures (Day and Bakioğlu, 1996). During this period expectations become more realistic and this is the time for major changes to begin to take shape.

The early stages of headship can, therefore, be turbulent times characterised by challenge and stress. This is partly linked to the experiences faced by new Principals as they progress through the various phases of organisational socialisation outlined above. Do international school leaders face similar challenges? Considering their unique environments and possible increased variety of experiences and learning, will there be additional difficulties? These areas will be explored further in Chapter 6 bearing in mind the vacuum of research on this subject for international schools.

Continuous Professional Learning

The way socialisation changes over time is a rich theme in Principal socialisation literature, however, much of this literature is focused on the early stages of the process and on first becoming a Principal. However, principalship itself is an on-going development process (Day and Bakioğlu, 1996) with learning and socialisation a continuous, dynamic and iterative process during which the leader must not only learn and develop important skills and capabilities but also develop personally in areas such as confidence, openness, motivation, resilience and interpersonal skills, and school leaders continue to develop throughout their career.

Professional and organisational socialisation both play important roles in Principal development. As discussed above, professional socialisation usually

takes place before appointment and incorporates learning the 'role' divorced of context, for example, through training or formal qualifications. Organisational socialisation on the other hand is context-specific and involves a new Principal being socialised into a school and its culture. Although the traditional notion of effective socialisation has the new Headteacher conforming to the community's expectation of the role, termed by Hart (1993) as 'role taking,' the reciprocal nature of socialisation has been highlighted. Socialisation is not a passive process, but an active one with the Principal socialising the new school to new values and approaches whilst at the same time contributing to their own learning (Crow, 2006). Through their experiences, Principals will go through a process of making sense of the role by themselves and through informal feedback from teachers, students, parents and other members of the community and go through a process more akin to 'role making' (Crow, 2007).

The early stages of socialisation examined above suggest a period of huge change and sense-making. Despite the highly contextualised and individualised nature of leadership and learning it is interesting that research (Reeves, Moos and Forrest, 1998; Weindling, 1999) points to some quite consistent patterns in Principals' socialisation and learning with leaders moving through a series of stages over an eight to ten year period.

Following the early phase of induction, the next phase is often characterised by a period of refinement. With organisational and structural changes having been made in the first two years, this can be the stage when further curriculum changes take place alongside the fine-tuning of plans. Principals often feel this is the time when they are 'hitting their stride' (Weindling and Dimmock, 2006) and their enthusiasm and motivation is at its peak. However, this can also be a period of considerable learning and challenge, which may engender feelings of uncertainty, loss, inadequacy and loneliness (Day and Bakioğlu, 1996; Hobson et al., 2003). It is a period of deep change and development with idealism and enthusiasm turning into realism.

The next stage according to Weindling (1999) is a period of consolidation with leaders having introduced most of their planned changes and improvements. More legislative changes are commonly introduced during this period. According to Day and Bakioğlu (1996: 212-219) this phase is perceived to be the most satisfactory and rewarding with Heads growing in confidence and effectiveness, coupled with increased reflective practice, introducing greater sharing and distributing of leadership.

The final identified stage of socialisation, from the seventh or eighth year onwards is often considered as a plateau (Weindling, 1999), or a time to change (Reeves, Moos and Forrest, 1998), or a period of disenchantment (Day and Bakioğlu, 1996). NCSL (2007) suggest that seven years in one school is a significant amount of time and enough to have seen through a full cohort of students and initiated and implemented most changes. At this time a leader can experience declining confidence, enthusiasm and motivation, and increasing personal fatigue.

School leaders learn throughout their career in myriad ways and leadership development arrangements for more experienced leaders vary widely across national contexts and reflect both local culture and national imperatives. One challenge or misconception is that development is identified with training, and that needs can be fully met by courses (Watson, 2003: 9). However, the OECD (2008:133) reports quite clearly that leadership development is done best when it forms a hybrid of formal and informal processes threaded throughout and responding to the various stages of leadership practice. The need to look beyond programmes and workshops is reinforced by Fullan (2001: 253) who talks about the development of 'habits of learning' through daily interactions and experiences. There is clearly a link between the importance of experiential on-the-job learning, the enhancement of abilities to learn and the skills needed to be proactive in complex work environments (Fullan, 2001; Huber, 2010).

However, it is also increasingly clear that there is no single way in which leadership development creates leadership capability. Principals need to engage with different forms of learning that are relevant to them at specific times (Burgoyne, Hirsh and Williams, 2004: 3) and learning should be personalised. Bolam (1999: 196) argues that leadership development can be grouped into four modes with the final three suggesting an emphasis on process rather than content:

- Knowledge for understanding
- Knowledge for action
- Improvement of practice
- Development of a reflective mode

In addition to Bolan's suggested strategies, it is important for leaders to be co-constructors of their learning (Bush, Glover and Harris, 2007; Smylie et al., 2005). Different modes of learning for Principals may include individual theoretical learning such as self-study and online learning, or courses, conferences and workshops. Facilitated and personalised learning in the form of mentoring or coaching is also a widely-used and favoured mode of learning (Robertson, 2005). Coaching is a means of learning that is gaining popularity (Bush and Glover, 2005; Scott, 2003). Coaching and mentoring are often confused and there is indeed some overlap (Bush, 2010). Coaching tends to be more short-term (Barnett and O'Mahoney, 2008) and focussed on developing specific skills (Bush, 2010). However, coaching is also increasingly used to develop performance on an on-going long-term basis, providing a space for regular review of practice and guided critical reflection (West-Burnham, 2004).

Even though this is still very much a growing area of research, coaching is considered to be one of the most relevant and helpful modes of learning by new and experienced school leaders alike (Earley et al., 2011; Scott, 2003). Unfortunately, it is one of the least likely to be engaged in (Darling-Hammond

et al., 2007), whereas workshops and reading - felt to be the least helpful vehicles - seem to be the most common modes of learning.

Another approach of this kind is collegial exchange (Huber 2011: 640), which may take different forms in different contexts, but at its heart is the opportunity for leaders to visit and discuss with others, providing strong potential for idea transfer. Visits to similar contexts seem to be particularly useful (Bush, 2010), with networking being one of the most favoured modes of learning for Principals. The development of schools as learning communities and informal interactions and discussions about learning and leadership with peers are also highly valued by school leaders (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007; Scott, 2003).

This fits with the shift from the concept of the heroic leader and an individual perspective of leadership and leaders (Bennis, 2009; Southworth, 2010) to a collective one (Fullan, 2008). With the development of leadership, rather than leaders, there is a focus on structure, systems, people, social relations and distributed leadership in schools (Hartley and Hinksman, 2003) and Fullan (2008) argues that we need two approaches; leadership development for individuals, together with parallel strategies to change the culture of schools, making leadership more about teams and developing organisations on a day-to-day basis. There are clear links to capacity building (Dimmock, 2012) and to the aims and outcomes of distributed leadership (Spillane, 2006).

It is clear, therefore, that there are multiple and varied ways in which Principals continue to learn and develop. What are the preferred modes of learning for the international Principals in this study? To what extent will we see any similarities and differences when we reflect on the leadership conversations later in this thesis and how does the international context influence their learning?

Learning from Experiences

John F Kennedy (1963) said 'leadership and learning are indispensable to each other' and according to NCSL (2007) developing craft knowledge is a priority. This learning cannot be done by textbook or by attending a course alone as it is context-sensitive (Fluckiger, Lovett and Dempster, 2014). No matter what mode of learning is engaged, each must be drawn into a reciprocal and effective practice-centred relationship (Bush, 2009; Huber, 2011; OECD, 2008; Southworth, 2010). Grounded in theories of experiential and situated learning, educational leaders learn through on-the-job experiences. These experiences are particularly important for learning 'soft' leadership skills such as reading the context and intuition (Lewis and Murphy, 2008). Development also comes from learning from mistakes or incidental learning (Marsick and Watkins, 2001), through solving problems and from facing challenges (Dimmock, 2012). Bennis and Thomas (2002) describe these leadership-shaping experiences as 'crucibles' - key experiences or challenges that significantly develop a leader's skills, knowledge or character. West-Burnham (2004: 5) suggests three levels of learning:

- Shallow learning: concerned with acquisition of information
- Deep learning: focused on the creation of knowledge through the development of understanding
- Profound learning: where knowledge is converted to wisdom and where understanding becomes intuition.

Deep and profound learning, can only be achieved through these contextualised experiences and application of knowledge (Bush, Glover and Harris, 2007; West-Burnham, 2004) and Levin (2004) suggests that school leaders rely more on tacit knowledge or craft knowledge gained from experience and practical intuition and wisdom, than on academic or research knowledge. Wisdom is the extent to which an individual uses intelligence and experience (moderated by values) to work towards a common good, balancing intra- and interpersonal skills (Sternberg, 2006: 358). Furthermore, Hart et al.

(1996) found that timing was also critical, in that most errors made by novice Principals involve reaching decisions too quickly or too slowly. This intuitive orientation, or 'knowing in practice' (Schön, 1984), is when we understand something tacitly, when we 'incorporate it in our body' (Polanyi, 1967:16) and it is interwoven with craft knowledge or wisdom. It can therefore only be developed through experience. Nestor-Baker and Hoy (2001) report that outstanding Principals have a greater number of 'if - then' scenarios to draw from and these are developed from their experiences.

Through these experiences, memories and observations become etched in leaders' psyches and eventually come to influence their mental models and subsequently their actions and behaviours (Avolio, 2007; Senge, 2006; Sternberg, 2006). However, this is not always the case and learning does not always happen. Sometimes leaders remain faithful to their old mental models and a number of reasons are proposed for this. There could be resistance to new experiences and learning (MacBeath, 2009), the existence of fixed or rigid mental models (Dimmock, 2012), or an absence of emotional glue, willingness or perceived need to commit to learning at that time (MacBeath, 2009). Dimmock (2012: 28) and Janson (2008: 91) assert that supporting leaders in their learning, especially through failure and challenge, would lead to greater flexibility in their mental models and improved learning; a possible reason for the growing interest in coaching and mentoring.

Leadership learning does not simply come from doing but by thinking about the doing (Fullan, 2007), and reflecting and gaining insight whilst doing it (Mintzberg, 2004). Leaders must be able to review their practice, work with others and explore how theory and practice interact and new competencies are gained by practice, feedback and reflection. However, Huber (2011: 637) argues that sufficient theoretical foundations must be in place to lessen subjectivity and ground learning. As such, a blended approach to learning with a range of modes is encouraged with reflection a necessary bridge between theory and practice to move from shallow to deep learning (West-Burnham,

2004).

Although the case for situated learning is strong, exposure to rich learning experiences is more likely in some environments than others (Dimmock, 2012) and many schools remain weak leadership learning environments (Southworth, 2010). In fact Ofsted (2006) implied that in less effective schools CPD is likely to be weak. However, this does appear at odds with the concept of on-the-job learning and the agentic nature of reflection in action and leadership learning through experience. Even accounting for the learning environment, some leaders appear to have greater capacity to learn from their on-the-job experiences and to develop craft knowledge than others (Dimmock, 2012; St. Germain and Quinn, 2006). Two leaders could undergo the same experiences but take away different meanings from the experience, resulting in different effects on leadership capabilities (Janson 2008: 76) and all this is suggestive of a connection with individual agency and personal dispositions (Billett, 2001; Dimmock, 2012).

Successful leaders and successful learners share common skills such as problem solving, reflection and acting on experience (Claxton, 2002; Southworth, 2010; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009). They learn through every stage of life and their learning includes emotions, identity, metacognition and decision-making (Fink, 2010). Claxton (2002) presents four 'R's for learning for the twenty-first century: **resilience**, the ability to stay intelligently engaged with learning challenges despite setbacks; **resourcefulness**, the capacity to use a range of intellectual tools including intuition and imagination; **reflection**, the facility to monitor, analyse and understand one's own learning; and **reciprocity**, the recognition of learning with and from others and it being a two way process. These skills are, as we explored in Chapter 2, as relevant to leadership as they are to learning (Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009).

Leithwood et al., (2006: 14) argue that 'successful leaders are open-minded and ready to learn from others'. They are also open to continuous learning

(Senge, 2006) and are risk takers, keen to experiment and try new things, knowing they may fail but embracing failures because they know they will learn from them (Bennis, 2009: 35). People's personalities, dispositions and attitudes have a significant influence on the way in which people handle difficult situations, perform their duties and learn (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2006) and having motivation, perseverance and being willing to learn are key determiners of successful learning from experience (Evans, Kersh and Sakamoto, 2004: 228).

Therefore, from what has been presented thus far, it is clear that the provision for leadership preparation and development incorporates a range of opportunities, from academic to experiential learning, formal courses to informal networks, group learning to individual mentoring and coaching, and combinations thereof. Each has its relative merits, suggesting the usefulness of a blended approach with any theoretical learning embedded into practice. Socialisation provides one important lens for viewing Principals' learning but it does not provide a complete picture, nor does the study of workplace learning alone.

Developing self and professional identity

Becoming a Principal is a transformative process (Browne–Ferrigno, 2003; Crow and Glascock, 1995; Tubin, 2017). It is a process of learning, practice and reflection and the development of a new role identity. As discussed, the process requires knowledge development, perhaps through further study or professional qualifications, together with skill development through situated learning activities (Browne-Ferrigno 2003; Capasso and Daresh, 2001; Daresh and Male, 2000; Lave and Wenger, 1991).

We have explored the profound connection between leadership and learning, and there is also one between identity and practice. It is through participating in work, which includes learning, that a person develops and redevelops their professional identity (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2006). Wenger (1998: 149)

argues that identity is not just a self-image; it is a full, lived experience that is negotiated through participation in work and by the ways in which we see ourselves and others see us. The temporal nature of identity is important, as it does not remain static in the shape it was formed; it continues to be negotiated through experiences and the meaning and significance placed on them (Wenger, 1998; Tubin, 2017). Identity is also influenced by previous experiences. The biographical nature of Principals' learning has also been confirmed (McGough, 2003), with research showing numerous instances of early childhood and educational experiences being carried directly into adult learning and professional lives. The word '*Headteacher*' also emphasises the use of previous experiences and identity within education, encouraging building on previous teaching experiences and the types of learning that took place as teachers (Crow, 2007).

Earlier in this chapter, professional and organisational socialisation were examined. A third type of socialisation, less frequently identified in literature, is personal socialisation. This is the process of role identity transformation that occurs when a Principal learns new roles and lives new experiences (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Matthews and Crow, 2003) and is an essential part of successfully becoming a Principal (Crow and Glascock, 1995). Building an identity is a 'way of making sense of yourself' (Biott, Moos and Møller, 2001:397) and constructing an identity consists of defining who we are and negotiating the meanings of our experience of membership in a social community.

New Principals make sense of their position within the workplace by experiencing the role, interpreting the position, understanding what they do and do not know, and learning to manage the actions and perceptions of others as well as self-perception and their own actions (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2006). It is not simply an individual's choice nor is it only the result of belonging to the social category of Principal (Biott, Moos and Møller, 2001). This process of identity formation and change can include developing a

different image of themselves and their role (Matthews and Crow, 2003). New Principals often experience a loss of identity and feel completely unprepared for the extent to which they are treated differently and in turn treat others differently (Daresh and Male, 2000; Parkay and Hall, 1992), often feeling like a 'character simply known as the Principal' (Daresh and Male, 2000: 96). New Principals also report difficulty in finding a new identity due to what is required of them in their role and many do not appreciate the way in which becoming a school leader can be a life-transforming experience (Daresh and Male, 2000).

This raises questions to be discussed later in this thesis such as: how do participants construct a workable notion of what it means to be an international school Principal and cope with this life-transforming experience? In addition, are there increased challenges with other life-transforming experiences taking place at the same time, such as moving schools, countries and learning about a new context and culture and how do these experiences influence their sense of self?

The process that one undergoes in building a new professional identity is unique to each individual although common threads emerge from the literature. Role identity transformation through a new mindset (seeing oneself as a Principal) appears to be a critical step in the professional growth process (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003) and this continues to change over time. For a novice leader moving into a Principal position for the first time, or an experienced one moving from one school to another, this requires stepping out of their comfort zone and relinquishing a comfortable mindset, demonstrating an openness to change, a willingness to take risks and the confidence to accept new challenges and learn new behaviours (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Carr 1997; Crow, 2007). Professional socialisation and knowledge gained pre-appointment does not fully prepare Principals for the enormity of the role, including the stress and anxiety, the professional isolation and loneliness, the lack of self-confidence and loss of identity (Crow, 2006; Earley et al, 2011; Hobson et al., 2003). Building a new identity requires the formation of a new

sense of status, image and self-worth in the role and themselves (Weindling and Dimmock, 2006: 338).

A school Principal is a whole unique person who is formed from the interaction of heart and head - not simply the sum of the individual skills they can acquire (Loader, 2010: 196). A leader's emotions cannot be ignored as they impact on how they make sense of their experiences. This can be a challenging part of personal socialisation and often a bleak time for leaders; the literature highlights two major learning needs for Principals: self-learning and (re)developing self-confidence in a new role (Crow, 2007; Daresh and Male, 2000; Earley et al., 2011). We only have to look through the papers at the 'situations vacant' section to find job adverts demonstrating that the modern concept of competencies encompasses relevant knowledge and experience as well as a range of personal qualities and skills. This suggests a need for greater awareness and understanding of the link between the cognitive, emotional and social (Illeris, 2003; Goleman, 2009; Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002), not only for learning but also for identity formation and leading.

We have seen how learning at work occurs not only by doing things but also by learning from experiences, through reflection and being proactive in seeking challenges and embracing failure. Confidence arises from successfully meeting challenges and receiving feedback (Eraut, 2004), and self-efficacy develops on the basis of successful experiences (Bandura, 1982). By experiencing challenges, leaders are not only able to build a greater bank of 'if-then' scenarios about action to draw from and use in the future, they are also able to become stronger and more resilient with increasing confidence from surviving these experiences (Loader, 2010: 203). As experienced-based knowledge and self-efficacy increase over time, they are inextricably integrated with the development of one's self-concept as a learner and leader (Janson, 2008). This plays an important role in shaping and reinforcing identity as a leader throughout different career stages. Leaders make self-discoveries and

their feelings, images and thoughts - their self-concept - unifies with their actions (Shamir and Eilam, 2005; Wade, 1997).

The process of development of self-concept and identity includes self-learning. For Principals this can mean developing a tough exterior and finding a balance between humanness, whilst avoiding appearing unable to cope. This incorporates learning to manage their own emotions, coping with exhaustion, being able to relax, becoming more centred and developing self-belief and self-confidence. This entails:

- Arriving at certainty regarding what is needed to lead a school
- Developing the courage to take risks
- Developing awareness that one has the courage, sense of connectedness and perspective to motivate others to join them

(Crow, 2007; Weick, 1978)

As discussed, leaders are increasingly required to develop inter- and intra-personal intelligence as much as academic and practical knowledge (Cowan, 2007; Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee, 2002). Through experiences they need to develop inner resources and self-reliance, deepening their understanding of motivations, reflective practice and self-worth. In this tumultuous period of change and rapid learning, this is a major challenge for new leaders and even more so if, as Goleman, Boyatzis and McKee (2002) suggest, the emotional impact on a leader is almost never discussed in the workplace, let alone in the literature on leadership and performance.

Thus, it is evident that professional identity continues to be shaped by self-concept and experiences, both in the early stages of headship and beyond. Leaders are often expected to not show their emotions and Principals may project an image of how they think a leader should appear: rational objective and dispassionate (Loader, 2010: 199). This emotional regulation, or emotional labour, that school leaders face (Maxwell and Riley, 2017) can bring

challenges for the Principal. There is a need to better understand the mental models of school leaders, both the rational and non-rational elements (Leithwood, Begley and Cousins, 1994) and, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, emotions are an important part of learning, becoming and leading.

Conclusion

Our understanding of effective schools and leadership practice has developed in recent years and there is a limited but growing body of research on the competencies required for school leaders to be effective. However, there is even less research about how leaders learn through experience and reflection, and how they develop skills and dispositions at different stages of their career and in different contexts (Smylie et al., 2005). What research there is tends to focus on socialisation, which though a valuable lens, does not provide a complete picture.

Developing school leaders is important, not least because a Principal's job is complex and hard work and doing it well requires reserves of emotional and social intelligence. Principals learn in a range of ways including formal learning through professional qualifications and courses, by networking, mentoring, coaching, and from experience. Each has their relative merits suggesting the usefulness of a blended approach with any theoretical learning embedded into practice. School leaders appear to learn best through experience and reflection, and this includes leadership behaviours and dispositions; developing intra- and interpersonal skills throughout the process. It is through this experience and reflection and social participation that professional identity is shaped.

Chapter 4: Towards a Contextual and Conceptual Framework

Introduction

All information presented so far relates to research in national contexts or from comparative international research. This qualitative study aims to explore educational leadership from leaders' perspectives, but most importantly it does so in a severely under-researched context: international schools. In 1969, Leach (1969:15) pointed out that the then academic community had not yet 'become very much aware of the phenomenon known as the international school' and little appears to have changed in the last five decades. For Bunnell (2008: 416), international schools are 'still largely hidden and under-researched' and even more so in issues relating to leaders and leadership (Benson, 2011). If leadership is 'exquisitely sensitive' to context as Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach (1999: 4) suggest, this study is both timely and much needed and it seeks to explore the learning, leading and becoming of international school Principals.

Having discussed leadership, and leadership learning and development in the context of national systems, this chapter offers insights into international school leadership and demonstrates gaps in the knowledge base that this study seeks to fill. The chapter begins with an exploration of the history and background of international schools in order to describe the wider context for this research. It then focuses specifically on leaders and leadership in international schools. The unique context of Kuala Lumpur's international schools is then examined in order to further illuminate the context for this research. Finally, the chapter draws together emerging themes by proposing a conceptual framework for analysis.

History of international schools

The international school context is neither clearly defined nor conceptualised and is 'hopelessly vague and contestable' (Bunnell, 2016: 545) There has been some academic discussion (Hayden and Thompson, 2013; MacDonald,

2006) about what the collective term for international schools should be, namely a 'network,' 'system,' or 'sector.' Perhaps considering the 'for-profit' business status of many international schools, it can also be termed a 'market' or 'industry,' thus referencing the competition between schools for students or the competition between families for schools. For the purpose of this study, the collective term of 'sector' will be used in so far as international schools constitute 'an area that is distinct from others' (Oxford English Dictionary). The term 'network' will also be used but only in the context of networks formed by agreement for the purpose of collaboration or membership of specific organisations.

The rapid growth of the international school sector is often attributed to the process of globalisation (Cambridge and Thompson, 2004). According to Brummit and Keeling (2013), most international schools are 'for-profit' and most of these for-profit schools are located in Asia (MacDonald, 2006). Globalisation and the rapid growth of this sector can also be linked to the increase in workforce mobility and that of expatriate populations, particularly in the region of the Middle East and South-East Asia, which has led to increased demand for international schools (Bunnell, 2016).

In fact, the number of English-medium international schools has increased exponentially in the last decade to reach over 7,500 schools worldwide (ISC, 2015). The aforementioned globalisation has fuelled the growth and diversity of international schools (Spring, 2008) and this phase has been characterised as one of expansion, diversification, decentralisation, independence and exploration (Keller, 2015). Bunnell (2008: 419) argues that a second phase has begun in the last decade, characterised by restructuring, re-professionalising, refocusing and re-standardising, moving towards a 'more ordered, structured and outwardly professional worldwide system'. Although 'no agency has managed to unite it nor represent it' (Bunnell, 2016: 548) there has been the formation and further development of organisations, such as the Council of International Schools (CIS), international career pathways for

teachers and leaders, and qualifications such as the International Leadership and Management Program (ILMP), as well as a move to more universal standards through accreditation processes, such as CIS, British Schools Overseas (BSO) and the International School Quality Mark (ISQM).

Despite this growth, the notion of international education and its definition remain elusive. For Cambridge and Thompson (2004: 161), international education is an 'ambiguous term' with no commonly accepted definition of what it means to be an international school and some (see Murphy 2000) suggest we stop the quest for a common understanding and definition. What puts the 'international' in international education? Haywood (2002: 171) proposes two broad rationales: pragmatic and visionary. Pragmatic due to the student and teaching population being multinational and whose existence initially came in response to the demand to meet the educational needs of expatriate families away from their home countries. However, it would be a mistake to think that international schools are mainly attended by expatriate families, as approximately 80% of international school students come from host country families (Brummit, 2011), bringing perceived advantages to local families such as an international curriculum, bilingualism and an international mindset. The second the second rationale, visionary, is based around the fact that international schools offer an experience that promotes a broader worldview, cross-cultural understanding and international mindedness.

The ISC (2015) has a simple two-strand definition to identify international schools: the medium of instruction being different to the host nation and/or the curriculum offered being other than that of the host nation. Wickins (2013: 39), following a meta-analysis of literature, proposes five key characteristics of international schools:

- They have a **commitment to international mindedness** including the values of acceptance and tolerance
- They have an **International curriculum**

- They function **independently of national systems** meaning they have relatively high levels of freedom to develop
- They have a **diverse school community** formed by people from a variety of cultural backgrounds. The students and staff are not homogenous and are often transient, bringing an interesting mix of opportunity and challenge.
- **High expectations** are a cornerstone. This is certainly not unique to international schools but with the client base being either high-income local families or well-educated expatriate families, high expectations for examination success and access to elite universities worldwide are the unwritten rules of schooling.

Although Bunnell (2007: 352) argues international schools have 'no cohesive sense of unity', these five characteristics, together with the complex and dynamic relationships within them and their context, do make international schools distinctive.

International School Leadership and Leaders

We have noted that academic study of international education is predominantly in the field of comparative education and involves research into and across national systems (Bunnell, 2008: 415). However, such research into both successful leadership and leadership development has many emerging common themes across contexts. There is, therefore, a strong probability that this research also applies to international schools. However, the literature is lacking in terms of leadership in international schools and their specific context.

Leaders of international schools in Malaysia, as in other countries, are operating in a fast-growing, poorly-defined niche of the education sector (Brummit, 2011) and the existent research, sparse as it may be, appears to suggest a number of key dimensions that make this sector distinct (Haywood, 2002). Understanding and developing people is a core part of the

Principal's role and with this comes human resource issues of teacher recruitment, retention, training, motivation and building teams. In international schools, the staff, student and community turnover can have a destabilising effect when it is high (Blandford and Shaw, 2001: 14). For international schools in Malaysia, with over half the staff being non-Malaysian (ISC, 2015), this may add a uniquely international dimension with the additional complexity of expatriate concerns, overseas recruitment, induction and staff support during cross-cultural transition and beyond (see Dabic, González - Loureiro and Harvey, 2013; Hippler, Haslberger and Brewster, 2017).

This brings challenges for the Principals personally and also in their leadership. Although there is limited research in educational settings (see Roskell, 2013) there is considerable knowledge of such phenomena within the field of Human Resource Management (HRM). Culture shock is a common experience, 'widely recognised as a potentially distressing life changing event (Roskell, 2013: 155) that can manifest in myriad ways. Working in a new culture can bring with it confusion, uncertainty and frustration and has been attributed to between 20 and 30% of expatriate workers leaving their roles before reaching the end of their contract (Cooper, n.d.). Vance and Paik (2006: 209) suggest a five-stage process of cultural adjustment: being a tourist, culture shock, adjustment, performance improvement and finally international mastery. During this process considerable learning takes place and workers need cultural intelligence (Earley and Mosakowski, 2004) to adapt and learn, including a deep level of resourcefulness, resilience and self-efficacy (Cooper, n.d.). Even after successful adjustment a sense of isolation and insecurity may develop (Adams and Van de Vijver, 2015; Vance and Paik, 2006), perhaps due to a sense of loss (of friends, family and home) (Roskell, 2013) and lack of 'belonging' (Adams and Van de Vijver, 2015: 327).

The international school leader may need higher-level management and leadership skills that are context-specific in order to deal with such human resource issues. In addition, they need to be adept at navigating further

expatriate concerns (Haywood, 2002: 176), such as third culture kids¹ (TCK), family challenges from international moves, frequent parent absence and maid culture (RSAcademics, 2016), where families rely heavily on maids to run their household with a large role in raising children. Differing parental expectations can also bring challenges. There can, for example, be misunderstandings and disagreements between parents' beliefs about education and the aims and methods of a school (Blandford and Shaw, 2001).

Working with multinational, multilingual and multicultural communities is a reality of many schools in national contexts. However, an added dimension for international school leaders is that they often deal with these features when they, and their staff and students are transient, and outside their home country. Building and leading a vision and a community with an average teacher turnover of 18% (Mancuso, Roberts and White, 2010) may require new and heightened skills of teamwork and communication. Furthermore, the length of tenure of international Principals themselves is an average of 3.7 years (Benson, 2011) compared to 6 to 7 years for a UK Headteacher (NCSL, 2004). For Principals working in international schools it has 'always been a very precarious arena' (Bunnell, 2016: 551) as disagreements with school governors or owners can lead to short or curtailed contracts (RSAcademics, 2016). Littleford (1999: 33) goes as far as suggesting that 'too many international schools today are revolving doors for Heads'. Do international school leaders in Kuala Lumpur feel a sense of insecurity in their positions? How does this influence their leadership and sense of identity?

A further dimension peculiar to international schools is that, depending on their context, they can be subject to limited regulatory control in their host country. International schools are often 'islands' (Blandford and Shaw, 2001: 9) with no overarching international body or system (Blaney, 1991; Blyth, 2017). This

¹A Third Culture Kid (TCK) is a person who has spent a significant part of his or her developmental years outside their parents' culture. The TCK builds relationships to all the cultures while not having full ownership in any' (Van Reken, 2017)

may bring greater autonomy, for example, in curriculum choice. However, it can also create challenges (Wickins, 2013).

International leaders need methods of addressing these challenges of complexity, ambiguity and change (Haywood, 2002). Simkins (2005: 22) warns against failing to try to understand and make sense of such ambiguities and complexities, particularly those relating to the human context. Poore (2005: 351) highlights cultural differences and relationships as particular challenges in international school leadership. Caffyn (2007) draws attention to the micro-politics of international schools highlighting how the context often intensifies relationships, even going so far as to describe the environment as a psychic prison.

As seen, there is limited research into the qualities of successful educational leaders. However, the extant research does reveal the importance of emotional sensitivity, and intra- and interpersonal skills. For international school leaders, the most sought after competencies are communication skills, the ability to inspire, motivate and embrace diversity, together with interpersonal skills, approachability and humour (Roberts and Mancuso, 2014). In much-needed research into international school leadership in Asia and the Middle East, RSAcademics (2016) identify the need for leaders to possess cross-cultural competency, diplomacy, contextual intelligence, resilience, empathy, technical knowledge, integrity and courage, to meet the demands of the role.

It is interesting to note that although a managerial style of leadership is no longer popular and the models of learning-centred, authentic, transformational and distributed leadership are more in vogue, international school boards in Asia predominantly seek leaders with a managerial leadership style (Roberts and Mancuso, 2014). This is suggestive of 'power-centric Asian cultures' (Dimmock, 2012: 112) and as Walker (2004: 75) argues, 'the deep structures' which are reflective of cultural norms 'lurk unseen' and are 'resistant to

change.’ Cultural debates are ever present in international schools bringing challenges at every level, including one as fundamental as leadership styles.

International Schools in Malaysia and the Kuala Lumpur Context

In 2010, the Malaysian government launched its Economic Transformation Programme (ETP) with the goal of elevating the country to developed nation status by 2020. Malaysia has the aim of becoming a high-income nation by 2020 and, as part of its ETP, the government is promoting the development of international schools in a bid to attract multinational companies by providing education for the children of expatriate workers (ETP, 2017). The government had the target of 87 international schools by 2020, but this target had been surpassed by 2012 (Johnstone, 2014). Furthermore, this growth is continuing, with the number of international schools in Malaysia having increased by 39% between 2011 and 2015 (ISC, 2015).

Additionally, the number of Malaysian students attending international schools in Malaysia is rising. Up to 2006, it was almost impossible for Malaysian students to attend international schools due to government legislation prohibiting their enrolment (Johnstone, 2014). However, in 2006, the government introduced new legislation permitting international schools to enrol Malaysian citizens up to a limit of 40% of the total roll (Johnstone, 2014). Subsequently, in 2012, it removed this limit thereby allowing international schools to enrol as many local students as they wished (MoE, 2012). In contrast to the 80% of students in international schools coming from host nations according to Brummit (2011), locals only account for slightly more than half the total enrolment at Malaysia’s international schools although this figure is rising (ISC, 2015). International schools in Malaysia now offer an education to both expatriate children and those from local aspirational and high-income families who are seeking what they consider to be the best possible education for their children.

According to Tee (2016: 44), there are four school systems in Malaysia. Firstly, there is the government system, which follows a Malaysian curriculum through the medium of Bahasa Malaysia, Malaysia's national language. There is a heavy emphasis on examinations, ending with the Malaysian Certificate of Education (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia - SPM). Prior to 2012, English was the language of instruction for many subjects and the reintroduction of Bahasa Malaysia is one of the core reasons for wealthy Malaysian families increasingly choosing international schools, to give their children the best possible advantage (Gaskell, 2016: 18). The second school system is private schools. These schools are the same as the government system in terms of curriculum. However, they have better facilities, smaller class sizes, charge tuition fees and increasingly use English as the medium of instruction. The third system is vernacular. These schools are non-Malay schools and are either Chinese or Tamil schools, reflecting the cultural diversity of Malaysia. The fourth system is that of international schools; the first international school in Malaysia opened in 1946 to serve a need for expatriate schooling (Johnstone, 2014) and many more followed over the next few decades, opening for the same 'pragmatic' reasons.

There are 143 international school campuses in Malaysia with 59 in the metropolitan area of Kuala Lumpur (ISC, 2015) and more due to open in the next few years. Malaysia's context is specific with UK-based curricula being the most prevalent, rather than International Baccalaureate (IB) programmes. This is in part could be due to the historical links between Malaysia and the United Kingdom. The dominant regional associations are the East Asian Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS) and the Federation of British International Schools in Asia (FOBISIA). Within Malaysia itself, there is the Association of International Malaysian Schools (AIMS). We can therefore consider international schools in Malaysia and indeed Kuala Lumpur as a significant sector.

All international schools in Malaysia must register with the Ministry of Education and are granted a licence to operate. They are not governed by the 1996 Education Act but are subject to supervision by the Ministry of Education through its Private Education Division and are inspected once every two to three years (MoE, 2017). All teachers must hold a relevant degree and a teaching permit, issued by the Ministry of Education. Regarding curricula, the mandatory subjects are Pendidikan Moral (moral studies) for all students, Bahasa Malaysia language and history curriculum for all Malaysian students; and Agama (Religious Studies) for all Muslim students (MoE, 2012).

In addition to a Ministry of Education inspection, many schools opt to be inspected or accredited by additional external bodies. The dominant accreditation bodies in Malaysia are the Council of International Schools (CIS), the Western Association of Schools and Colleges (WASC) and British Schools Overseas (BSO). Often the Malaysian Ministry of Education's Inspection framework runs counter to the values and principles of international education and to those of these international accreditation bodies, generating challenges and complexities. For example, the BSO inspection standards require British values such as appreciation and understanding of LGBT rights, something that is illegal in Malaysia.

Within this sector of international schools in Kuala Lumpur there exist tensions and dynamics (all schools have to operate within Malaysia's legal, political and economic framework) as well as hierarchies. The majority of schools in Kuala Lumpur are profit-making and there can be an inherent conflict of interest between providing a quality education and making a profit (RSAcademics, 2016: 30). Furthermore, Johnstone (2014:18) reports fierce competition between international schools in Kuala Lumpur over enrolment.

The ISC (2015) identifies tiers of schools including mid-range and premium, according to a number of factors and these hierarchies are acknowledged. Premium schools charge tuition fees that are significantly above average, are

almost always accredited by at least one recognised accreditation body and are usually members of at least one recognised regional or international association. Additionally, the secondary divisions of premium schools offer a recognised international programme and are authorised by international examination boards (ISC, 2015: 51) such as Cambridge International Examinations (CIE) or the International Baccalaureate Organisation (IBO). This research will explore leadership in premium schools whose student outcomes, including examination success and university entrance, contribute to the classification (further defined in Chapter 5) of a 'successful school'.

Conceptual Framework

According to Miles and Huberman (1994: 18), a conceptual framework explains either graphically or in narrative form the main dimensions of a study and the presumed relationship between them. The conceptual framework that guides this study has been developed from research into a wide range of contexts already presented, namely:

- Successful school leadership
- Leadership competencies
- Leadership learning
- Socialisation
- Identity formation
- International school leadership

There is little research into leadership in international schools in Malaysia, so a primary aim of this study is to illuminate this phenomenon, seeking similarities and differences between Principals' experiences in Kuala Lumpur and what is suggested by existing literature. Dimmock (2012) suggests that leadership research needs to move from the *what* to the *how* and this study does just that. In other words, it will explore the experience of leading and learning in international schools and *how* leaders enact their leadership and approach their learning. Furthermore, it seeks to understand these experiences and in

order to do this I am interested in the interplay between the concepts of learning, becoming and leading. The following figure provides the initial framework through which to conceptualise and examine this interplay.



Figure 4.1 Initial framework to explore learning, becoming and leading

It is only by examining these three interrelated concepts that we can really understand the challenges and issues Principals face in developing their leadership skills and taking action in international schools. Using an analytical frame based on the interrelationships of leading, learning and becoming (the process by which the development of self-concept and professional identity can be understood) will tease out the complex art of international school leadership and in doing so we will begin to understand the person in the Principal's office.

Chapter 5: Research Design and Methodology

Introduction

This chapter is devoted to describing, explaining and justifying my research design. It begins by looking at the philosophical and epistemological foundations of the research, arguing that an interpretative and qualitative approach is most suited to my research focus, namely the experiences of leading and learning in an international school setting, and the interplay between the concepts of learning, becoming and leading. It is argued that it is only by examining these three interrelated concepts that we can really understand the challenges and issues Principals face when developing their professional identity and leadership skills and when taking action in international schools.

Secondly, this chapter explains the choices made at each stage of my research design - a design rooted in phenomenology, influenced by life history and narrative enquiry, and written within a broadly constructivist framework. The methodology and the primary research tool of semi-structured interviews will also be explored, including the process undertaken to develop the questions and topic guide. I then consider the data generation process, its challenges and how they were overcome. The chapter concludes with two final sections which focus on data analysis and interpretation, and how ethical issues were dealt with throughout the research process.

Philosophical and Epistemological Approach

Philosophical and epistemological foundations must reflect the intentions of the research, the interests of the researcher and the research questions. My aim was to develop an in-depth understanding of a particular context: how school leaders understand and make sense of their experiences of leading, learning and becoming. One could adopt a quantitative, positivist approach grounded in scientific method since this is said to allow for the identification of patterns and the production of generalisations - the *what* and the *when*. Coleman and

Lumby (1999) and Bryman (2008) show that a quantitative methodology offers many qualities for both social and educational research. It follows a linear approach and can produce hard and objective data, and lead to a hypothesis that can be tested and proven. Its methods strongly emphasise reliability and validity, leading to the ability to generalise and replicate.

However, it cannot develop insights into the narratives of Principals - the *how* and the *why* - and how they present and make sense of their experiences. It thus became clear that an interpretive, qualitative approach which seeks answers to questions that stress how social experience is both created and given meaning (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008) was a more fitting vehicle for this research. The purpose of such an approach is not to measure how often patterns occur, but to enable deep enquiry and rich descriptions of the experiences of individual school leaders, engaging them in a process of reflection and dialogue. Moreover, the key concern of qualitative research is to develop 'an understanding of the way in which the individual creates, modifies and interprets the world in which he or she finds himself or herself' (Cohen and Manion, 1994: 8). 'It is not concerned with generalisation, prediction and control but with interpretation, meaning and illumination' (Usher, 1996:18). The epistemology needs to enable deep inquiry and support these aims; this research therefore employs a qualitative, constructivist approach, which supports interpretivist, phenomenological, and narrative enquiry theoretical perspectives.

Qualitative research is diverse: there are multiple types and the term is used in different ways in social and educational research. Bogden and Biklen (1998:3) searched for and proposed some common ground by identifying five features of qualitative research which are all reflected in this project:

- The research is naturalistic with the researcher as an observer collecting data from a specific context

- The data is largely descriptive and generated and analysed in a careful, rich and thoughtful way
- The research focus is on process rather than an outcome - the how and the why of leading and learning
- Theory is inductive as it is grounded in and emerges from the data
- The concern is with meaning and developing an understanding of experiences from the leader's perspective

Through the research I attempted to understand the experience of school Principals - their practice and learning - from their own perspective, and identify and construct meaning. When a research problem requires a profound understanding of human experience common to a group of people, a phenomenological approach is suggested (Creswell, 2013). This research is, therefore, rooted in phenomenology, the purpose of which, according to Lichtman (2011: 242), is to 'achieve a deeper understanding of the nature and meaning of everyday experience.'

The core purpose of a phenomenological study is to understand the lived experience of participants and how they make sense of their experiences. The researcher identifies the phenomenon, generates data and goes on to develop both an understanding of individuals' experiences, identifying meaning into common themes, and to develop an understanding of the essence of the experience for all of the individuals (Bryman, 2008; Creswell and Poth, 2017; Van der Mescht, 2004).

According to Creswell and Poth (2017: 76) phenomenology has a number of key features, which guide this research's design. First, there is a keen emphasis on the phenomenon to be explored, which is phrased in terms of a clear concept or idea and the goal of my research was to explore the three separate but interrelated concepts of **learning**, **becoming** and **leading**. The research itself focused on the practice of leadership and learning, notably the nature of the leadership role in successful international schools, the knowledge

required to fulfil it and how a diverse group of school leaders make sense of their role and experiences. How do these leaders learn and develop their identity through leading, and what are the relationships between learning, leading and becoming?

Further features of phenomenology include the exploration with a group of participants who have experienced the phenomenon (in this research twelve Principals of premium international schools in Kuala Lumpur) through semi – structured interviews. It is also common for the researcher to ‘bracket him or herself out’ (Creswell and Poth, 2017: 77) by identifying personal experiences with the phenomenon enabling a focus on the experiences of the participants.

Finally, data analysis and writing leads to detailed description, which honours the voices of participants until a holistic picture of the issues emerge that discusses the ‘essence’ (Creswell and Poth, 2017: 77) of the phenomenon. In this thesis, Chapters 6 to 8 adopt this approach; capturing the lived experience of the Principals using rich thick description and ad verbatim (Creswell, 2013) quotes through the Principals’ voices in Chapter 6 moving to identify common themes and a holistic sense of the phenomena in Chapters 7 and 8.

Phenomenology is not only description but it is also an interpretive process thus emphasising the constructionist ontological and the interpretivist epistemological foundations of this research. It is assumed that social phenomena are not only produced through social interaction but that they are in a constant state of revision and change. People make meaning from their social reality and act on the basis of these meanings (Bryman, 2008) and the participants reflect and draw meaning from their experiences, learn, develop and change.

The final theoretical influential perspectives in this research are narrative enquiry and life history approaches. I am interested in how this group of Principals perceive and describe their experiences of leading and learning, and how their professional identity is developed. Narrative enquiry can help to

explain the complexities of social situations (Floyd, 2012: 223), such as interrelationships between leading, learning and becoming, as investigated in this study. As will be demonstrated later in this chapter, elements of a life history approach have been woven into interviews and subsequent analysis, as it 'emphasises the inner experience of individuals and its connections with changing events and phases throughout the life course' (Bryman, 2008: 695).

At this point, it is prudent to explicitly acknowledge that this research will follow a participatory research methodology. As a Principal of a leading British international school in Malaysia, I fulfil a similar role to participants and inhabit the same professional world. Accessibility to participants did not present any difficulty as I am known to many and in fact have 'privileged access to participants' (Drake, 2009: 85).

I am, however, both an insider and an outsider with all the potential benefits and pitfalls of each. As an insider I am doing a similar role within the same community, perhaps engendering credibility, but I am also an outsider, as I do not work in the same school as the participants. The latter means that I may not always be fully trusted. Le Gallais (2008: 148) explores insider / outsider research as a continuum. As a 'peer to the respondents' Le Gallais (2008: 153) proposes that the researcher has 'the potential for achieving in-depth empathetic access to and interpretation of data' but guards against 'over familiarity and researcher bias', advocating a fluidity in the research which 'should be embraced for the richness of the insights it offers'.

Unlike quantitative research with its emphasis on objectivity, qualitative research recognises its own subjectivity and the researcher's own perspective. Morrison (2012: 20) proposes that educational research must be conducted with, not on, people. The researcher is part of the research process, rather than separate to it; they are involved in a 'continual process of meaning construction in order to understand' (Morrison, 2012: 19). This highly active engagement involves working through what Mason (2002) calls an 'intellectual

puzzle', investigating and understanding experiences, editing, developing, revisiting - an iterative process with the researcher as 'bricoleur' or 'quiltmaker' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008), interpreting and making sense of data. In fact, Carr (1995: 98) argues that the researcher's voice is an inescapable part of educational research.

This research therefore requires a critical stance (Grogan and Cleaver-Simmons, 2012: 30), with the researcher being conscious at all times of the relationship with the researched, an acknowledgement of the researcher's belief system and the acceptance that subjectivity is welcomed. I accept that it is difficult to be neutral and Drake (2009) argues that it is in fact impossible for a researcher to take a neutral position in the political context of doctoral insider research. The bricoleur recognises that research is an interactive process shaped by his or her own biography, gender, race and class (Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Grogan and Cleaver Simmons, 2012) and a continuous reflexive approach was pursued at all stages of research: confronting, questioning and challenging assumptions, and intentionally seeking to examine this rather than aspiring to be neutral. This began with making explicit my own experiences of learning, becoming and leading, not only because my voice is an undeniable part of the research, but also because my interest grew from those experiences. The sharing of my story (see Appendix 1: Reflection) lays bare the experiences that have shaped me as a person and some of the filters through which I may view actions. The writing of the story, as Danzig (2006) suggests, enabled me to develop a greater understanding of my own journey and allows me and the reader to better judge the extent to which these experiences may have influenced this research. Also relevant is the reciprocal nature between the researcher and the research experience, described by Trahar (2006) and there is congruence between her learning and mine:

My research grew out of my experiences as a practitioner, and the process of being in the midst of my research raises questions for my practice ... I am coming to believe that it is only through dialogue about

difference and similarity that we can learn from and about each other (Trahar, 2006: 217)

Qualitative research of this nature is a collaborative effort; learning and narratives do not simply end but continue. The researcher's voice is important and is an integral part of an in-depth reflexive approach.

Research Design

To reflect the phenomenological and narrative qualitative approaches discussed in the previous section, appropriate data collection and analysis methods were chosen. Face-to-face, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were selected as the research tool in order to understand 'the lived experience of other people, and the meaning they make of that experience' (Seidman, 2006: 9). The life history approach is usually achieved through a one-to-one interview process (Goodson and Sikes, 2001).

Initially, I had planned a two-phase approach to my research, the first being one-to-one interviews with Principals to explore their experiences of leading and learning and the second phase being a conference with the research participants to stimulate discussion, develop the analysis, contrast meaning and strengthen validity. School leaders have much experience and knowledge to share, but few opportunities to do so. The aim of the conference was to initiate an experimental and discursive process. Frost (2007: 187) posits that 'we need to build a climate in which practitioners can collaborate to raise questions about practice, experiment with better practice, evaluate practice and develop practice' and the aim of the conference was to facilitate this discourse which I suggest is especially necessary in the international school setting as there are fewer networks, formalised or system-based regulation or support, such as government and Local Education Authorities (LEA). However, it became increasingly apparent that this was beyond the initial focus of the research problem. An alternative method of strengthening the research's validity was conceived and will be discussed later.

In terms of the sampling strategy adopted, purposive sampling, common in qualitative research (Coleman, 2012: 259), was chosen. There were two levels of sampling in operation: the sampling of schools and the sampling of participants. For the former, a list of English-medium international schools in the Kuala Lumpur metropolitan region was gathered from the 59 international schools in operation. Based on this study's aims and empirical foundation, a process of selection from this list followed to identify 'successful schools'. The criteria used included being a 'premium school' according to ISC (2015), which has criteria such as fee level, accreditation by external international bodies, belonging to recognised educational organisations, such as FOBISIA, and being a registered centre for international examinations; together with high enrolment and strong examination results.

From this initial investigation, a list of nine schools emerged, ranging from an institution with seventy years of educational history and two that had been in operation for less than three years. All nine schools proclaim the international nature of their curriculum, student and staff demographic, together with examination and inspection success. The two schools that had been in operation for less than three years were excluded due to limited evidence of meeting all the criteria set for selection, namely examination results and high enrolment. In addition, they are very different contexts as they were still classed as being in the 'start-up' stage. Seven schools were therefore selected and all are members of the organisation AIMS. This led to what was considered a balanced sample, providing useful and meaningful empirical contexts and scenarios (Mason, 2002: 121) and experiences that could be analysed and compared, but in which heterogeneity was also present.

Each sample school is an all-through school (Years 1-13), meaning they cover the educational stages from Primary - in some cases including Early Years - through to Secondary. However, the sampling of participants was rendered somewhat problematic by certain inconsistencies in the sample schools, such

as differences in the leadership structures and nomenclature. In some, the leader of the whole school is called the Head of School or Headteacher, with the Heads of Section named Primary Principal and Secondary Principal. In others the titles are reversed, with the leader of the whole school entitled Principal, and the Heads of Section with the titles Head of Primary and Secondary.

Not only are the titles different, but the roles differ too. In the more established larger schools, the role of the leader of the whole school has limited involvement in the day-to-day leadership and management of the school; this rests with the leaders of the Primary and Secondary schools. Their roles are predominantly strategic, working with external bodies and governors for the long-term future sustainability of the school. The perspectives of leaders in these positions are very different with limited involvement in the 'bread and butter' of schools: teaching and learning. It was decided to offer interviews to leaders - whole school, secondary or primary - with a direct responsibility for learning and teaching in the identified schools. For the purpose of this study, the nomenclature used will be Principal and its definition: a school leader with a direct responsibility for learning and teaching.

This second level sampling provided a definitive list of seventeen 'Principals' as previously defined. It proved difficult to contact two Principals from one school, but I contacted fifteen Principals and invited them to participate in this study, fully explaining the purpose of my research and their requested involvement. The invitation email can be found in Appendix 2 and the information provided for participants in Appendix 3. I received an almost immediate response from six Principals, agreeing to participate in my research. Two Principals apologetically declined - one due to a family emergency and the second due to time pressures. Further to a follow-up email sent a week later, the remaining seven Principals agreed to participate. Unfortunately, one interview did not take place due to the Principal having a medical emergency on the interview day, meaning I interviewed twelve

Principals between April and June 2016. The range and number of their voices gave the research sufficient depth and diversity, and opportunity for nuance.

The following figure details the participants and schools (using pseudonyms), giving background data about role, gender, nationality and time in post.

School	Leader	Position	Gender	Nationality	Years in post
Kuala Lumpur International School (NFP)	Helen	Head of Primary	F	UK	5
Lake View School (FP)	Karen	Principal	F	UK	4
Lake View School (FP)	Richard	Head of Secondary	M	UK	1
Lake View School (FP)	Neil	Head of Primary	M	UK	9
Arch International School (FP)	Josh	Principal	M	US	1
Arch International School (FP)	Maria	Head of Secondary	F	UK	3
Arch International School (FP)	Mark	Head of Primary	M	UK	1
Malaysia International School (NFP)	Jim	Head of Middle School	M	CAN	9
Horizon International School (FP)	Paul	Head of Primary	M	UK	4
Horizon International School (FP)	Frank	Principal	M	UK	5
Horizon International School (FP)	Emily	Head of Secondary	F	UK	3
St. George's School (FP)	Graham	Head of Secondary	M	UK	3

*NFP Not-for-profit

*FP For profit

Figure 5.1 List of participant schools with background data of interviewees

Two thirds of the participants were men, with the majority from the United Kingdom. The average age of participants was 45, with the youngest being 40 and the oldest 53. Seven participants were in their first principalship, with the

minimum amount of time in post being one year and the maximum nine years; the average was four years.

Methods and Data Generation

There are many arguments for using interviews as part of qualitative research, such as their ability to encourage participants to describe their world on their own terms. They also provide rich, meaningful data and are adaptable to the personality and circumstances of the interviewee (Johnson, 1994: 45).

As a result of a thorough review of the literature on the three core concepts in my research (learning, becoming and leading), together with a careful literature review of qualitative methodology in educational leadership and social science, and my research questions, the interview guide was developed. Throughout this review I made considerable notes to guide my thinking and question formation, and devised an initial interview guide (see Appendix 4) which simply divided the interview into two parts: the first focusing on demographic data and establishing rapport; the second comprising a series of questions.

In order to evaluate the relevance, clarity and manageability of the proposed interview questions, a pilot interview was carried out as suggested by Berg (2001) and Coleman (2012). A Principal outside of the sample participants agreed to be interviewed by me and to provide feedback on the interview process itself and, subsequently, the transcription of responses. This led to the identification of several flaws in the design and proposed sequence of questions. The pilot interview exposed an additional design flaw: it lasted in excess of the maximum stated possible time of 90 minutes. Some questions were repetitive and did not elicit any new information and were therefore eliminated. It was also clear that I was asking too many questions, so I developed umbrella questions with further probing questions underneath (Mason, 2002) for use when needed. Other amendments are discussed in detail below. I was, however, pleased to note that the interview yielded much rich and useful data despite its inadequacies.

Following the pilot interview, I undertook a further review of the literature on the craft of qualitative interviewing and applied this additional knowledge in devising the revised topic guide. If knowledge is situational and the interview is a social interaction, interviews need to draw upon the social experiences. Questions that are situational and focused on the lived experience, rather than abstract, need to be asked (Mason, 2002: 64). I therefore ensured there were clear questions that focussed on experiences. Because narrative, or storytelling, is such an effective tool for reflection (Cunliffe, 2002), I included questions and requests for stories to exemplify situations. By encouraging participants to share stories of their journey to leadership and their current experiences, I envisaged being able to better analyse data to inform the key research question of identity formation and its relationship with the practice of leading and learning.

Also, as a result of the pilot, the questions were revised to eliminate those that were vague or elicited irrelevant or repeated information and there was a major revision of the structure to enable better flow during the interview and subsequent analysis. Mason (2002: 67) emphasises that 'interviewers have to work hard on the structure and flow of the interview', which was evident from the pilot. In view of these new considerations, to enable 'flow' and facilitate analysis through the study's conceptual framework, the revised interview guide (see Appendix 5) was divided into five clear sections:

- Personal information and the journey to headship
- Qualifications and training (professional socialisation)
- The role of the international school principal
- Learning and organisation socialisation
- The inner leader and personal socialisation

This change facilitated a more guided conversational approach to the interview, which Burgess (1984: 22) describes as 'conversations with a purpose'.

In preparation for the interviews and as part of the invitation to participate, clear information about the research aims was provided, together with an opportunity to ask questions or seek clarification. One participant asked about the kinds of questions to be explored and was sent the headings listed above with a few example questions. No participant expressed confusion or concern about the interview. One participant was well known to the researcher, so professional trust was particularly strong with this participant. They, in turn, were extremely forthcoming in their responses.

For both the participants and the researcher, it was a busy time of year and it unsurprisingly proved challenging to find convenient interview times. Nine interviews were arranged to take place during the working day and three in the evening, although six interviews had to be rearranged due to changes in work schedules, including one interview which was rescheduled on three occasions. All interviews took place at the participants' schools since the most convenient time and location was offered to them. This enabled the participants to feel comfortable and at ease, and provided the opportunity for the researcher to observe the school setting, albeit in a limited capacity (Coleman, 2012).

The interviewee was put at ease with a brief overview of the research and I provided some information about myself. This was often in response to questions posed by the interviewee about the research itself and my own position. Following the exposition of the research outline, the consent form (see Appendix 6) was shared in writing and explained verbally, and time was given to read, ask questions and complete it. I made clear that the interview would be recorded using a phone recording App, so that it could later be transcribed, and that notes would also be taken during the interview. Participants were reassured that, although their words may be quoted in the

thesis, neither their own nor their school's name would be used. No concerns were expressed by anyone at this point. The participants appeared to understand the research aims and the qualitative research framework. All expressed an interest in the research topic and post-graduate study.

As previously discussed, the interview was semi-structured and divided into five thematic sections with open questions, biographical and narrative themes. With the research questions clearly in mind throughout the interviews, the order of the sections was for the most part consistent in all interviews. However, the headings did allow a fluid and flexible structure, enabling the interviewee not only to respond but also to shape the conversation. Bush (2012b: 79) posits that in qualitative interviewing, what the participants want to say often becomes as important as what the interviewer wishes to ask. Some themes were explored in more depth in some interviews as they arose and were clearly important to the interviewee, such as challenging relationships with staff and demonstrating knowledge about learning and teaching.

As stated by Fontana and Frey (2008: 119), 'interviews are not neutral tools of data gathering'; meanings and understandings are created in an interaction leading to negotiated, co-constructed, contextually-based data and qualitative researchers stress the importance of building rapport (Coleman, 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2008; Mason, 2002; Fontana and Frey, 2008). For Oakley (1981: 49), 'there is no intimacy without reciprocity', which echoes the idea that interviews become a 'methodology of friendship' (Kong, Mahoney and Plummer, 2002: 254). As a fellow practising Principal, I was often asked about my experiences and perspectives; when asked, I willingly and actively engaged in discussion. Such questions were often asked when the participant was intrigued by a question I had asked, or they had not reflected on a particular experience. There was often considerable reflection on the part of the Principals during the interview together with co-construction of data.

Kvale (2007: 81 - 82) proposes some important characteristics and abilities for successful qualitative interviewing: sensitivity, gentleness, good listening skills, ability to steer the interview and to exercise critical judgement, to remember what has been said and link areas together to support flow. I kept these characteristics in mind at all times and developed strategies, such as taking notes without interruption, so that social interactions could be recorded (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000) and also so 'respondent antecedents' (Johnson, 1994: 48) could be used to return to at a later time, thus ensuring flow. In addition, non-verbal and verbal probing was used, such as 'tell me more', 'mm' or simply an encouraging glance or nod. This also reassured the interviewee that I was interested and fully listening.

Floyd (2012: 231) reminds us that in interviews, especially from a life history perspective, the 'story is still being lived' before, during and after the interview has taken place. In developing the research framework and questions, and considering ethics, it was initially thought that the interviews would be quite transactional in nature with little potential for sensitive material. From the first interview, it became clear that this was not going to be the case. The participants had emotional and at times difficult and distressing stories to tell, and I became mindful of what Clandinin and Connelly (2000: 63) term 'being in the midst'. I subsequently reflected and further developed strategies such as note taking during and after each interview to record not just what was being said but also how, ensuring each interview was conducted with integrity, sensitivity and an 'empathetic' approach (Bogden and Biklen, 1998; Fontana and Frey, 2008)

Coleman (2012: 260) highlights the fact that the interviewer is not a 'neutral force'. Factors, such as gender, age, ethnicity and status are relevant in the interaction. If the interviewee and interviewer are of a similar age, status and gender, this may encourage greater rapport and improve the quality of the interview or elicit enhanced information (Coleman, 2012:254). In the four

interviews with female Principals, gender in educational leadership was raised by participants and subsequently became a lens for analysis.

The interviews varied in length and style. The shortest interview was just under 60 minutes due to a last-minute change in the participant's schedule and the longest was 100 minutes. However, most were between 60 and 75 minutes and all were recorded and subsequently transcribed. The transcribed interviews amounted to 363 pages. Some participants took a reflective and evaluative approach, many commenting during and after the interview that the questions were interesting and thought-provoking, encouraging reflection and drawing together themes they had not previously considered to be interrelated. Other participants were more concerned with sharing experiences, perspective and opinions and seemed more comfortable with this stance even after probing and follow up questions had been asked. All interviews were conducted in a positive and collegial atmosphere and ended warmly with the interviewee being thanked for their time. Participants were also reminded at this point that they would receive the transcript of their interview for further comment, clarification or addition, a practice advocated by Scott and Morrison (2006) to limit interviewer bias and increase trustworthiness. I felt privileged and humbled that such busy and important school leaders were so generous with their time and were so open and forthcoming in their participation and responses.

I transcribed the first of the twelve interviews myself, but decided to change this approach for the remaining interviews. As such, the second to twelfth interviews were converted into Word document transcripts using a transcription service based in England. It was decided to use a service based outside of Kuala Lumpur for language and confidentiality reasons. The transcriber signed a non-disclosure agreement (see Appendix 7) to ensure confidentiality. On receipt of the transcriptions, I read through each one checking for accuracy and made minor amendments in cases such as names of conferences or organisations, and then listened to each recording twice whilst reading the

transcript. The transcripts were then returned to each participant inviting further comments and all identifying names and features were removed and replaced with pseudonyms for my saved copies. Eight participants responded to the returned transcripts: seven simply commented that they were happy with both content and tone, and one was returned with very minor corrections.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

As a relative newcomer to qualitative research, this stage of the data management process was quite daunting. Breaking each stage of the process down into three stages, which I classified as initial, coding, and rebuilding and writing, I developed a range of tools and strategies to support my analysis and interpretation. These are explained below.

Initial Stage

I read each transcript twice whilst listening to the audio recording. As a result, I became very familiar with the data. Taken together with my field notes (taken during and immediately after each interview), I was also able to recall and note the non-verbal communication signals that occurred during the interview. I then carefully read each transcript again (Gerson and Horowitz, 2002: 216), making detailed notes on each interview. The resulting emerging common themes were coded as:

- Leadership
- Learning
- Relationships
- Context (including structure and organisational factors)

I made the decision to manually code rather than to use a computer-aided data analysis tool such as NVivo, following the advice of Saldaña (2016) who suggests that the resulting data can be overwhelming for first-time researchers and small-scale studies and can lead to a situation where 'mental energies may be more focused on the software than the data' (p.29). Furthermore, my

own preferred research style fits with Bazeley's (2013: 132) description of the researcher connecting through the 'tactile contact with paper' and sitting 'with data surrounding them - giving them a sense of physically handling and juggling the words or pictures as they tease out ideas contained in them and a sense of understanding the whole picture.'

Initially, I used post-it notes and colour-coded columns. New codes developed within the initial codes, such as 'lack of support' within the theme of context and 'emotional intelligence' within that of leading; a process described by Dimmock and Lam (2012) as 'fracturing.' A degree of analysis began in this initial stage, as I was looking for links and explanations. For example, there were emerging themes of building strong relationships, a duty of care and the expat bubble. I began using a journal to record my thinking since writing 'often provides sharp, sunlit moments of clarity or insight - little conceptual epiphanies' (Miles and Huberman, 1994: 74). This was certainly the case as I questioned the data arising from the initial themes, and noted relationships, for example, between learning through challenges and building self-confidence, and emotional intelligence and its links with leading and learning.

After this initial thematic coding, I began what Bazeley (2013: 106) terms 'purposeful play' in order to connect to and reflect on the data. I undertook three activities. First, I created a profile for each person to better understand them as individual participants (see Appendix 8). This process also facilitated further thematic coding and encouraged questions about leadership styles and philosophies. The second activity was to 'scribble and doodle' (Bazeley, 2013: 109) on the transcripts underlining important parts and drawing lines to connect ideas. This again, served to more deeply connect with the data, zooming in on individual participants through the scribbling and doodling but also enabling me to zoom out through my questions and my thoughts in the research journal. Thirdly, in order to 'kick start' my analysis (Silverman, 2000: 135), I selected for investigation the emerging puzzle of staff turnover and its impact on leadership, recruitment and retention.

Spending considerable time on this initial stage served me well as moving into the second stage I felt I knew the data well, facilitating further analysis and interpretation.

Coding Stage

The initial thematic coding had begun in the first stage and my first step was to carefully and systematically thematically code in the left-hand margin of each transcript. In addition, I colour-coded sections of each transcript according to the previously mentioned four main headings. This facilitated reading and speedy location of data.

The second step of this stage was to choose further coding strategies and implement them. I selected 'in vivo' coding because, as Saldaña (2016: 106) posits, it is particularly effective for a beginning qualitative researcher who is 'learning how to code data and studies that prioritize and honor the participants'. This coding was carried out in the right-hand margin together with 'emotion coding' which, according to Saldaña (2016: 125), is particularly appropriate for studies that 'explore intrapersonal and interpersonal participant experiences and actions, especially in matters of social relationship reasoning, decision-making and judgment'. Coding in this way enabled breaking open the data and from this I organised the codes into a hierarchical system of categories and subcategories. This often led to reviewing the coded data to determine where the code belonged and through this process I was increasingly able to find connections. With the thematic, in vivo and emotion coding, together with the aid of journaling, I was able to begin to establish some relationships between code categories and the 'significance of such relationships for the development of theoretical conceptions' (Gibson and Brown, 2009: 138). This then led to building thematic understanding, which is critical in a phenomenological approach in order to 'identify the essence' (Bazeley, 2013: 193).

Rebuilding and writing stage

Whilst the initial stage was exciting and the coding stage became somewhat mechanical, this third stage was at times overwhelming and frustrating as I grappled with the concept of writing as analysis and the repetitive cycle required. I began drafting the findings chapters around learning, becoming and leading. In order to analyse the influence and impact of the Kuala Lumpur context, I created three categories: the human, social and organisational dimensions. Throughout the process of writing I was analysing and continually questioning and interpreting the data - comparing and contrasting, creating vignettes, and connecting ideas. I am a very visual thinker and learner and throughout the analysis and interpretation process I constantly doodled and created diagrams and other visual tools to support theory building.

I explored various pictorial representations of the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading in order to show and understand the way in which they constantly interact with each other. This drew me towards exploring the idea of a double helix (Figure 5.2) as a means to demonstrate the way that learning and leading are interwoven, with a central core representing the Principal becoming and the leadership and learning journey moving from left to right.



Figure 5.2 Evolving conceptual model of the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading

However, this still did not serve to encapsulate the concepts as an important part of this study is to explore the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading, together with the context and the continual and progressive development involved. This process of diagramming continued throughout the iterative process of analysis and writing until the final model was created (see Chapter 7).

Ethical Considerations

This research was undertaken with ethical issues very much in mind at each stage of the research journey. It was of paramount importance for me to be cognisant of the ethical consideration of both social and educational research. After careful reading of the ethical guidelines of the Social Research Association (SRA), British Sociological Association (BSA), British Educational Research Association (BERA) and the Economic and Social Research Council's Research Ethics Framework (ESRCREF), it was clear that there are many points in common. As such the following five core ethical principles, adapted from these documents were adhered to:

1. Harm to participants must be avoided or minimised
2. Involvement of participants must be voluntary with participants fully informed about purpose, methods and use of research, and respectful of autonomy
3. Privacy of participants must be respected and confidentiality and anonymity preserved
4. Research must be high quality
5. Research should offer reciprocity

(Adapted from BERA, 2011; BSA, 2002; ESRC, 2015; SRA, 2003)

Furthermore, as part of my research design and planning, I went through the University of Leicester ethical approval process, receiving feedback that helped guide my thinking together with approval for my research (see Appendix 9). Ethical issues did arise throughout the research process and in

this section I explore how, at each stage of the journey, the ethical principles identified above were upheld.

Planning and Design

The research was designed in such a way as to ensure its integrity and quality, employing methods that were 'fit for the purpose' of the research (BERA, 2011: 9). As described previously in this chapter, careful thought was given to the underlying epistemological foundations, of a qualitative approach within an interpretive paradigm, influenced by phenomenology, life history and narrative enquiry, in order to achieve a deep and rich understanding of the lived experience of international school Principals.

Access, Consent and Privacy

As a serving Principal of a British international school in Malaysia, I have an understanding of the educational landscape and was known to many of the participants and in many ways I was viewed as an insider. However, I only have a close professional relationship with one participant and therefore did not assume that access would be easily secured. I wrote to each proposed participant during the early stages of planning. The information provided for potential participants was clear and comprehensive (see Appendix 3).

By providing this information at the outset, participants were able to make an informed decision about their participation (Bryman, 2008) and there were very few questions asked before agreeing to participate. Participants were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix 6) which informed them, as recommended by Bryman (2008: 122), that:

- Participation is voluntary
- They are able to refuse to answer any questions
- They are able to withdraw from the process at any time
- They are able to withdraw their data within a specified timeframe

The British Sociological Association states 'participants should understand how far they will be afforded anonymity and confidentiality' (BSA, 2002: 3). This was provided and explained through two measures:

1. The research is for a doctoral dissertation and is an academic piece of research and not designed to be widely distributed
2. The schools and principals' stories were described, but schools' and principals' names were not revealed and pseudonyms were used.

Pseudonyms protect anonymity of individuals yet enable the preservation of the detail of their narrative stories. It must be recognised, however, that the data generated from interviews is at times highly contextual and as such could possibly be attributed to a particular person or school with this small, well-informed group of Principals and therefore it was challenging to ensure full confidentiality despite all possible steps being taken.

Ethical Fieldwork

Consideration was given to where the interviews took place to facilitate not only confidentiality and trust but also comfort and individual Principals guided the choice of location on every occasion. Each interview was recorded and transcribed with all identifying information removed. For the interviews not transcribed by the researcher, the transcriber was required to sign a non-disclosure agreement agreeing to conform to the Data Protection Act.

I was alert to the potential ethical issues of interviews. First, the power relations of the interview interaction were considered. In most cases it is assumed that the power balance will sit with the interviewer, as they set the agenda and control the data (Mason, 2002: 80). However, the approach I took was to develop ownership, engagement and sharing of experiences. I ensured that I was active, aware and reflective throughout the process, giving full attention to the voices of the interviewee (Fontana and Frey, 2008:123).

Furthermore, a participant might agree to an interview but still feel pressurised during the process to respond to a question or feel guided into an area in which they are uncomfortable. I explained this clearly in the information provided pre-interview, and also at the beginning of the interview. Two participants when describing particularly challenging situations, were quite overcome with emotion and asked for the recording to be temporarily paused. The interview only continued when they felt able to do so and they continued to respond to the question or stimulus willingly and without concern. Three participants sought confirmation about anonymity before responding to questions that included sensitive information in their examples. By developing rapport and approaching the interviews with sensitivity and care, any issues that did arise were handled appropriately and where interviews moved into unexpected areas, participants were given every opportunity to decline to make a contribution (a minimum ethical requirement, according to Dockrell, 1988).

Busher and James (2012) discuss the challenges of interviewing people of a different gender or culture. As a female British leader in a male-dominated context, I was aware of this. It is not possible to understand if or how this influenced the interviews with male Principals, however, I was alert to any potential difficulties.

Finally, the insider methodology is identified by Macfarlane (2009) as problematic because researchers have to 'draw a line' between their professional views and their integrity as a researcher, guarding against data being coloured by the meaning the researcher attaches to it (Johnson, 1994:7). I tried at all times, as Coleman (2012: 260) advocates, to be aware of this and the impact that I had on an interviewee and how prior knowledge and beliefs can influence the interview and subsequent data analysis.

Data Storage, Interpretation and Writing

All data was handled within the guidelines of the Data Protection Act. Participants' names, schools and identifiers were not stored on hard drives. Unique identifier codes were used in data files with a list of participants and their identifier code kept separately with any hard copies of transcripts in a locked cabinet. These actions sought to protect privacy and ensure that personal details were protected and confidentiality maintained.

Decisions were made throughout the research with ethical issues firmly in mind and although ethical purity in such research is impossible, I attempted to ensure that it was carried out in the most ethical way possible.

Conclusion

I adopted a qualitative approach within an interpretive paradigm, influenced by phenomenology, life history and narrative enquiry. This chapter has sought to explain the choices I made and strategies I used at each stage of the research process and how the creation of the conceptual model sought to illustrate and better understand the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading. Ethical considerations have also been fully explored. We shall now explore the voices of the participant Principals and use their narratives to interpret the theoretical background presented in Chapters 2 and 3, and the conceptual and contextual framework put forward in Chapter 4.

Chapter 6: The Principals' Voices

Introduction

The findings and conclusion chapters have been guided by the principles of phenomenology, in that they begin with rich description of the phenomena and move to further analysis. We now have two theoretical lenses through which to examine the data provided by participants: that of successful school leadership, focusing on the strategies and styles, skills and qualities of Principals, and that of leadership learning focusing on how Principals learn and become leaders. Since this thesis focuses on the nature of the leadership role in successful international schools, the knowledge required to fulfil it and how a diverse group of school leaders make sense of their role and experiences, it is the voices of the Principals that are central to this study. Quotations were selected to provide rich, thick description and capture the essence of what the phenomena mean to the participants. Therefore, this chapter explores what these voices actually say about the experience of **leadership** in international schools in Kuala Lumpur, how participants lead, and the ways in which Principals **learn** and **become**. The chapter concludes with a summary of major findings emerging from the data and leads into Chapter 7 where the common elements are further analysed, interpreted and developed through the two powerful themes emerging from the data of **impermanence** and **isolation**.

Leadership practices and strategies

The testimony of the Principals in this study reflects the four key leadership practices discussed in Chapter 2, namely building the vision, values and setting direction, developing the organisation, understanding and developing people and managing the teaching and learning programme.

Participants speak passionately about their values and vision for their schools and particularly about the kind of environment and culture they wish to create:

It's a we rather than an I, we're in this together and we're here for the children. (Frank)

I want to make a difference ... make a community of learners where everyone is communicating with strong relationships ... and being authentic and serving others. (Emily)

Education is a vocation ... we do it because we genuinely want to make a difference. Or I certainly do. I chose it, I didn't fall into it, I strived to do what I wanted to do and I work incredibly hard to get better at what I do ... It isn't for me, it's for the people that I touch. (Helen)

It's about people and positive relationships ... it's about the children ... it's about having core values and really sticking to those. It's making the time to see that everyone feels valued. (Josh)

Our vision is simply excellence. (Jim)

My vision is to empower others. (Mark)

The participants all have high expectations of themselves and of their community. They challenge the status quo, fighting for the best opportunities for their staff and students. For Karen '*there is no excuse for bad teaching in an international school.*' She introduced accountability procedures in her first year, raising expectations for teaching and learning and student outcomes. Similarly, Helen rapidly sought to improve experiences and outcomes for students, facing considerable resistance from staff whose practices were deeply ingrained. Other stories of leadership that challenged practice and focused on improvement were shared: Jim changed assessment practices and redesigned teams and structures; Paul swam against the tide to introduce a new curriculum. Despite resistance, these Principals were resolute in their quest for improvement and the best outcomes for students, and they share their vision, and live their values through building strong relationships and collaborative cultures.

Although participants clearly articulated their values and vision, they faced tensions specific to the international school context. Ten of the twelve Principals lead privately-owned, for-profit schools, and governance was raised as a key challenge, primarily due to an inherent conflict of interest between providing a quality education and the need to make a profit:

I guess the thing I find the most challenging is the push/pull tensions between being a profit-making school which I am totally aware of and the fact that I need to make money for the parent company, that is imperative because without that the school won't exist! (Karen)

With profit making schools ... the school can lose sight of its core purpose and its vision. (Mark)

The market forces make schools become far more than just schools ... and getting those clients is so important and I feel as though it's becoming more and more an aspect of school life ... sometimes I feel as though the tail wags the dog. (Richard)

In this pressurised and competitive sector participants spoke of the increasing need to develop marketing strategies and promotional materials. For Karen, there is pressure to increase numbers and as a result she needs to be '*much more hands-on in terms of developing and guiding the marketing strategy and admissions*'. Although she enjoys its creativity, she finds it '*frustrating*' because of its focus on business rather than education.

The Principals are cognisant of the external competitive environment and of ensuring that they do not do anything '*to scare away clients*' (Karen); they are increasingly troubled when the more commercially oriented side of the role '*takes away from the core business of learning and teaching*'. (Josh)

For the second core practice of developing the organisation, participants shared their experiences of restructuring the organisation in established schools and developing and implementing structures, policies and procedures in younger schools. In the early stages of their leadership they carried out an appreciative inquiry or 'gap analysis' (Josh) and created an improvement plan with short, medium and long-term goals. The exceptions to this were Principals who were leading a school through the early stages of existence as their actions were different:

Writing a development plan is not very relevant [in a new school] because everything needs to be done, and everything needs to be worked on ... so it was looking at shared priorities with staff ... There was a point when everything had to be done and it was really difficult to prioritise. (Paul)

Setting up a school, everything needs to be put into place. So when I arrived, there was nothing, there was no student work, no tracking, nothing. So a lot of what we were doing, the fundamental important stuff had to be... policies, procedures, not even policies actually, it was just procedures. (Emily)

I began by looking at what curriculum we were going to use ... then we had to start looking at where to buy the actual hardware ... at the same time as all the logistics of what furniture we were going to have ... and trying to get a bus company to actually come out here ... and a caterer ... so if I did it again I would say that you don't just start with one lost bloke on his own in a building with no air conditioning or anything. You actually get your team together first. (Neil)

In the early phase of leadership (as suggested by Weindling, 1999) the participants prioritised restructuring the senior and middle leadership teams, including their roles and responsibilities, developed monitoring and evaluation

systems, and developed professional learning opportunities for staff in order to build capacity. Helen restructured her senior leadership team '*creating a vertical structure within a horizontal structure*' which provided the capacity to completely redevelop the curriculum.

Also, in Maria's first years it became clear that there was the need to develop capacity:

We employ amazing teachers and they should be able to become senior leaders. So we needed to set up a system that can grow and develop those leaders instead of each time having to recruit from the UK for a Deputy Head who doesn't know the system. (Maria)

In the case of 'start up' Principals, this was and remains critical even a number of years after opening, as leadership structures are not fully developed, with Principals only having middle leaders to work with or perhaps one deputy:

When I started, there wasn't a leadership structure at all, it was just me. And we have now got the Heads of Key Stage and Heads of Department and that's it. And it has been quite difficult ... so I've kind of worn all those hats as the school's developed. (Emily)

This year we have a Deputy Head, who is mainly responsible for the teaching and learning in the school. We don't have a pastoral Deputy, though we will have next year ... and a Head of Sixth Form. (Graham)

In contrast to what is suggested (NCLS, 2007), very few participants spoke about improving the physical environment of the school to create more positive, supportive conditions. However, Principals were working to develop their schools' facilities in order to extend provision.

The concept of restructuring in order to develop capacity guides us to the interrelated core practice of developing people which in turn is closely related to the fourth core practice of managing the teaching and learning programme. Participants share how they are developing professional learning communities (PLCs) in their schools bringing teachers together for learning, collaboration and joint practice development. Karen, Richard, Paul and Graham discuss the ways in which facilitating learning and professional development of their staff is one of their top priorities and other participants share the ways in which they do this:

If you're doing your job then you're improving teaching ... we are creating a culture of trust and of reflection. (Josh)

I'm developing our leadership team ... I coach them and they in turn are beginning to coach their teams. (Maria)

I enjoy working with our teachers and our teaching assistants and we've really brought them on a lot. The idea behind it is that eventually we'll be able to train up our own TAs to be teachers, so just last year two of them went through the PGCE. (Neil)

I still model outstanding teaching and learning except I do it to adults. Teachers are my students now and we have a full programme of professional learning. (Helen)

We have introduced coaching as a model to develop our staff and a reflective approach. (Jim)

Reflecting on research in domestic contexts (Sammons et al, 2011; Robinson and Timperley, 2007; Dimmock, 2012) this focus on developing learning and teaching is to be expected. However, for these successful Principals, there are additional challenges worthy of exploration and analysis. It has already been

suggested (Dimmock, 2012) that the building of leadership capacity and succession planning is important. It appears particularly acute in international schools due to high staff turnover and the somewhat challenging transition when a teacher or leader moves from one school, in their home country or another country, to Malaysia. As Maria notes *'it can take a year before they become fully productive'* and Principals speak about the induction process and the necessary continued opportunities for professional and personal support, and development for all staff. In fact, the induction programme is an imperative for developing new teachers as they are moving across the world and in a very short space of time, the schools need to ensure that they are ready to start their professional role as effectively as possible:

When you welcome 40 new teachers and you have got them in a hotel and then you have got to transition them within two weeks from hotel to accommodation ... getting them set up at home, making sure that they've been to Ikea, making sure that they've got their bank accounts set up ... making sure they've got a phone, the internet. (Josh)

So we have a wonderful orientation programme, it really starts in February where we start to slowly give them access to our email system, our want ads, we buddy them up with a curriculum buddy and a social buddy. And once they get here ... we put them up in a hotel for ten days and we have a two-week orientation. Where we have something called MIS essentials, so we want to make sure that we're speaking the same language ... It's overwhelming for them every year though, and it's that balance of how much information do you give them and how much do they need. (Jim)

Furthermore, it is not simply about developing staff but understanding their needs, which as suggested above are specific in this context. It is *'knowing you are their pastoral carer as well'* (Maria) and recognising that *'people are*

moving half-way across the world and they might not be as resilient as you'.
(Graham)

Leaders in domestic contexts contend with change and staffing issues also. However, it is clear for these Principals that the higher rates of staff turnover have a significant impact. Even if everything else in school were to remain constant, the recruitment and induction of staff each year brings substantial change management. Leaders firstly have to manage the sense of impermanence, which has both positive and negative elements. Karen reveals that staff may feel a sense of 'vulnerability' and 'anxiety' that they are only on a two-year contract and this may impact performance. Graham refers to the key challenge he faces with one-year contracts, although this is equally a challenge with two-year contracts:

We only offer one-year contracts, kind of rolling contracts. It's an argument I have had with the Board because I can't see what benefit it serves ... First of all it worries staff and I don't really know why we do it because we do want staff to stay ... I think they come with a different mindset. They come with, 'it's a year and if it doesn't work out, then I can go home'. (Graham)

In contrast, Maria reflects that there are positive aspects to two-year contracts and notes that there is more freedom than perhaps in a domestic context to determine if a school and a teacher are the right combination:

Although we don't say it, you've got, you know in the back of your mind this is only a recruitment decision for two years, whereas I think you see some schools, and schools I have worked in in the UK, where people have been there for 20 years, or even 5, and you know it's not the school for them and another school would work but this school doesn't.
(Maria)

However, if turnover is high then institutional understanding and knowledge can be lost and a culture could change significantly between one year and the next without appropriate strategies in place to ensure successful recruitment and change management. Participants were also concerned with not just hiring teachers, but hiring the best, and this is becoming increasingly challenging for the Principals:

The most important job that a Principal has is to hire the best teachers ... it's the number one thing, so we put in an incredible amount of time, money and effort into getting the best teachers possible. (Jim)

Recruitment is getting more of a challenge, and not more of a challenge to recruit teachers, but more of a challenge to recruit quality teachers who fit in with the ethos that we really want, or what I believe is the right one for this school. (Frank)

Recruitment seems to be becoming more challenging, particularly in certain subjects. So I think understanding what it is that is going to attract people, good people to our school. And retaining, having that instinct for bringing in staff, not only good staff but staff that you know are going to stay the course and you know are going to be able to live here and give it a fair shot. (Graham)

Closely linked to developing people is the fourth core practice of managing the learning and teaching programme. This is mainly done through monitoring teaching and learning and leading the performance management of teachers. This includes 'learning walks' (Helen), 'looking for learning' (Neil), 'mini observations' (Graham) and 'pop-ins' (Jim). Each school has a performance management programme tailored to each school's context and designed to impact classroom practice and student outcomes. All participants speak about the importance of their involvement in observing lessons, providing feedback and coaching for improving classroom practice. Coaching models are used as

part of these processes to develop teachers' reflective practice. It is interesting to note that there was only limited mention of using data to improve learning and teaching, a practice that is common place in schools in England and one of the most highly used strategies to monitor and improve outcomes (Day et al., 2010; Sammons et al., 2011). This could in part be explained by the emphasis placed on data by external agencies in England.

Leadership styles

Successful heads use the same basic leadership practices but in different ways and at different times according to context (Leithwood and Day, 2007; OECD, 2008; NCSL, 2004, 2007). Furthermore, high performing schools are characterised by learning-centred and transformational leadership that is increasingly distributed (Gurr and Day, 2014; Leithwood, Sun and Pollock, 2017). We will now explore how the core strategies are put into practice through the conceptions of leadership presented in Chapter 2.

It is clear from the interviews that the Principals cannot be classified as one type of leader; in fact, they show a mixture of transformational, learning-centred, distributed and authentic leadership. The participants who could be said to be in the middle or advanced phase of leadership - having been in role for three or more years - were taking steps to more widely distribute leadership, as is suggested by Leithwood et al., (2006) and Hallinger and Heck (2010). All Principals spoke of the importance of building capacity, empowering others and distributing leadership:

Being able as a leader to put all of those skills of autonomy and distributed leadership and genuine delegation into play, and allow them to make their own mistakes and to learn themselves and to coach them through that and allow them to put that into practice. (Helen)

As time has gone on, I think we've now got truly distributed leadership within the whole school. So everybody, the TAs, the personal learning

assistants, the teachers, everybody's got some sort of a leadership role.
(Neil)

All participants explore the importance of knowing staff, building relationships, establishing trust and learning communities with a view to developing leadership, and teaching and learning capacity, and also distributing leadership. The common maxim seems to be that you cannot distribute leadership until you know your staff well. Participants also argue that in the uncertain world of international education with a high turnover of staff, distributed leadership is more of a necessity to ensure sustainability; '*one person cannot hold all the knowledge*' (Helen). However, distributed leadership also poses challenges in the context of high turnover. A school may work hard to build capacity and distribute leadership and then may face a turnover of 30% of their staff. Maria illustrates this experience:

The year before I started (as Principal) we had, I think it was 37 new secondary teachers out of a hundred and that was a big change, that was hard because we lost a few things that we were doing in that process because, you know that institutional knowledge just disappears.

We can begin to see that in this international school context distributing leadership must go hand in hand with building capacity to ensure that the next generation of leaders are '*grown within*' (Helen) and the development of learning communities and internal professional learning opportunities within the norms of the school context and culture. Josh's school has restructured their school week to create weekly scheduled staff development time with a focus on excellence in learning and teaching in their context, and peer-to-peer observations and discussion:

Creating the culture of trust, we've done. Creating the culture of reflection we're on our way with but not fully embedded ... developing school culture and learning simultaneously. (Josh)

In this chapter we have seen how Principals distribute leadership and use transformational and learning-centred leadership practices to meet the day-to-day and longer-term challenges of developing their schools, such as suggested by Day et al., (2010) and Leithwood et al., (2006). One of the clearest patterns emerging from the evidence is the importance that all participants place on building relationships and including others through participatory, collegiate and collaborative approaches. Karen views herself as a '*relational*' leader, Graham sees himself as '*democratic*', Mark describes himself as an '*affiliative*' leader, and Helen characterises herself as '*collegiate*'. Participants passionately argue the need for creating a culture of '*openness, transparency and trust*' (Frank) and how the nature of relationships is unique in an international school. They also argue that in the context in which they lead, there is a great need for '*leadership flexibility*' (Neil) and high levels of emotional, social and cultural intelligence which influence their leadership, proposing that there is not one ideal leadership style, especially in an international school. Helen explains:

I think the biggest thing about being an effective leader, certainly where we are, if you haven't got a full leadership toolkit you'll fail. And so it's not even about knowing which leadership style you are using for any task or any conversation it's about being able to switch between them absolutely as you're watching the eye contact and the body language of the person you're sitting with or opposite ... Maybe that's it actually, it's nothing to do with leadership style, it's having the emotional intelligence.

Karen reflects on the importance of the flexibility needed in international schools and how her leadership style has developed over her time as Principal, contingent not only on specific situations but stages of the school's development:

My style has changed since being in international education but I am more aware that it's a flexible thing that you move in and out of different roles depending on who you are talking to and what the circumstances are around where the school is at in terms of its phase of development as well. Because when I first came I think a lot of my focus was establishing a vision, being very clear about the direction of the school. ... Now I feel my job is to coach others so they can take on that and be much more the visionary leader of their particular field. (Karen)

Participants therefore use a range of leadership styles and strategies depending on need. However, there is a distinct focus on relationships, building capacity for learning and teaching, empowering others and distributing leadership.

Leadership knowledge and competencies

As successful leadership is sensitive to context (Leithwood, Jantzi and Steinbach, 1999) it is important to explore what participants perceive they need to know in order to be good at their jobs in this international school context and this includes themes such as instructional leadership, law, financial management, educational policy and administration, team leadership and contextual knowledge (Bush, 2008; Bush and Moorosi and Bush, 2011). Interestingly these areas of knowledge were not emphasised and it was a common theme amongst participants that an awareness of certain areas is sufficient owing to the employment of specialised teams of local staff. In terms of finance, for example, Karen reflects that *'there are other people in the school that have got more knowledge than me on that,'* whilst Josh mentions his *'very strong legal and marketing teams'*.

However, three common areas of knowledge are emphasised by participants. Firstly, having strong pedagogical and curriculum knowledge. For Karen it is important to have *'complete credibility as the leader of learning in the school'* and having the knowledge and understanding of what makes great learning

and teaching to *'spot gaps and make improvements'* (Josh). For Paul, it is imperative to have *'curriculum, assessment and pedagogic knowledge'* and this knowledge was also key for Jim who in his first few years *'lifted the rock off assessment'* and began *'an enormous enriching, stimulating process'* of huge change for his school leading to structural changes and benefits for student learning and outcomes.

The second area emphasised is contextual knowledge. All Principals highlighted the importance of rapidly developing an in-depth understanding of their own school, something that appears to be especially important in the context of international schools in Kuala Lumpur. The need to not only understand the culture of the school, but also those of its students, parents, staff and the host country Malaysia, adds considerable layers of complexity:

So you've done the work, you've done the learning, you've done the job, but now you're doing it in a multicultural, multi-ethnic, multilingual setting where you know nothing actually. You might know how to run a school but that bears no resemblance whatsoever to the school you are in now. (Helen)

For Graham, this contextual cultural learning was crucial. He has faced challenges with a deep rooted and strong culture of tutoring outside of school and what he describes as:

The spoon-feeding what they and the parents want; the text book culture. (Graham)

This caused tension with different educational values and goals between the school and its community – one placing value on teacher-led, didactic approaches and rote learning, and the other on a more holistic, skills-based, student-led and independent study approach.

The third, and most underlined area of knowledge is intra- and interpersonal skills. Successful Principals need high levels of these (Boyatzis and Saatcioglu, 2008; Fink, 2010; Goleman, 2009; Scott, 2003) and it is interesting to note that when asked about the knowledge and skills needed to be successful in their roles, this was the most discussed theme.

For Richard, it is important to:

Know yourself and your strengths and weaknesses and to be able to pull on the strengths of the people that make up your team.

For Neil, being trusted is key, since:

If nobody trusts me I wouldn't get anywhere ... it's the EQ thing and it's the most important thing rather than the knowledge.

Paul shares how it is about '*being a champion of people, valuing people*' and Emily explores how it is key to know that you '*don't know everything*' and how developing knowledge of others and where to find answers is of real importance.

Successful Principals are optimistic with a positive disposition. They are also forward thinking, have a strong moral compass (NCSL, 2007) and require emotional sensitivity (Fink, 2010) or emotional intelligence (Goleman, 2009), and communication and teamwork (Scott, 2003). The limited research into international school leadership suggests the need for these skills, together with cross-cultural awareness, diplomacy, resilience, integrity, courage and approachability (Roberts and Mancuso, 2014; RSAcademics, 2016). It is not surprising, therefore, that participants underline such skills. In addition, a number of personal qualities essential to a successful international school Principal emerged from the data: emotional intelligence, including intra- and interpersonal skills and the ability to make connections; the desire and drive to

be constantly learning; openness; grit and determination; empathy; resilience; flexibility; cultural intelligence; optimism; compassion and humility. There is perhaps nothing surprising in this list as, although the language may differ from research to research, the fundamental meaning is shared in this research with the findings of others (see Fink, 2010; Goleman, 2009; Leithwood, 2005; Leithwood and Day, 2007). However, the individual stories that together make up this collection of important qualities are significant as they portray the nuances of leadership in an international context.

Emotional intelligence is a quality explored by all participants and is defined by individuals as *'knowing yourself'* (Emily), *'feeling the temperature in the room and what every individual needs from you'* (Helen) and *'being good with people'* (Frank). Participants often used the term emotional intelligence to include being a good listener with the ability to empathise, and also the social skills or the 'people skills' to build relationships that all participants commented on being the most important skill in this context. An integral part of emotional intelligence is self-awareness and the ability, openness and drive to learn; qualities that participants talk about during the interviews. All share how they attempt to seek and act on feedback, demonstrate reflection and learning from mistakes and challenges, and are self-directed learners, self-assessing and actively seeking opportunities to learn and grow.

One further dimension of emotional intelligence is self-regulation (Goleman, 2009), which was also explored by many participants. Five participants actively practise mindfulness in their personal and professional life, and comment on the importance of thinking before speaking and always remaining calm and composed at all times. Frank highlights this:

There are times when some people, some parents, some teachers, can be particularly unprofessional and you have to control very much what you say, compared to what you want to say and feel, and I'm particularly good at that, in that I'll never let someone see what I really

feel about them. I'll never lose my composure with regards to the volume or the tone at how I speak to people. I'll always try to keep as calm and as normal as possible, but that's difficult if you are dealing with people who are just downright rude or downright unprofessional, but I can do it.

Sometimes it's hard to know how to act and what to say. You may be in a difficult situation with parents from five different cultures – all expecting a different reaction. You need to adapt but be true to yourself.
(Helen)

However, self-regulation is not always viewed positively. Maria raises the concept of self-regulation in terms of emotional labour:

The idea that you put on a face as a leader, as a teacher, and knowing that underneath you have got that emotional resilience ... it's putting on the smiley face. I have a walk of smiles ... when I am going from the business office to here, right, get your face back in gear, you are going to go back into school and you are going to pretend that you have not had those dodgy conversations.

Jim uses the analogy of being the 'chief cheerleader' to illustrate his deliberate stance on always remaining optimistic and being the reservoir of hope and motivation for his staff. Graham similarly talked about always having an 'open door' to staff and remarked that 'you've got to have a smile on your face for everybody' in order to maintain what he called a 'consistency of approach.'

The emphasis given to 'people skills' (Frank, Jim), 'emotional intelligence' (Helen, Neil, Josh, Emily), 'social skills and empathy' (Karen, Maria, Graham, Richard) by these international school Principals identifies an interesting point. As we have seen, Headteachers require these skills to build a vision and to develop teamwork and communication to reach the vision. However, the

international context appears influential. The role of the Principal in setting a vision and building a community united around this vision is made more complex in an international setting due to the transient nature of staff, students and parents.

Learning and Developing Self

All participants are concerned with developing themselves as leaders and professionals, as well as developing others, a practice suggested by Gurr (2014):

I will do things off my own back ... I am always reading ... I try to take something every time and put it into my practice. (Emily)

Every year I gather feedback to see where I can improve. (Paul)

I am always reflecting, what went wrong, what could have gone better. I think it's being a lifelong reflectioner (sic) and a lifelong learner. (Josh)

Wanting still to learn and knowing how to learn and carving time out to learn is so important. (Helen)

They learn through being coached, through formal and informal opportunities, through reading and through on-the-job learning and reflective practice. And as we will see in this section, they demonstrate motivation and drive to continually develop themselves and their schools, and direct their own learning. OECD's (2008) three-phase framework expounded for learning and development will be used to loosely structure findings and discussion in the following section, namely:

1. Initial leadership training and preparation before beginning a role
2. Induction programmes for the early months and years of practice

3. Continuous professional learning that is relevant for career stage and context

Principals' preparation or professional socialisation can take two forms. The first being academic or professional qualifications, which include relevant domain-specific knowledge. Although qualifications and routes to principalship varied, almost all participants held Master's level qualifications before appointment, mostly in educational leadership, and had completed further professional studies such as the NPQH. Secondly, participants also learnt from prior experiences, providing development in skills, attitudes and values. These prior experiences of leadership roles, non-educational roles and personal lives have been seen to provide rich learning for Principals' role conception (Bush, 2016; Crow and Glascock, 1995), especially for the development of intra- and interpersonal skills and attributes (Crow, 2007).

All participants reflected on the major sources of their leadership learning being experiences or learning undertaken as Deputies or from previous work-related experiences:

I did quite a lot of training when I was in the Deputy Principal's position ... Actually I found the move from being the Deputy to being the Principal not a very great move in fact...Obviously the shock is there is nobody else to go talk to that is above you as it were but I didn't really find that it was the jump that perhaps I had imagined. (Karen)

Preparation for me has been through conversations that I have with the people that I've worked with. Being genuinely a reflective person, I think I'm quite aware of myself, my skills and my shortcomings and I'm equally not afraid to talk about them. (Mark)

I was already reading leadership books as a Deputy Head and there were a few that were quite key to me around that time. (Helen)

Frank comments on how he has learnt a lot about how things should be done and how not to do things in his earlier experiences as a Vice Principal. In terms of his promotion to Headship, he believes that *'you've really got to do it to appreciate all of the demands on your time from every different angle'*. Such learning from prior experiences is from both positive and negative role models; shaping participants' values and vision. Josh explores this with two polar experiences, with one former leader who *'didn't treat people the way they should,'* and another who *'really took care of people'*. Exploring the latter, Josh muses that:

I think it's relationships and how you develop those and how you are able to inspire and lead people through that. And I think seeing the way he cared about his staff, especially with it being an international school where you're all away from our families. (Josh)

Participants all commented positively on their transition from the Deputy position to that of Principal, reflecting on their previous learning experiences being their major source of learning together with knowledge development of educational and leadership theory through independent reading or study. No participant expressed concern about not being fully prepared for the role of Principal and this is the opposite to what has been understood previously by research into beginning Principals in domestic contexts (see Daresh and Male, 2000). This could be explained by the phenomenon of rose-tinted glasses for participants who were more experienced Principals. For example, Jim, who is in his ninth year and third position as Principal, reflected back on his first position as a *'baptism of fire'* where he was thrown into the deep end and was *'just trying to be a good manager.'* However challenging this experience was originally, Jim's reflections were positive in terms of his steep leadership learning curve at the time of the interview.

A variety of approaches exist in different countries towards Principals' induction programmes for the early months and years of practice. There is a continuum ranging from mandatory formal structured and supported programmes to incidental events orchestrated by Principals themselves (Bush, 2008). This period is also one of organisational socialisation; a context-specific, two-way process that involves a new principal being socialised into a school and its culture and the Principal socialising the new school to new values and approaches, whilst simultaneously shaping their own role concept. In this study no participants were required to undertake any training nor were they provided with any structured induction programmes or supported by formal mentoring or coaching. However, participants shared their experiences of socialisation, and how they approached challenges, demonstrating the two-way process.

Karen was confronted with two challenges on her arrival. The previous Principal had a very strong educational philosophy that the teachers subscribed to but it was not clearly articulated and there was no culture of accountability:

There was a thing in the school that was this is how we do things here and this is Lakeview or this isn't Lakeview. There were some teachers here that had started the school, so they had opened it with 25 children and they were here right from the beginning and they were always telling me that wasn't very 'Lakeviewy' or this is what we are about here. It was quite nebulous and the Principal who had left spent quite a lot of time coming up and confusing me about what Lakeview was but really concerned that it didn't change under my leadership ... The other thing was that there was a complete lack of accountability in the school ... they were resistant to any kind of process in terms of accountability.
(Karen)

Her approach was to read as much as possible around the educational philosophy and try to clarify, articulate and document the Lakeview way, putting student learning and experiences at the centre of all discussions. Through the discussions, energy grew, relationships improved, and she was able to restructure learning and teaching, timetables and bring in a learning-focused performance management system. During this time her leadership style evolved from being directive and visionary underpinned by building strong relationships and trust, to what it is now: coaching and distributed. Karen's self-concept as a leader developed too and she now reports the school '*belonging to me and me to the school*'.

When Jim took up his position he inherited a functioning middle school. However, its structures did not align with the clear vision and experience he had of an excellent school. Staff felt overwhelmed by the volume of initiatives and the structure and systems made collaboration difficult:

I knew we needed a teaming structure, I knew we needed a collaborative structure. I also knew that I needed to really focus professional development on what a middle school is, not a junior high school model but a middle school. So we did a lot of reading together and we dedicated a lot of time in our meetings together to look at teaming structures and to look at the attributes of a wonderful middle school. (Jim)

Jim reflects on this journey as one of give and take, learning and growing together; he as a leader and his newly formed teams. The collaborative journey of discovery led to the formation of a new shared and understood purpose, with Jim highlighting the importance of changing the culture through strong relationships and the interaction of new and existing values, behaviours and strategies. The journey was not without its challenges particularly with staff reluctant to change:

The tipping point started to come in about the third year when people started to see value in what they were doing. And it also came with hiring. I counselled a lot of people out, frankly one or two a year, and it wasn't that some of them weren't effective teachers whatsoever ... I can coach and help a lot of people, but I can't change lazy. (Jim)

Principals continue to develop throughout their career (Day and Bakioğlu, 1996) and they need to engage with different forms of learning that are relevant to them at specific times (Burgoyne, Hirsh and Williams, 2004) and take ownership of their learning (Huber, 2010). All participants demonstrate a passion and a thirst for learning and development - for themselves, their staff and their students. They recognise and acknowledge different kinds of learning and the need for continual development. Richard *'learns everyday,'* Karen *'reads constantly, particularly about pedagogy,'* Maria and John are *'always learning'* and Josh is *'constantly evaluating, critiquing and improving'* his practice.

The preferred mode of learning for many participants is reading, followed closely by discussing with colleagues and coaching. Three key purposes for reading emerged. The first relates to leadership practices and personal and professional knowledge. The second is educational or pedagogical knowledge development and the third is research in order to make evidence-based decisions for change.

Leadership readings come from educational research and also wider reading on leadership from the business world. Principals read, make notes, reflect and apply new knowledge in their practice. Maria has introduced strength-based leadership practices to her team after significant reading in this area and how they can best *'work together as a team because of our different strengths'*. When planning projects and designing change management, Paul returns to his reading on *'frames of reference'* for leading change and applies theory to practice *'to judge whether something is going to be successful'*.

In planning new curricula, considerable reading and research is undertaken by Principals. For Helen, the imperative was to learn from best practice around the world to evidence and plan what *'learning could be and develop an increasingly learning culture'* and this learning for her was *'profound'*. Similar reading and learning took place for Jim and Emily when introducing a new assessment system and for Karen when designing a new middle school curriculum framework. When a curriculum can be completely designed from scratch due to the pedagogical freedom of having limited or no regulatory government control, this appears critical.

Online learning was mentioned as a necessary source of learning due to the participants' location in Asia and the paucity of leadership professional development opportunities in the region. Social media, in particular Twitter, was commented on by the Principals as a source of learning and knowledge. For Emily, following people on Twitter leads her to further reading and can *'influence and confirm'* her practice and Neil is an *'avid user'* of this social media platform too.

Although online learning and reading were highlighted, the isolated nature of this type of learning was also noted. All participants explicitly talked about the need to develop learning in teams, taking learning points from different sources, sharing and discussing. Karen reflects on the *'rich learning'* she gains from attending conferences as a team.

This leads to individual, team and organisational learning. Several participants share the importance of modelling professional learning for staff and building open learning communities in their schools. Josh is developing *'professional collaboration'* and for Maria it is important to recognise that in developing learning communities in school and developing others you are naturally developing yourself:

You are not just one lone person so you can't influence other people's development without influencing your own, so by thinking how am I going to grow and develop them I am naturally growing and developing my own leadership because so much more is distributed. (Maria)

This sentiment is echoed by other participants who are involved in facilitating professional development for others, either within their schools or more widely in the region. Within schools, much of the participants' professional learning is grounded in lesson observations, coaching and teacher professional learning, and developing reciprocity in learning for the community.

Developing a culture of openness, trust and reflection is something mentioned by participants, with reflection cited as a valued method for personal and organisational learning, used in a variety of ways. Emily reflects as she reads, wondering '*How does this relate to me, to the school, to the children or the staff? What have we done? What could we do?*' This reflective approach to reading is mirrored by other participants. Neil begins each leadership team meeting with a team reflection with the questions: '*How has your week gone? What have your learners learnt? What have you learnt?*' These questions lead to group discussion with each leader sharing their leading and learning with the team.

Several participants talk about making use of organisations such as FOBISIA and AIMS for formal networks. Within AIMS there are regularly scheduled meetings for different role holders, such as Heads of Primary, to facilitate job-alike discussions and sharing. A small number of participants talked about these being useful but more explored the building of informal networks, often online, to share ideas and problems. However, the competitive educational landscape of Kuala Lumpur was in the minds of participants, with Maria explaining:

You collaborate together but you're still in a competitive state ... so you don't have that consulting, supportive or LEA type feeling about it.

As mentioned, coaching is a commonly used and much valued tool for learning for participants themselves and also with their staff. The time needed to invest in coaching was identified as a limiting factor but the benefits for individuals and the organisation were widely felt, for example in lesson observations and reflective practice development with teachers. Six participants talked about the positive experiences of being coached in their careers and actively promoted it within their own leadership teams. Coaching is also a source of support during personal socialisation, which is the process of role identity transformation (Browne-Ferrigno, 2003; Matthews and Crow, 2003), and making sense of self and role (Biott, Moos and Møller, 2001) although participants only had ad hoc experiences of coaching for this purpose.

It is worth pausing to note that forming a self-concept as a Principal and its continued shaping and reshaping is a dynamic and multifaceted process comprising many strands. McGough (2003: 453) posits that Principals' perspectives are deeply embedded in their own biography and their life experiences that shape values, beliefs and future perceptions. Of the participants, Josh and Richard had always held leadership positions throughout their life in education and sport, and emphasise the role that these experiences played in their lives. Helen, on the other hand, comments that she had not always wanted to be a teacher or an educational leader but a series of experiences led her to rethink her life and inspired her to lead:

I was a headhunter in the finance industry for two years working in London and discovered that selling your soul for money was a bad thing to do. I had always wanted to do something that was meaningful and had purpose so through a self-coaching experience I decided that I wanted to train as a teacher ... and I never looked back. And from the moment that I met my headteacher I knew that was what I wanted to do.

When I met her it was like standing in warm sunshine and I thought that's what I want to be! (Helen)

Frank and Emily both spent considerable time in a career other than teaching, Frank as an engineer and Emily as a physiotherapist. They each talked about making a conscious decision to change career. Jim always wanted to be a teacher but it was circumstance that first led him to move from being a Middle School Coordinator to principalship when he was asked to 'step in' after his Principal was dismissed in September. Paul found himself in a similar position, although he had always aimed to become a Principal:

I came here in a teaching capacity, with the promise of opportunity ... there was a Head of Primary in place, and for personal reasons, she left after three months, so then I took on that role. Which was unexpected but where I was aiming for. I just didn't expect it to be so soon.

A number of participants share that the biggest step in the process of building their self-concept as a Principal actually started before beginning in role, even before application, and involved making sense of their own and others' perception. Karen applied for an internal promotion to Principal and although unsuccessful she 'had to step up and think of myself in the role' and received much positive feedback from colleagues 'giving me the confidence to make that step'.

Richard was encouraged and prompted to think about becoming a Principal by his former Head of School who told him 'he would never have considered hiring a Head of Secondary who had been a deputy head for longer than five years'.

Maria was encouraged to become a Principal by her Headteacher through coaching and mentoring and the process was influential for Maria. Before applying for her current position, which was an internal promotion, she was

encouraged by the Principal who was *‘a very positive influence in me developing the confidence to be able to be a leader*. Initially aspiring to an Advanced Skills Teacher pathway, Maria realised that *‘just by starting to model and show things, how much more influence you can have over student learning than by just being one teacher in a classroom’*.

Although each Principal’s biography is different, common themes emerge of being inspired, coached and supported by previous Headteachers, who exerted a strong positive influence on shaping their leadership beliefs, values and actions. For some participants previous Headteachers remain mentors and sources for inspiration now:

I still have a kind of what would John do? It’s fading but you know, I kind of try to figure out how he would respond to situations and it helps to ground me. (Graham)

I am in fairly regular contact with three or four former older colleagues who are either retired or Heads themselves, who I’m pretty open and honest with and who I ask for their critical friendship. It’s not just taking problems, sometimes it’s reflecting on something, a decision that I’ve made, and asking what would they have done maybe in that situation. (Richard)

We can see how confidence building plays an important part in role transformation and this continues when becoming a Principal for the first time and when moving to a new position; this confidence comes from experiences and from others’ and self-perception. Participants reflect openly on how they have ‘become’ the Principals they are today, their own self-concept and their full lived experiences, and this includes developing the many attributes they feel are required for successful international school principalship.

All participants speak of the importance of knowing yourself and how this is a starting point in the leadership journey. Helen highlights this:

Know yourself and know why you do what you do ... Once you know yourself well and you acknowledge yourself where you have work to do and where your conflicts are likely to be ... you can develop your leadership.

Participants in the early years of principalship explore making sense of their new roles and themselves as leaders, moulding their identities, through their interactions and experiences, reflecting and developing their leadership. Mark reflects:

It's been fairly organic in the sense that when you're in role you start to see things happening ... I kind of grow in recognition that people do look to me as the leader.

Confidence develops over time and is derived from a number of factors including experience, success, and feedback from others. For Neil, knowing that his team trusts him continues to build his confidence and for Maria it was the trust from her leader when first in role that contributed to her confidence and development as a Principal:

He listened and he trusted and he empowered me, and that for me, being empowered, because that meant that somebody trusted me. Seeing that somebody could trust me as a new Head in that role and that I could talk to him and he would have my back. (Maria)

Mark talks about how his confidence grew from experience and feedback from others, getting through challenging situations and even the process of moving overseas, explaining that *'the fact that we move overseas and make those decisions and even just moving to different positions and move schools, all*

helps you grow in that confidence.' Frank reflects on this link between experience and growing confidence:

I was 39 when I was first Head of the school and I'm sure I was making huge mistakes then, and people would see it. I would expect that maybe I'm still making mistakes now, but people don't see it because I'll carry myself and the whole situation differently. Always looking like you're in control of the situation, and always looking and giving the impression that you're very composed.

Helen also highlights how confidence comes with experience and how she has come to realise that '*problems are just problems*' and that there is always a solution and a way through a challenge. Some participants share how their approach to problem-solving and decision-making has changed over time as their leadership has evolved. This involves decision-making slowing down and '*having the confidence to take more time*' (Maria) and involving others more in the process of problem-solving. Similarly, Graham feels he is now '*less of a control freak*' whilst Neil talks about not making decisions on his own anymore.

Almost all participants speak of significant leadership learning through experience and increasing confidence that had a significant influence on their identity as a Principal. They relate to dealing with challenges and problems, 'doing the hard thing' and reimagining their relationships with others. Jim explores his transformation and defining his self-concept as a Principal:

It was a point when I wanted to please everyone. I had to be loved right, you have to be loved and in order to be loved you make decisions that are maybe not in the best interest of kids because you don't have the confidence yet to do that. Sometimes you make decisions that are going to please teachers ... I think it's the transformation of the position of Principal ... It's different and having the confidence and clarity, comes from experience. (Jim)

Josh shares how, through experience and confidence, he became more values-driven:

I got feedback that I was Mr Nice Guy, and I think I shied away from having difficult conversations when I first became a leader. And I wasn't as effective as I could have been because I wanted everyone to like me and make everyone happy ... but I became more values-driven and I said, I'm never going to shy away from difficult conversations again, I am never not going to be transparent and open ... I just made a decision never to shy away from difficult conversations again and putting the students at the heart of it and that was best for the students.
(Josh)

This leadership learning and self-defining for a Principal who needs to take a stand, be courageous and prepared to challenge, comes from experience and also from renegotiating relationships with staff. What all of the stories have in common is the way in which reflection upon experiences developed participants' learning and raised their confidence through positive affirmation. This in turn has influenced their future behaviours, and continues to shape their values and self-concept as a Principal.

Finally, Loader (2010) asserts that attention must be paid to the 'inner' leader as both developing identity together with self-care are important. Many participants reflect on the exhausting nature of the role and how it causes a degree of stress. These feelings are frequently intensified by the sense of isolation and loneliness in the role and the lack of someone to share experiences and feelings with:

I think as a Deputy you're still ... in with the lads a little bit. So what I miss most is laughing ... I miss that laughter and that camaraderie ...

I'm not an emotionally needy person but it can be quite lonely. (Graham)

I have friends from before I was a Head, but not many friends on the job. (Emily)

I think it's a quite lonely position. I have got a very supportive wife ... and home life has become far more important for me. Even as a Deputy Head I was still able to have quite a close relationship with some of my colleagues, I feel as though I have no close, close relationship. All my friendships are pre-here and I don't see that changing. That doesn't make me sad; I am sensing that it's a loss that comes with the position. (Richard)

I socialise with a number of people who I work with and I have great warmth with some who I work with, I wouldn't ever tell all of it, all of me to any of them. It's not appropriate ... There are very few people, one person, that I would say comes close to knowing the full me here. That's why you have to have the two networks. (Helen)

All participants' narratives include defining moments for them in their development as a leader, with stories differing in content but similar actions, the act of having to dig deep and '*go inside for strength*' (Karen). Exemplar stories were complex challenges faced in school or times of real personal as well as professional challenge, such as not being appointed after applying for an internal promotion, not having an employment contract renewed, and perceived unfair treatment by a superior. Two interesting points emerge from analysis. The first being that all four female participants' experiences were personal, with three feeling they were unfairly treated and one in a challenging situation with a superior, who were all males. They expressed how they feel a female Principal needs to develop an even greater emotional toughness and

resilience because they are constantly having to prove themselves and especially so in what is a male-dominated environment.

I do think that being a woman means you are more resilient, that to be in this position, you have got to be more resilient because you are having to prove yourself. But not in a way that makes you like a man because then you're not respected for that either. (Emily)

The fact that I'm female and had a baby is an issue. I'm constantly challenging things. Grey men run international schools ... list me ten female heads of international schools ... it's a travesty of international education. (Helen)

The second is the way in which all participants talked about working through the challenges, with openness, adaptability and a growth mindset.

We talk about growth mindset, we talk about character and I remind myself that a true test of character is at the worst of times ... and I think that there's almost that responsibility of being a role model, first and foremost. I have to, if I'm preaching this all the time, I have to show I'm fine. (Josh)

We tell our students about the growth mindset ... if you don't recognise your failure, it's not going to improve ... through these opportunities and reflecting on them and learning. (Mark)

That was a jarring experience that was really emotional, in the end it wasn't a pleasant experience but it was a really good experience ... it helped me to clarify what I stand for. (Jim)

The process of becoming a Principal is therefore multidimensional. It includes learning and developing new strategies and personal leadership resources

from all kinds of life and work experience and reflection, together with beliefs, values and self-confidence.

Conclusion

The narratives of the Principals show that their experiences of leading and learning reflect both generic leadership issues and the peculiar context of Kuala Lumpur international schools. There is certainly support for the four core leadership practices of building the vision and setting direction, understanding and developing people, developing the organisation and managing the teaching and learning programme. The participant Principals are people-centred, placing considerable emphasis on developing positive relationships, building capacity and they feel a strong duty of care. It is suggested that the influence of context is considerable here for two reasons. The first is that high staff turnover creates a sense of impermanence and strong relationships provide a sense of security. The second is the need to be the pastoral caregiver and engender a sense of community or family for staff who are away from home. Whilst participants draw upon a full leadership toolkit depending on the situation, they are relational leaders focused on building capacity for learning and teaching, true to their values, and empower staff through distributed leadership.

The knowledge perceived as critical for success is contextual - understanding the organisation and the unique cultural context - pedagogical and relational. Participants are reflective and self-directed learners with a passion for their own continued development and that of others. They use a blend of on-the-job learning, reading and attending conferences, whilst their self-concept and personal leadership resources - such as resilience, problem-solving, optimism - have developed over time through experience, challenge and feedback. These themes are further analysed in the following chapter.

Chapter 7: Discussion and Analysis

Introduction

This chapter seeks to analyse, synthesise and interpret the Principals' voices and describe the essence of the phenomena in the Kuala Lumpur context through an exploration of two key themes that are deeply woven through participants' narratives and cut across this research, illuminating the influence exerted by the Kuala Lumpur international school context on learning, becoming and leading. These two important themes are **impermanence** and **isolation**. In addition, a new analytical framework is presented as a means to understand the interrelationships between learning and becoming through leadership experience.

Impermanence

The first of the themes we will explore is that of impermanence and its many implications for leadership. This theme is embedded in participants' narratives and is far-reaching in its influence and impact. The sense of impermanence is derived from the transient nature of the community as the high turnover of students, parents and staff brings considerable change each year. The old adage of 'the only constant is change' seems to be especially relevant in this context. This is significant for leadership because leading change and the need to continually build and rebuild a cohesive and supportive community is important. This is not a simple task that can be completed once and then further developed year on year. It is one which requires continuous planning and efforts, re-engaging a constantly-changing and diverse community in a shared vision.

The sense of impermanence comes predominantly as a result of the high turnover of staff and this has significant implications for leadership as strategies and practices need to be developed and implemented to effectively manage the recruitment and induction of new staff, the majority coming from outside Malaysia. Recruitment is therefore complex in this international school

context, more so than in a domestic context. The high volume of staff to be recruited means that considerable time is spent on this each year and recruitment usually takes place during ‘*recruitment rounds*’ (Graham) throughout the year.

- **Recruitment, Induction and Retention**

What makes recruitment so complex and time consuming? First, there is the factor of distance between Kuala Lumpur and the teachers’ home countries, the latter being the UK and USA for the majority of teachers at the schools in this research. Often, interviews will take place using video conferencing or increasingly Skype, but Principals will also usually travel to London, or in some cases further afield, taking two to three weeks away from school to conduct face-to-face interviews. Secondly, participants mention that it is not just about hiring a good teacher; it is also about hiring a teacher who has the personal qualities to be able to successfully move across the world and live and work in another country. Practice is changing in order to overcome these challenges. Principals are now sharing increased information with candidates, through school websites, virtual tours, recruitment videos, and pre-interview presentations about life in Kuala Lumpur and teaching at their school. Jim shares some of the content of his presentation in which he is very direct:

I’m now very clear with the qualities of highly successful people ... I stand in front of about a hundred people at our information sessions in these fairs and I say, these are the four qualities if you want to work at Malaysia International School and be highly successful and happy ... If not, this is not the school for you. (Jim)

Expectations are high for teachers in these international schools and Graham emphasises the importance of interviewing for personal qualities and not just teaching skills:

More and more I kind of grill them on, are they living at home at the moment, is it going to be their first time away from home, how do they know they are going to be able to cope with the move. (Graham)

It is clear that recruitment is a considerable challenge and one that requires a flexible and dynamic approach. Closely related to recruitment is the induction process, which is an annual vital ingredient to ensure that new staff are able to fully function as *'productive team members'* (Maria) as quickly as possible. This process, as we have seen, is also time consuming. However, it marks out differences in relationships at a very early stage through its provision (hotel accommodation, SIM cards, finding somewhere to live, opening bank accounts). This helps to create a sense of community, as these are actions one may take to support friends and family in moving somewhere new and therefore demonstrate the ethic of care and the different relationship one may have with an employer in this context. It should be noted, however, that the downside of pastoral care and support of this nature is that it can create a culture of dependency in which teacher expectations of school support are heightened.

The impermanent nature of teachers' contracts and subsequent high turnover clearly brings challenges for recruitment and induction. From the perspective of retention, creating a supportive community is key. Also, when middle leaders (for example, Heads of Department or senior leaders) leave, the data suggests it is preferable to have the capacity to promote from within. This enables a more focused transition, knowledge of school practices is retained and further developed, and time is not lost inducting and settling a new member of staff into a new life in Malaysia, a new school and a new leadership position. Therefore, coaching, mentoring and distributed leadership are prevalent within Principals' narratives.

Furthermore, with staff and families, the sense of impermanence is present due to the short-term contracts of one or two years' duration. This, together

with being far from friends and family, can cause a sense of anxiety and vulnerability, which needs to be managed and supported. The results of the study suggest that this leads to a greater '*duty of care*' (Josh) giving rise to a heightened awareness for participants of the importance of building strong relationships and a sense of community and '*family*' (Frank).

- **Duty of Care and Sense of Family**

We have seen how the development of trust and positive relationships is a cornerstone of successful leadership practice (Day et al., 2010; Dimmock, 2012; Leithwood and Day, 2006) enhancing the performance of a school through shared purpose and collaborative relationships (Harris et al., 2013). All participants emphasise that building strong, purposeful and trusting relationships is at the heart of their leadership practice.

Being highly visible in school is important to all participants and they argue that it is not simply a case of being seen around school but that great value is placed on building strong and sustainable relationships with staff, students and parents:

Schools are about relationships, and schools are about people, and schools have to be joyful ... the only way they can be joyful in my opinion is if those relationships are strong. (Jim)

A rich and complex theme in the interviews is the different nature of relationships in an international school and participants argue there is a need to give considerable attention to this area:

There is a duty of care. Staff need to know that you are mindful of the fact that they are away from home, so I guess that impact is something that is a daily thing that you are aware of. I have a member of staff at the moment who has come back because her father died last week and it's a constant with illnesses in the family or concerns that people have

when they are far away from home and that vulnerability they might feel ... I have also got somebody who was in hospital ... I am aware that they are single and they haven't necessarily got a partner to look after them. (Karen)

In an international context the staff become more of a family than you are as a staff back in the UK. (Frank)

It's different being in an international school where you're all away from family and it is different from being back when I was in the UK or any other country where you have your university and friends you grew up with, and your family. You are in kind of a bubble together. (Josh)

We ask a lot of staff and they have been uprooted from their home countries and they come here and we push them hard and they need to want that, and what is it that keeps them motivated and trying to get to know them individually. (Maria)

This is suggestive of a sense of responsibility that participants feel towards their staff. Josh explores how the role of an international school Principal requires a greater personal involvement with staff:

In my welcome speech I actually say to them, 'if your washing machine's broken and your landlord won't fix it, come and tell me.' I would never say something like that in the UK.

All participants echo this sense of responsibility for staff and this pastoral care means getting to know staff well and being able support proactively and reactively. Karen summarises this well:

As a maternally type figure I think it is important that the Principal is aware of individual circumstances and knows their staff well in terms of

where they live, who they are living with, what their friendship group is and to make sure that nobody is really left sad and lonely, and in a difficult situation. Much more so than I would in a state school in England.

The sense of responsibility and care felt by participants also appears to extend beyond staff to students and their families. The expatriate community in Kuala Lumpur consists of families who have travelled from their home country in order to work and the school often becomes the focal point for community. Mark believes that the school has a ‘*social responsibility*’ to open up its facilities to the community and provide opportunities to learn outside of school and come together:

It’s quite difficult when you move to another country to find places to follow your interest. Therefore, if the school can offer those, whether it’s ballet lessons, sport, music, photography, then those passions can be followed by our parents, our students, our friends of the parents and families and therefore the community’s been extended. ... So that sense of community really does centre around the international school.
(Mark)

The international school often becomes the place where new families meet existing families and make friends, ‘*integrating first into the school community rather than the wider community in Kuala Lumpur.*’ (Neil)

As noted in Chapter 4, this phenomenon has been identified and discussed in the field of HRM but not in international educational research. However, there is clearly a need (due to staff and families being away from home and high turnover which can cause an unsettling feeling of impermanence for the whole community) to create a safe, secure and stable community; one in which people feel protected and supported.

- **A Leadership of Care**

Impermanence appears to also influence leadership styles. We have just discussed the emphasis placed on strong relationships and participants all speak of being people-centred and transformational leaders. However, also pertinent here is the participants' focus on collaborative and distributed leadership. The need to ensure that knowledge, understanding and leadership are widely distributed seems to be particularly relevant in this context. With a high turnover of staff and of Principals themselves, this is necessary to ensure that knowledge is not lost, strategies remain in place and schools continue to develop from year to year.

Participants say that the success of their school is due to the leadership and contribution of all staff, and their narratives confirm that distribution of leadership is also a popular strategy. The frequent uses of '*empowerment*' (Maria, Emily and Mark) and '*collaboration*' (Jim, Josh and Neil) show that Principals understand the power of the collective.

The strength of people-centred leadership, together with distributed leadership in this context is twofold. With high staff turnover a sense of impermanence and uncertainty can develop. The issues of trust, transparency and strong relationships are found in the narratives, together with the need to invest in people, with an ethic of care, to build positive and happy school cultures. Inherent in this is the idea that if we demonstrate care for someone, value them and invest in their development, they will feel safe, be more effective in their role and more inclined to stay. This in turn brings a positive impact on recruitment and retention. The second strength is that through distributed leadership, capacity is built, knowledge is shared and staff are empowered to lead. There is perhaps significant value in this to mitigate the loss of institutional knowledge, understanding and skills through high turnover, and also the ability to be able to promote leaders from within.

This people-centred leadership - characteristic of female leadership - emphasises relationships with others and building communities (Mertz and McNeely, 1998). Conversely, male leadership characteristics tend to encompass individual achievement, independence, procedures, power and authority (Sergiovanni, 1992). This research is showing that a key characteristic of participants' leadership styles is their tendency toward female leadership typologies. This is intriguing and begs the question of whether this is determined by the international environment.

Having discussed the theme of impermanence, specifically its influence on recruitment, induction and retention; duty of care and sense of family; and leadership, we now turn our attention to the second theme that cuts across the research: isolation.

Isolation

The Kuala Lumpur international school context engenders a sense of isolation in a number of ways. First, in the physical and geographical sense - the schools are located in Kuala Lumpur which is far away from the home countries of participants, the majority of teachers and many families. This physical distance is real and can lead to feelings of isolation over being far from friends and family and the support structures of home. Furthermore, there are limited regulatory frameworks within which the schools work and there is no organisation or government body to provide guidance or support. Whilst '*invigorating*' (Karen), it is also '*challenging*' (Mark). This isolation gives rise to distinct challenges which will now be explored.

- **Ambiguity and Vulnerability**

Operating in a context that has limited guidance and support from external agencies can be challenging. For Josh, a key illustration of this was during the severe haze of 2015 when local schools were instructed to close due to dangerous conditions for students. It was not clear at this time if the instruction also covered international schools. Initially, international schools acted

independently, but as the weather conditions became chronic, groups of schools began working together in the absence of local authority guidance, and in the presence of contradictory information from the Ministry of Education:

I had two WhatsApp groups, one for my family of schools and one for AIMS ... we had two polar opposites, groups of parents fighting for it to be closed and fighting for it to be open ... we were trying to give a consistent message out to everyone, and then creating haze policies.

(Josh)

This illustrates how Principals often need to make decisions in something of a vacuum, although, as with networks for learning opportunities, formal networks such as AIMS have been created to provide at least the opportunity to share practice, knowledge and mutual support in times of challenge. However, the competitive international schools market is ever present in the minds of Principals, thus engendering a further sense of isolation.

Participants also feel the sense of isolation when dealing with challenging situations with powerful parents and school governors. They are working in an environment far removed from their home countries' legal and regulatory frameworks, and can feel both exposed and isolated. The lack of guidance and support is significant in these cases and many experience vulnerability, particularly with their own job security. Firstly, there is the 'client' mentality of some parents who, because they are paying fees, can see their relationship with the school as a commercial transaction in which they possess greater rights:

I've had to deal with parents whose children are not coming to school as much as they should be, and that's very difficult to deal with... We're not in the UK, we haven't got that support network, we've only got our policies but these are fee-paying parents and we need to respect them.

(Paul)

However, almost all challenges shared by participants relate to instances with angry parents after an incident happening in school, particularly with local parents with strong influence in the community:

[They] are able to go above you and they have influence there, and they have a very strong influence in the community in that they can almost wield their power above you ... There are times where your hands are almost tied by these people and their positions of prominence. (Josh)

The parents were incredibly powerful Datos and Datins², in fact they would quickly correct me to say they're Sri Dato and Sri Datin. Extremely obnoxious and arrogant and difficult, and made it very difficult with all sorts of threats, but they wouldn't engage, wouldn't actually come in and speak, just by courier and letter. (Mark)

Navigating these kinds of situations requires intercultural knowledge and understanding, together with patience and resilience. Often situations are ambiguous with contradictory or unclear requirements, for example, with Malaysian agencies or complex legalities. Participants reflected on these experiences and their own position within them. The uncertainty of their legal standing and that of the schools within Malaysia was brought to the fore, resulting in fear and anxiety, and a sense of uncertainty and insecurity:

I could have lost my job, could have been thrown out of Malaysia and I thought; that's so easy for someone to do. And we did nothing wrong. (Neil)

I was basically being told, get rid of this problem now, or else we'll be getting rid of you. (Richard)

² Malaysian honours titles: Dato is the most common title awarded in Malaysia. The wife of a Dato is a Datin. Dato Sri is the highest state title conferred by the Ruler on the most deserving recipients who have contributed greatly to the nation or state. (Istiadat, 2017)

The lack of agency (such as LEA) support and unclear requirements is a challenge:

Working outside of your own country makes it difficult because you're not always sure how far reaching ... whether you really know the ethics and working practices of a country and the support you might have ... Whereas at home, you've got a clearer idea whether it's backing from unions, or it's the local authority, things are a lot clearer. (Mark)

This leads to tension for participants, who at times struggle to reconcile their values and beliefs about what they feel is morally right, with well-being and education at the centre of their decisions, and feeling pressure to respond in a different way. How far do they go to remain true to their beliefs? Do they put their jobs on the line? Being isolated and with limited protection and support, these questions are always in participants' minds and their responses are situational. As a result of leading through these challenges in this context, participants learn the skills of compromise and negotiation.

- **The Principal 'Crucible'**

Isolation also has implications for participants' learning. Successful Principals are concerned with developing themselves and others (Gurr, 2014) and results of this study suggest that participants are self-directed and reflective learners. Due to the isolation there are limited opportunities for external leadership development. As such, leaders actively engage their leadership teams in professional leadership learning, developing reciprocal learning relationships through reflection and coaching within their own schools. The use of social media, particularly Twitter, is a significant source of learning and networking for participants, building virtual communities of practice within and beyond Malaysia and South East Asia. In the absence of mandatory, formal and supported opportunities for learning, the data reveals a proactive and forward-looking approach to their own learning. Face-to-face networks exist, such as

AIMS, though however collaborative a leader may be in their own school, there is an element of caution as the international schools' market multiplies and competition increases. This can intensify the feelings of isolation.

Also significant is the lack of formal training and preparation necessitating Principals' learning to be on-the-job, perhaps as a result of the isolated nature of this context. All participants talk about their most powerful learning coming from experiences on the job. Common 'crucibles' (Bennis and Thomas, 2002) were making mistakes, incidents in school, dealing with angry parents and challenging situations with staff and students. Participants reflected on these experiences and identified learning for their practice and development of personal leadership resources. For example, Jim focuses on a recent example of a parental complaint about the sports programme, which he acted on and tried to solve without the involvement of his Athletics Director:

It was such a rookie mistake ... Our protocol is go to the person but instead I took it on and it turned incredibly messy ... Finally I just said, no, this is wrong and went to the Athletic Director. (Jim)

Jim's learning from this experience was threefold: do the right thing no matter how hard it is; do not be political; have honest conversations with people and truly listen. Through this experience Jim also reinforced his knowledge about what makes effective communication and his values about transparency and collaboration. Successful leaders are open-minded and ready to learn (Leithwood et al., 2006:14) and embrace failure (Bennis, 2009). Reflection is a powerful tool for participants to convert experiences into learning and change in practice. Jim reflected on the experience at the time, extracting the key learning points. He then engaged in reflexive practice during the interview to further examine the reasons behind his actions, the assumptions he was making and how this would shape his actions and thoughts moving forward. Thus emphasising that craft knowledge cannot be learnt through textbooks or courses (Fluckiger, Lovett and Dempster, 2014) and must be drawn into a

practice-centred relationship (Bush, 2009; Huber 2011; OECD, 2008; Southworth, 2010).

- **The Expatriate Bubble**

The expatriate teaching community in Kuala Lumpur is close knit and teachers often live in the same location, frequently close to school with their social life revolving around the school and the friendships formed within it. These areas tend also to be expatriate areas, which may also have many parents living within them. Josh describes this phenomenon:

Our teachers basically live within ... if you could draw a circle around the school, their apartments and living are around the school. (Josh)

This has the benefit for teachers and families in that there is a ready-made support network in this isolated environment. However, it can also mean that anxieties and issues can become exaggerated. Caffyn (2007) draws attention to the micro-politics of international schools highlighting the isolation that they face and how this intensifies relationships. No participants go so far as to describe the environment as a 'psychic prison' (Caffyn, 2007). However, the unique Kuala Lumpur international school context is described as a 'bubble'. Mark explains:

There is a dependency culture in that it becomes a bubble. And it depends on how it's presented but it can be a fairly cliquey middle class foreign expat bubble. (Mark)

The metaphor of a 'bubble' is an interesting one to explore and can imply a suspended and self-contained world. It represents expatriates living far away from their home country, in a floating world of their own, away from reality and the social and cultural environment of Kuala Lumpur. Mark highlights the isolated nature of the international school and the expatriate 'false' lifestyle:

There is a contrast when you kind of create that bubble with the Kampung³ that's right next door which is inevitable when you've got that disparity of wealth and opportunity in one place and a lack of it immediately next to it. (Mark)

Two distinct but related challenges emerge for Principals from the interlinked expatriate bubble, closer relationships and proximity with staff, cultural diversity, and the caregiver role. Participants comment that there is a need to be mindful of the fact that teachers have been 'uprooted' (Maria) from their home and that there is a 'duty of care' (Jim). This, together with the concept of staff being 'family' (Frank) creates complexity when dealing with underperformance. Karen considers this complexity:

I am dealing with a member of staff who is not performing as expected but I am very aware that they have uprooted themselves and the possibility of them having to leave mid contract is dodgy ... And there is always the impact on other staff if you are seen to be too reactive and not giving somebody a chance.

There is much to consider and participants stress that although these situations may be hard, they have a clear moral purpose and they do not shy away from challenging conversations and situations, with student experiences and outcomes at the centre of all their decision-making.

The Principals may also need to speak to teachers to remind them of expectations. Josh provides insights into the specific challenges that this can bring in this context:

When you're doing a job as a leader in a school, one of the biggest challenges, especially if you make an internal promotion and you are

³ A Kampung is a small village in Malaysia. The term applies to traditional villages, especially of indigenous peoples, and is also used to refer to urban slum areas and enclosed developments within towns and cities

seen differently, is that teachers are in your social circle as well, which is different from anywhere else. You're in school and if you have to give someone a lesson observation or you have to pull them up on their dress code or expectations in any way, a lot of times on Friday or Saturday you're at a swimming pool with them and their family or you're out to dinner with them or out bowling and I think the line is blurred in the international context of leadership. (Josh)

Josh chooses to live away from school in order to give both physical and emotional distance for himself and his staff. Helen also reflects on this complexity and how the challenge is not just for her but for her staff who can think she is being '*duplicitous*' as she is able to separate work issues from personal issues very clearly. Helen, along with other participants, chooses to limit her socialisation with staff. However, this leads to the intensification of the feeling of isolation for Principals as their social network is grounded in school and the expatriate 'space' or 'bubble' is significantly smaller than in a domestic environment.

- **The Person in the Principal's Office**

The final area to explore within the theme of isolation relates to 'becoming' and the 'inner Principal' (Loader, 2010). We have seen that the concept of isolation has far reaching implications for participants. One such implication is the need to develop strong relationships and a sense of community and family. It is somewhat paradoxical, therefore, that the warm, supportive and caring community that participants seek to develop serves to increase their sense of isolation. The community and friendships are centred around the school in this context, and this social bubble brings unique challenges. The 'bubble' is significant in itself but so also is the '*KL goldfish bowl*' (Helen) where it is difficult to go anywhere without being seen by a member of staff, a child or a parent, and always '*being the Principal*' (Helen), emphasises their '*loneliness*' (Richard) and isolation.

Helen comments on how you need to work much harder to make friends and create a second network:

I don't think I knew how hard I would have to work at that and actually having children facilitated it beautifully. Just as I was giving up about having a social life in KL where the goldfish bowl is just ridiculous, you can't go anywhere and be you, without being seen as principal, whether by a member of staff, a child or a parent. (Helen)

Participants speak of developing 'grit' (Helen), 'resilience' (Maria) and a 'thicker skin' (Josh) and developing a greater degree of independence and self-reliance. They problem-solve in school on a daily basis but also find ways to deal with these situations of loneliness, isolation and stress. The solutions are personal and effective, with all participants finding strategies that work for them:

You have to find an outlet, you have to find something you are passionate about outside of school or even inside of school. I love music, I'm a musician and I'm in a band and I love it. So honestly just putting on a set of headphones and listening to a beautiful piece of music is uplifting. (Jim)

I do mindfulness stuff. I will sit and contemplate and just think it through. I do yoga which helps and I read and other stuff, probably drink way too much alcohol, but I do consciously try and have those moments when I have to process some things so I will sit and think and give myself some time ... I sort of focus on it and then let it go. (Karen)

Finally, we have discussed how Principals acknowledge their role in creating a safe and secure environment for their communities, to minimise the sense of impermanence. However, they also need to develop inner strength and strategies to deal with this for themselves. Benson (2011) reports that the

average length of tenure of international Principals is 3.7 years. The average length of tenure in this study is 4 years and the sense of insecurity is threaded through the narratives of participants, with the thinking that they may lose their jobs as a result of a difference in opinion with the school owner or parental pressure. There is little that can be done to protect against this, so participants develop coping strategies.

Isolation, as we have seen, brings with it many challenges; from professional learning to job security. The lack of support and guidance can be difficult to deal with, and the need is ever-present to build strong and supportive communities, as there are far fewer resources to draw on when faced with a crisis. Having a close-knit community is a strength, however, it can also exaggerate anxieties or accelerate issues when things go wrong. For example, the very relationships and environment that are created to provide care and support can cause complexity when dealing with underperformance as feelings and emotions are intensified in the small and self-contained bubble.

Personal Leadership Resources

The two themes of **impermanence** and **isolation** emerge from the interviews as having significant implications for leading, learning and becoming in multiple ways, including the knowledge and skills required to successfully navigate international school leadership. It is suggested that through these experiences leaders develop heightened personal leadership resources as illustrated in the following figure.

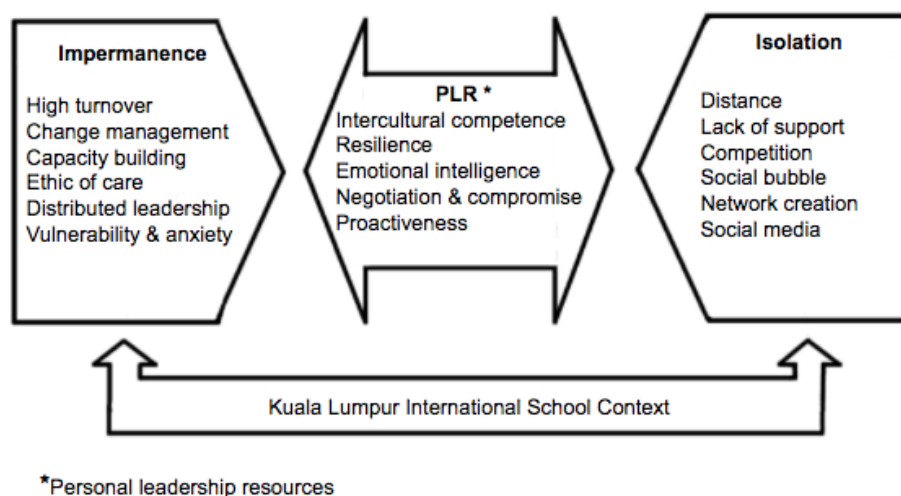


Figure 7.1 The influence of context on the development of personal leadership resources

Successful Principals in domestic contexts globally exhibit these personal leadership resources (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Fink, 2010; Leithwood et al., 2007) and emotional intelligence. Nevertheless, this research suggests they are both particularly needed and well-developed in this (the Kuala Lumpur) context. However, this research cannot assert whether this results from being exposed to the context or if participants already possessed these qualities prior to becoming international Principals.

Learning, Becoming, Leading: a dynamic relationship

To this point we have seen how the themes of impermanence and isolation greatly influence the learning, becoming and leading of the international school Principals in this study. This chapter will now explore the interrelationships and interdependence of these three central themes. The title of this thesis 'Learning, becoming, leading: the experiences of international school Principals' suggests three linear, sequential and separate activities. First you

learn the craft of principalship, then you *become* a Principal and then you *lead* a school in this role. This is certainly not the case. Where does one concept start? Where does another end? Which comes first? In wrestling with this intellectual puzzle, the initial conceptual framework Figure 4.1 (Initial framework for exploring learning, becoming, leading) was designed (see Chapter 4).

This framework began to demonstrate the interrelationships between these three concepts, the Principal and the international context. However, what it does not represent is the non-stop interaction between the concepts. Kolb's (1984) experiential learning model demonstrates a cycle of learning (see Chapter 3). In the context of this research, a Principal leads through a challenge (concrete experience), they reflect on their actions and the context (reflective observation), they identify behaviour to modify (abstract conceptualisation) and they apply this learning in another situation (active experimentation). The narratives of participants are consistent with this model (as seen with Jim's example). However, although this model captures the process of learning, it does not illuminate the interrelationships nor does it support emotions or the development of 'self' implicit within becoming. A process of continual analysis and diagramming took place (see Figure 5.2) and as a teacher I reflected on my knowledge and experience in curriculum design and structuring students' learning journeys and I began to draw parallels between a spiral curriculum design, when a topic is taught and then the core is revisited, deepened and extended to further knowledge. Out of this thinking came the following conceptual framework for understanding and illuminating the interrelationships and process.

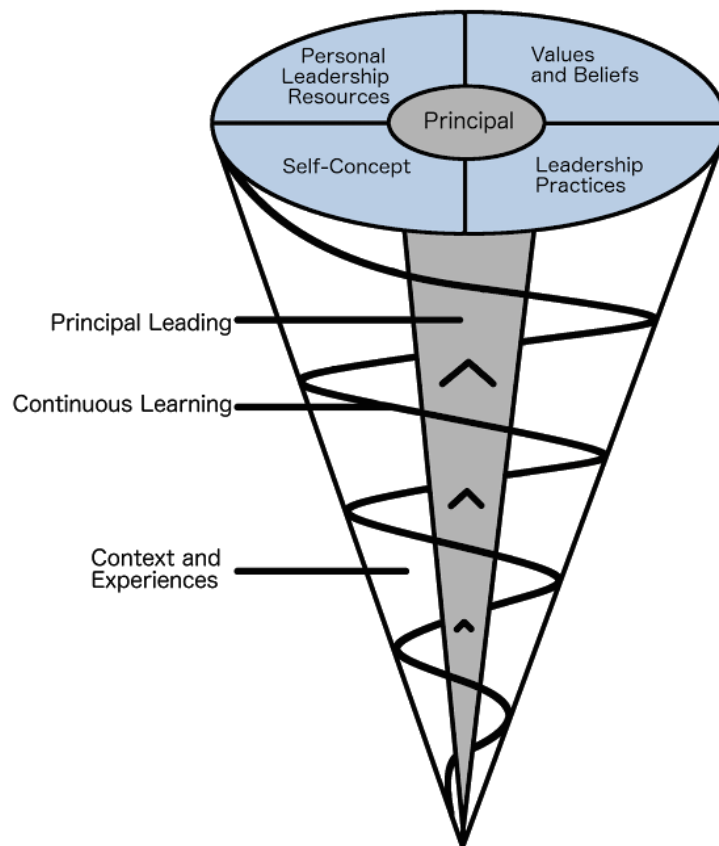


Figure 7.2 The leadership experiential continuum: growing leadership and learning

The Principal and their 'leading' is represented by the central column as leading is a constant once appointed. The space between the central 'leading' column and the outside perimeter represents the context in which they work and lead - the experiences, interactions and relationships which form the basis of their leadership environment on a daily basis and which shape their 'learning' as a leader. The spiral is representative of the continuous learning of the Principal and denotes a deepening and strengthening of knowledge and skills. In the case of a Principal who embraces the learning inherent in becoming a successful leader, the deepening and expanding learning and experience is represented by the widening of the overall shape of the cone.

Where the Principal column meets the top of the diagram, revealing a cross section of the model, are the four key areas in which Principals learn and grow in this study (personal leadership resources, such as resilience, emotional intelligence, communication and political acumen; self-concept, including confidence; values and beliefs, including moral purpose, ethic of care and authenticity; and leadership practices, such as developing people and distributing leadership. Each experience and learning moment will contribute in some way to these four elements, and the 'becoming' of the Principal. It is most useful to see this section of the diagram as slicing transversely through the leadership journey of a Principal, with the revealed cross section being indicative of what leader that Principal has become at that point as a result of their learning through context and formal learning. Thus, the diagram could be sliced at any point to reveal the various stages of 'becoming' for that Principal.

We will now illustrate how the conceptual framework works through a series of vignettes of learning through the experience of one participant Principal (Emily) who is in the third year of her first principalship.

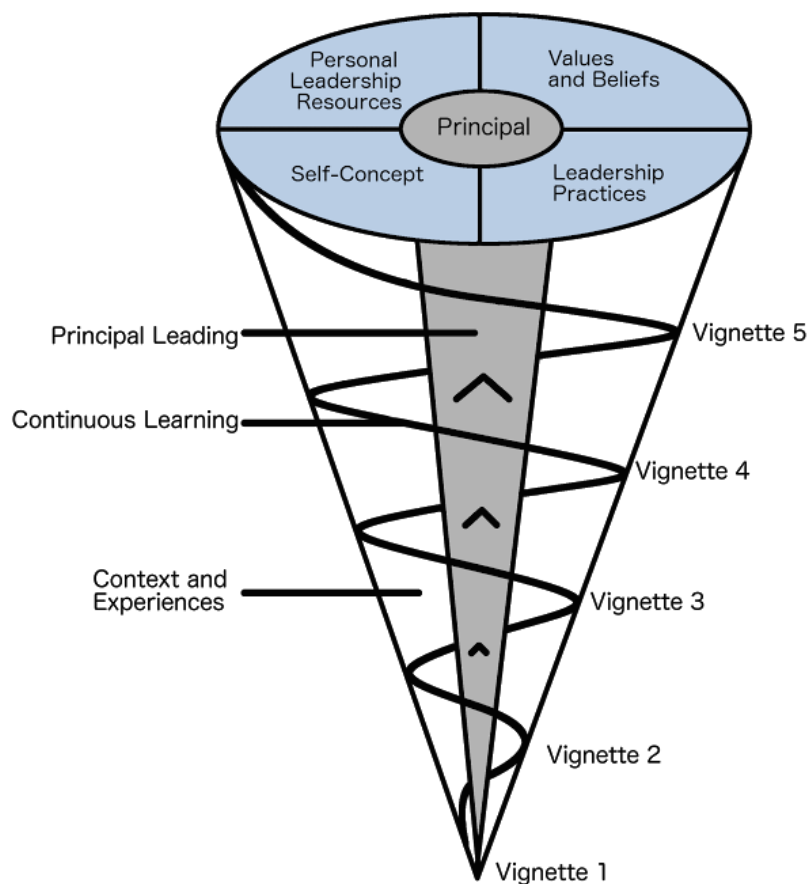


Figure 7.3 The leadership experiential continuum: growing leadership and learning - demonstrating formative learning moments (vignettes)

Vignette 1 - Childhood experiences and influences

Emily's childhood experiences were influential in her desire to become a school leader. Her mother worked in schools as a support assistant for children with special educational needs and behavioural issues. She worked hard and Emily saw the difference that she made to children and was inspired to make a difference. She was also influenced by her aunt. Emily's passion and interest in pastoral care began as a teenager and sowed the seeds for her future values, beliefs and her desire to '*make the biggest difference to more children.*' (Emily)

If we slice through the model at this early point in Emily's leadership development, the cross section is indicative of the proto-leader she has become at that point as a result of her learning through context.



Figure 7.4 Becoming: cross section of leadership journey (vignette 1)

This figure clearly shows that it is in the area of values and beliefs that Emily's early leadership learning was most pronounced. As we continue to slice Emily's model at intervals along her leadership career, we will find that each section will be coloured differently and will deepen to demonstrate learning and development in each dimension.

Vignette 2: Challenging conversations

The second vignette illustrates an important leadership lesson for Emily from a series of experiences of difficult conversations with teachers. She reflects on one in particular:

I had a Head of Key Stage and she wasn't in the right role and I moved her into a Head of Department role. She was really upset and it was one of the most difficult conversations I'd had.

Emily made a series of decisions based on her knowledge and experience of the leader and how she could best serve students:

The thing I've learnt the most is just to have the difficult conversations ... I believe that if you can have open communication then when you do have to have the challenging conversations people realise you're not being difficult, you're doing it for a reason ... so although the difficult conversations when I first went into the role, you know I had to really brace myself for them and go in really prepared, I don't have to do that so much anymore, but I've picked up certain ways of doing it better.

Through having difficult conversations and reflecting, identifying areas for improvement, and applying this knowledge in subsequent conversations, Emily's confidence and skill grew. In addition, so did her beliefs in building strong relationships to support the conversations, and the advantages of openness, transparency and honesty:

It's about being very authentic and serving others and really wanting to make a difference to everyone within the community.

Emily was able to put these values into practice through this difficult conversation and the leader in time came to realise that the move to a different position was the best, not only for the students, but also for herself. These values and beliefs of serving and supporting others continue to shape Emily's actions and further develop from her childhood experiences.



Figure 7.5 Becoming: cross section of leadership journey (vignette 2)

Emily's development can be seen in all the dimensions of leadership with a deepening of values and beliefs and embracing of leadership as service. The figure also shows some development in leadership practices, in this case relating to understanding and developing people through having challenging conversations. Emily's personal leadership resources are also developed at this point with communication, honesty, transparency and making tough decisions; as is her self-concept; as she experiences success in these situations her confidence is beginning to grow.

Vignette 3: Implementing change

When Emily first started in her school there were no systems in place to monitor student progress. In Emily's first year she wanted to implement a comprehensive data tracking system that spanned the secondary school. She pushed ahead quickly to implement this, but before long realised that it was not being fully used and not having the desired impact. Emily reflects:

I was a bit like a dog with a bone with that, but very quickly after the first year realised it was overkill. Teachers just couldn't take it all in and I took a massive step back and I've now got to the point where everyone's on board ... and I am now, three years later, probably where I wanted to be after one year ... But I've learnt you've got to work as fast as the slowest person.

Emily's learning here was significant relating to leadership practices, understanding people and managing the teaching and learning programme. Together with the need to prioritise, plan, engage people in the process and slow down. There was also considerable self-learning, expressed clearly by Emily:

Everyone impacts other people in a good or a bad way. And my knowledge of that has grown, I know that I am quite focused, quite

driven and sometimes people find that hard to take. Expectations are extremely high, which I think you have to have, but ... that's actually one way I've grown a little bit; knowing how to back down a little bit when you need to and not just keep going at it. And give people a bit of breathing space.

Thus the following Figure 7.6 shows that it is in the areas of leadership resources and leadership practices that Emily is deepening awareness and developing.



Figure 7.6 Becoming: cross section of leadership journey (vignette 3)

Vignette 4: Problems to solve

This vignette illustrates not only leadership development for Emily but also highlights two dimensions of the Kuala Lumpur context that have been previously explored. A new teacher started at Horizon School this year and the situation Emily describes exemplifies the East meets West pedagogical debate:

The teacher came from an IB background and has a very different style to other teachers. So parents feel that she's not teaching and their children aren't learning anything, when actually she's very skills-based ... when I am observing her lessons they are learning an awful lot, but

maybe not in the traditional sense ... so there's caution, is there learning, is she teaching anything?

A parent complained about the style of teaching and Emily dealt with it by trying to protect her and by gathering information and speaking to her Head of Department to evaluate and monitor. However, the issue did not resolve and more parents came in to complain. Highlighting again the context, parents had been talking and as Emily explains:

Parents' WhatsApp is a big issue, they WhatsApp everything and everything gets whipped up into a frenzy.

Before long the problem was magnified and it seemed *everybody* was unhappy with this teacher's classroom practice. Emily recognised that she had at first '*dealt with it very badly*' through '*trying to keep it from her and protect her*'. Emily spoke with the teacher, apologised for not involving her sooner, empowered the teacher to deal with the situation herself, and together they worked through the situation by explaining to parents and demonstrating how learning was taking place.

Through this experience, Emily further developed her contextual understanding and her cultural competence and diplomacy. In addition, she developed her problem-solving skills, particularly when involving teaching staff:

If there's a complaint, the first thing you do is you go and speak to them. And you give them back the power, because by the parent contacting you, they've disempowered them and you need to give that back to them. (Emily)

Reflecting on this experience prior to and during the interview, Emily's values and beliefs about collaboration, empowerment, relationships and openness

were reinforced, and she continues to develop the confidence to recognise when something is not working and to apologise for that and seek solutions.

Therefore at this conjecture in Emily's journey we can see, in Figure 7.6, key growth in leadership resources, values and beliefs and self-concept.



Figure 7.7 Becoming: cross section of leadership journey (vignette 4)

Vignette 5: Digging Deep

The final vignette explores Emily's growth and learning through a challenging time during which she had to 'dig deep' and draw upon a range of strategies to manage. Emily's words introduce the scenario:

This is quite difficult to say, my direct leader is very hard on me, I get a lot of negative feedback ... it's made me very resilient because I've reached complete rock bottom this year. And that's been quite a critical path, do I just go back into the classroom, is this really worth it?

Through this time Emily began being coached. She was able to talk through her experiences and feelings, and it was pivotal in helping her to recognise strengths and find positive feedback from other sources, such as parents, teachers and students. Emily also developed her confidence through working with external organisations and leading training for others, which demonstrated

best practice from her school that she had been instrumental in developing. Emily is open and reflective and through this challenging time she began to read more about perfectionism and self-compassion, and through reflection and coaching, grew in awareness of her own habits of being too self-critical, and how to overcome this.



Figure 7.8 Becoming: cross section of leadership journey (vignette 5)

We can see that this figure shows that it is mainly in the areas of leadership resources and self-concept that are most pronounced in this 'slice' of Emily's 'becoming'.

As we have seen, as the leader progresses through this helical model they are exposed to and interact with significant developmental experience (illustrated by the five vignettes) which influence the four dimensions of 'becoming' (leadership resources, values and beliefs, self-concept and leadership practices). As proposed by Kolb (1984) in his experiential learning model, the more consciously and deliberately leaders reflect on these moments, the greater their impact. The impact of these moments could well be positive or negative, as we have seen with Emily, and this has illuminated why the role of a coach/mentor could be so important, i.e. to give these moments clarity and significance, and to reveal their developmental value.

In addition, some of these experiences become significant because they are influenced by lessons learned from prior learning experiences (i.e. values reinforced or challenged or responses (in)validated) - this creates experiential 'matter' (a mass of real and abstract reference points) which broadens the helix (widens the cone) over time by multiplying the experiential reference points or abstract philosophical perspectives.

As these learning moments increase over time this provides the leader with a richer and more varied index of experiential reference points from which to develop a repertoire of leadership competencies or strategies or ways of being or doing and therefore a more sophisticated and reflexive leadership philosophy from which to synthesise the most adroit and apposite responses to future challenges, all of which are unique and therefore require a unique response.

Emily is self-aware, open to learning, able to step out of her comfort zone and take risks, and she has the confidence to accept new challenges and learn new behaviours. Thus, the model in her case has a widening cone demonstrating the increasing experiences, reflection, deepening learning and leadership development. However, this model is adaptive and in contrast, Figure 7.9 could represent a leader who began to learn and develop, being exposed to a range of experiences, reflecting and deepening practice. Despite this, after a period of time we can see that the shape stops widening. This could be due to the context not providing learning experiences and sufficient challenge, or it could be due to the leader not engaging in reflective practice for learning or not applying learning from previous experiences.

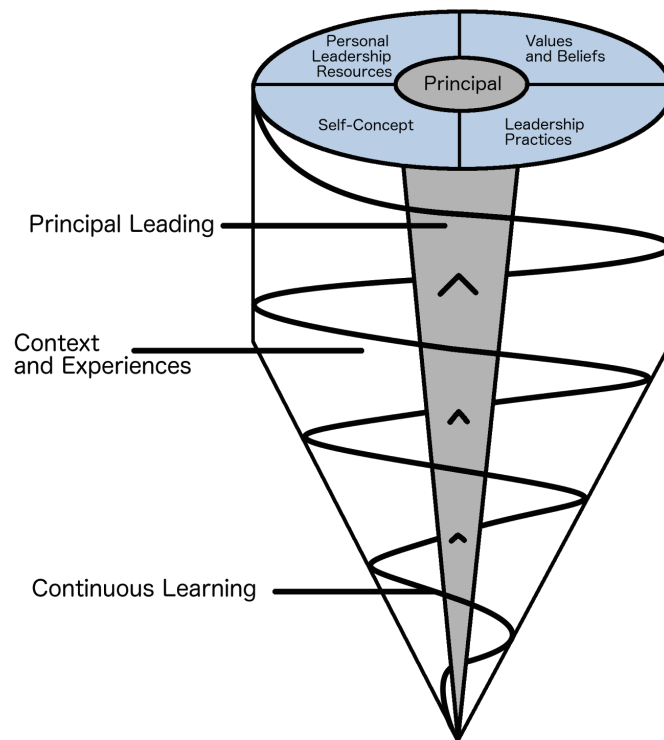


Figure 7. 9 Leadership experiential continuum: stagnating leadership and learning

Furthermore, Figure 7.10 is representative of yet another leadership journey, demonstrating the flexibility and applicability of this conceptual model. This figure demonstrates initial growth and development (widening of the cone) followed by a period of stagnation and, finally, regression (narrowing of the cone). This could represent the final stage of headship, as documented by Day and Bakioğlu (1996) and Weindling (1999), with loss of motivation, interest and satisfaction.

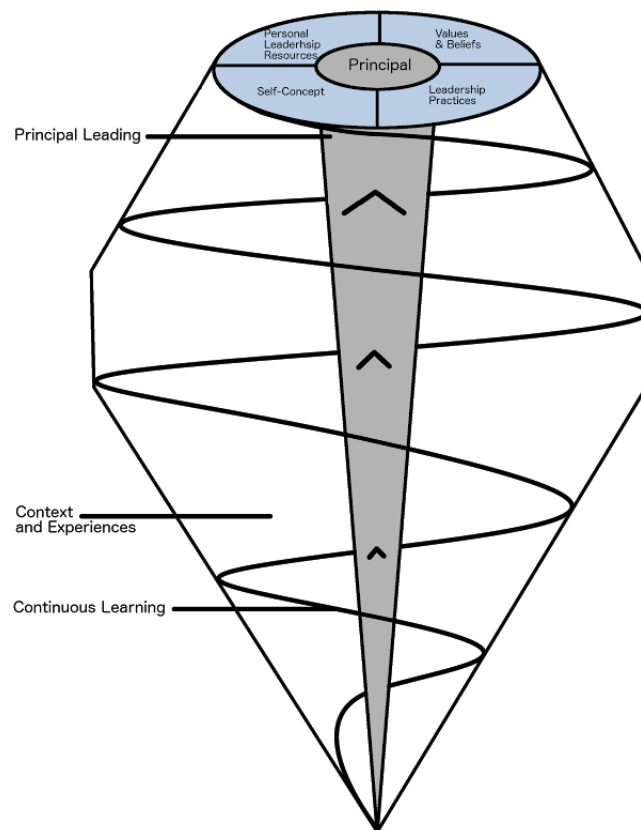


Figure 7.10 Leadership experiential continuum: regressing leadership and learning

The adaptability of the model in this respect means that it can provide a powerful lens through which we can explore and understand Principals' experiences and the interrelationships between the concepts of learning, becoming and leading.

Conclusion

This chapter has synthesised participants' narratives and both described and discussed the holistic picture of leading, learning and becoming in this international school context. The impact of the two themes of impermanence and isolation are deep and far reaching, generating challenges specific to international school Principals. In addition, a powerful model has been proposed to enable greater understanding and conceptualisation of the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading. According to this

model, leadership growth is a continual process influenced by past and current learning experiences, which symbiotically influence and are influenced by the values, beliefs, leadership practices and self-concept of the Principal, as well as their personal leadership resources.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Introduction

This final chapter is devoted to drawing together the findings of this study and answering the research questions posed at the outset. We then consider the implications and recommendations resulting from the findings, followed by an exploration of the study's limitations and suggestions for future research. The chapter concludes with a summary of major findings emerging from the data and, in doing so, highlights the contributions this research makes to the limited body of knowledge on leadership in international schools.

Leadership Research Questions

Research Question 1: How can we understand the experiences of international school Principals in Kuala Lumpur and their core leadership practices?

Six key themes permeate the responses of the participants. Four of these themes (values, vision and setting direction; understanding and developing people; developing the organisation; and managing the teaching and learning programme) are to be expected from the literature and have been discussed in Chapter 6. In addition, two further core leadership practices have emerged as specific to this context and are a key contribution of this research. Leaders:

- Acknowledge and embrace their role in creating a supportive community
- Navigate complex intercultural situations

Each one will now be briefly explored with the influence of the Kuala Lumpur international school context firmly in mind.

Values, vision and setting direction

All participants speak of having strong values and a clear vision for their schools - a successful leadership practice which appears to be universal

regardless of context. However, the impermanent nature of the diverse community is significant with Principals needing to bring a constantly changing community along with them. The diversity itself is discussed as both an opportunity and a challenge by participants. The need to be culturally sensitive and demonstrate cultural intelligence, recognising the implications of, for example, staffroom culture, learning and teaching, curriculum development and communications with parents is paramount. This can be particularly challenging when there are tensions at the centre of the visioning process. One aspect which illustrates this challenge is the 'East meets West' pedagogical debate between Asian parents who have strong beliefs on what constitutes good teaching (teacher centred, rote learning, lots of homework and testing) and Western teachers and international philosophy aiming to develop skills and attributes through a more inquiry- and student-centred approach. This requires careful '*negotiation*' (Graham), '*intercultural competence*' (Karen) and '*systematic yet sensitive*' (Jim) communication strategies.

Developing the Organisation

All participants take action to develop their organisation and improve conditions for learning and teaching. Some narratives replicate theoretical propositions, such as Maria seeking to develop the leadership structure and build capacity, which also reflects Day et al.'s. (2010) phases of leadership. However, it is interesting to note the differences relating to school review and evaluation.

The Malaysian Ministry of Education carries out inspections of international schools every two years, however, these inspections are not widely recognised by the schools or their communities. As such, to support developing the organisation, for quality assurance and marketing purposes, many schools choose international accreditation or inspection programmes. A number of programmes were reported by participants; the Council of International Schools (CIS), British Schools Overseas (BSO) and International Schools

Quality Mark (ISQM). This is significant as they can lead to learning and school improvement. The process leading up to inspection or accreditation is one of self-evaluation for the school, providing rich opportunities to engage in discussion in school about learning and teaching, student outcomes, leadership, systems and structures, and to identify strengths and areas for development. For Helen, despite the fact that her school is well established, there were few policies and procedures in place and 'writing the SEF (self-evaluation form) was the most amazing catalyst' for improvement in her first year. It is interesting that whilst education in England and America comes under criticism for being too controlled by governments and agencies (Huber, 2011), these international school leaders actively look to external bodies for support and accreditation.

Understanding and developing people, and managing the teaching and learning programme

All participants place positive relationships at the core of their practice and emphasise the relevance and importance of caring for their staff and students. The impermanent nature that can characterise international education in Kuala Lumpur, caused by short-term contracts of school staff and families, can lead to a sense of insecurity. Participants recognise this and the way in which they interact, involve, engage with and care for staff permeates their narratives. Reflecting research (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2007; Day et al., 2010; Dimmock, 2012; Senge, 2006), all Principals are engaged in developing people through the creation of learning-centred cultures characterised by trust, distributed leadership and PLCs. To further understand this practice in this context we need to consider the isolation that schools face in terms of access to limited professional learning opportunities for staff, which creates an even greater need to forge strong professional connections and learning within schools. The increasingly competitive nature of schools in Kuala Lumpur may also lead to fewer collaboration and development opportunities for teachers across different schools as each school can become protective of their professional capital.

High impact strategies for managing the teaching and learning programme include lesson observations, student work scrutiny and student voice, feeding back to teachers and coaching (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Dimmock, 2012; Robinson and Timperley, 2007). Participants speak of these practices, emphasising coaching to develop teachers' awareness of their practice and improvement strategies through '*powerful mediating questions*' (Jim) and '*reflective dialogues*' (Mark). This collaborative environment leads to further professional learning opportunities and learning communities, thus minimising the influence of isolation and the competitive environment.

Two interesting additional areas of practice emerge through the narratives of participants and are proposed as important and specific to the Kuala Lumpur international school context. In essence, the Principals in this context acknowledge and embrace their role in creating a supportive community and navigate complex intercultural situations. These additional aspects are explored below.

Acknowledge and embrace their role in creating a supportive community

Through the exploration of impermanence and isolation we have seen the importance that Principals place on developing and sustaining strong and purposeful communities built on positive relationships and trust. The powerful duty of care extends the role of the international school Principal and their relationships with staff, and the school as the centre of the community. The need is strong to create a safe, secure and stable community for all stakeholders who are much more reliant in this context. This responsibility extends beyond the Principals themselves, with participants talking about cultures and structures of collaborative care and support built into induction and beyond. In addition to supporting a wider school ethos, the need to create systems and a collective approach to supporting teachers is grounded in the need to retain teachers.

Navigate complex intercultural situations

The second proposed additional area of practice is that of navigating complex intercultural situations. High expectations are the norm in international schools and one challenge derives from diverse parent expectations, not only working with domestic parents but also international parents with very different cultural backgrounds. This diversity brings communication challenges with parents since participants' schools typically have over 40 different nationalities present in their student and parent body. This creates considerable need for intercultural awareness due to additional complexities. We saw in Chapter 7 how challenging it can be to negotiate difficult situations with parents and outside agencies in the context of isolation. However, the need to navigate complex intercultural situations not only takes place with parents and external agencies but also internally too with staff and students. Challenges that are peculiar to this Malaysian context relate to having a staff body with huge diversity of language, race and religion:

Our non-teaching staff come from a variety of different backgrounds with different languages, our guards don't speak any language that our teaching staff speak. (Helen)

In Malaysia there is a pseudo harmony, a professed harmony ... the staff will say 'that Indian person'; or that 'Chinese person'; they will talk about it in a very diminutive way. (Maria)

This influences leadership actions and communication. It also influences the way leadership is enacted. Neil shares an example of wanting to distribute leadership and working to empower a local teacher in whom he sees great potential as a lead mentor but who is struggling to see herself as a leader:

It's a cultural thing and she's local and she sees me as a man, I guess, a western man who probably should be telling her what to do and they're the kind of boundaries you have to get over I think. (Neil)

As Paul highlights, *'everyone comes from different systems and backgrounds,'* and this provides increased cultural complexity in international schools. The need for *'intercultural competency'* (Karen) is proposed to be an imperative to successfully lead in this context involving managing a diverse community. This can impact all aspects of leadership and management, from running a staff meeting to delegation to communication with parents. There is the potential for additional complexity as language, culture and background can influence understanding and action.

The finding and reporting of these two additional practices are a significant contribution to the body of knowledge on leadership practices of successful Principals in Kuala Lumpur international schools.

Research Question 2: How can we understand the leadership styles of the participant Principals?

In terms of conceptions of leadership, it is clear from the data that there is not one model that fits entirely with the leadership traits exhibited by the participants. Their leadership journeys demonstrate a range of strategies contingent on the stage of their own development and that of their schools. They are not solely transformational, learning-centred or authentic leaders, but they instead demonstrate elements of all. At the heart of their work, they are all concerned with motivating, supporting, developing and caring for staff, and with improving learning, teaching and student outcomes.

The discreet conceptions of leadership outlined in Chapter 2 are limited in utility when describing leadership in this international school context. Marks and Printy (2003) suggest an integrated model of leadership, drawing together elements of transformational and instructional leadership. Participants draw on a *'full leadership toolkit'* (Helen) to be successful and a fully integrated model in this context would include not only transformational and instructional leadership, but also distributed, authentic and relational.

Research Question 3: What knowledge and personal leadership resources are needed for successful leadership in Kuala Lumpur international schools?

The three themes emerging from the interviews are intriguing in the lack of emphasis placed on areas identified by research in domestic settings, such as law, human resources and finance. This is partly explained by the existence of '*strong teams of local staff*' (Josh) who have considerable expertise in these areas and advise, support and manage the business side of the organisation. However, participants recognise their limitations working in a country with a different language, laws, systems and culture and do not attempt to acquire more than a surface level understanding which enables them to function. This, as we have seen, can cause a level of frustration and anxiety, operating outside of the boundaries not only of their knowledge but also their cultural understanding. Principals must therefore seek to understand their context no matter how complex it may be.

Pedagogical knowledge and understanding is highly prized, with participants seeing themselves as chief leaders of learning. They work hard to continue to develop this knowledge, ensuring they are well informed of international trends in learning and teaching and new pedagogical approaches. Although understanding and knowledge in the core business of a school - teaching and learning - is to be expected, the emphasis in this international context is noteworthy. With international schools being what Blandford and Shaw (2001: 9) term 'islands' due to the limited and inconsistent regulatory structures (Blaney, 1991) and the rich and diverse range of cultures and expectations (RSAcademics, 2016), this pedagogical knowledge and instructional leadership is a necessity.

The third and most emphasised area of required knowledge is intra- and interpersonal skills. The need for relational, transformational and distributed leadership has been demonstrated and there are many skills and personal leadership resources that help participants be successful leaders. High levels

of emotional intelligence and leadership resources such as resilience and grit, optimism and growth mindset, compassion and cross-cultural awareness are noted. It is not a stretch to state that considerable emphasis is placed on these due to the international setting; the need to bring a diverse community together in an unstable environment due to high turnover, the ethic of care and the concept of 'family' within the community, and to manage their own well-being and sense of isolation.

Learning and becoming research questions

Research Question 4: How do the Principals develop their leadership practices and personal leadership resources?

Participants prepared to become Principals through a blend of academic study, such as Master's degrees in educational leadership, and learning through previous work experience, life experiences and their work as Deputies. Of these, learning from past experience was valued most highly. No participant took part in any formal or planned induction programmes when they first took up their role as Principal. Considering the cultural and contextual complexities the question is raised about how you can really train or prepare for this role of Principal. However, from the narratives, it is evident that participants did engage fully in the reciprocal process of organisational socialisation, developing tacit knowledge through experience and reflection. The first few years of headship can be a traumatic and incredibly challenging experience (Daresh and Male, 2000; Earley et al., 2011) and it is important to note that whilst participants shared stories about challenges they faced and difficulties they encountered with staff, students, parents and the wider community, their perceptions were different. Participants showed themselves to be pragmatic and deliberate problem-solvers, with growth mindsets; as Helen succinctly reflects '*problems are just problems, there are always solutions.*'

Participants may have wanted to show themselves in the best light possible during the interviews - as heroic and strong leaders. However, their responses were at times emotional and always thoughtful and humble, revealing

weakness as well as strengths and suggesting a high level of veracity to the leadership journeys and experiences they relate. It is interesting to consider the possible nature of a causal link between the fact that these are *international* Principals and the high levels of emotional and social intelligence, resilience and growth mindset exhibited by them. How much, for example, are these traits necessitated by the international context outlined above and how much are they inherent within a school leader prepared to work in an international context on the basis that this requires a particular mindset of possibility, reflection and openness?

Successful leaders and successful learners share common skills and attributes (Claxton, 2002; Southworth, 2010; Swaffield and MacBeath, 2009) such as self-awareness, motivation, resourcefulness and resilience. Personal qualities seem to have an effect on how receptive they are to learning (Hodkinson and Hodkinson, 2004). In the interviews, participants' responses to questions about failure and challenge gave considerable insights into them as people. They are self-motivated and self-directed learners, aware of their strengths and weaknesses, and who actively seek and respond to feedback and construct their learning pathways.

To conclude, participants are open to learning, actively seek feedback and engage in reflective and reflexive practice. They are constructors of their own learning, identifying areas for development through their own and others' evaluations; questioning their own practice through experiences; and learn through a blend of reading, coaching, professional development opportunities (both receiving and facilitating for others) and most frequently through experience and reflection.

Research Question 5: What does it mean to 'become' a Principal?

The process of 'becoming' a Principal for participants began in most cases before appointment. Through feedback, encouragement and advice, they began to develop their self-concept as a Principal - *'to see myself as a*

Principal' (Karen). When their headteacher, peers and teachers demonstrated belief in them and provided feedback to encourage them to apply for promotions to principalship the effect was that their sense of self-belief and confidence increased: *'I began to think I could actually do it'* (Richard). Having begun the principalship, their self-concept and identity began to develop through organisational socialisation, experience and reflection, in part due to successfully working through challenging situations.

Becoming a Principal not only brings changes in self-concept but also in self, with values and beliefs continually being shaped, together with growth in personal qualities, such as resilience and growth mindset. These qualities also develop through successfully navigating the stormy waters of challenge and conflict; *'It's hard but if you're not growing, you're dying right?'* (Jim). Headship is a lonely job and this can make these experiences even more challenging as the number of people to share with and ask for support is limited. This research suggests that this is especially relevant in Kuala Lumpur as participants feel very isolated because of the social bubble. With schools at the centre of the expatriate community, teachers are friends with teachers and parents; everybody knows each other. This can mean that problems are magnified resulting in frequent storms in teacups because it is difficult to create distance and boundaries between work, school, friendships and social lives. Who, then, can the Principals befriend? Who can they be open and honest with? Options are limited by the context. Participants develop their individual strategies for self-care but do feel a sense of loneliness.

Research Question 6: How can we better understand the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading?

In reflecting on the discussion and analysis in response to the research questions, it is evident that learning, becoming and leading are all inextricably linked. In Chapter 7 a powerful model (Figure 7.2 the leadership experiential continuum) was presented as a way to understand and analyse the dynamic

and non-stop interactions between the three concepts and context, leading to a leader's growing, stagnating or regressing development.

Implications and Recommendations

Principals can be vulnerable, particularly in the early stages of their leadership (Crow, 2006; 2007; Earley et al., 2011; ISSPP, 2010) while they are establishing themselves, learning about their new schools and themselves as leaders, and identifying their organisation's developmental needs and the appropriate pace for change. In contrast, the vulnerability felt by participant Principals is not due to organisational socialisation in the early stages of principalship, rather it is as a result of the complexities of working overseas in a multicultural environment and the sense of impermanence, instability and isolation that they face. Although participants state that they have learnt to cope with these situations, they are nonetheless challenging, particularly when they have minimal support.

No participant received specific preparation for their role, nor were they provided with a mentor or coach; any support they had was through their own self-directed learning, drawing on former colleagues and mentors as support, or actively seeking coaching themselves. With the increased sense of isolation this support is very much needed. Focused and well-structured induction programmes should be in place to assimilate the new leader into the new country, school and position. The provision of a well-suited mentor or coach would also be of significant benefit to the new incumbent. There may be a temptation by governing bodies to leave leaders to get on with it - especially if the school is developing well. However, astute governing bodies will continue to play an active role, encouraging professional learning and development, and building strong and supportive partnerships.

The participants are people-centred leaders, who value relationships, collaboration and transparency, and they actively seek to grow these dimensions in their schools. Furthermore, they engaged in this research with a

genuine enthusiasm and openness, often sharing painful stories of relationships that have gone wrong, mistakes they have made and anxieties they harbour. However, threaded through the narratives were many reflections on the increasingly competitive nature of the Kuala Lumpur school market and the sense of being guarded and not being able to share strategies with other schools, perhaps in fear of giving away a competitive advantage. On the other hand, there were stories of leaders and schools working together to be mutually supportive, especially in times of crisis and also in providing training opportunities for teachers.

Principals have so much diverse experience but very little opportunity to share their knowledge, insights and perspectives. Principalship is often solitary – it's lonely at the top – but even more so in international schools due to the isolation. As discussed in Chapter 5, during the embryonic stages of this study, as I was designing the research aims and methodologies, I contemplated a second stage to data generation with a conference to follow the interviews. Participants commented on '*enjoying*' (Emily, Helen, Josh) the interview and how it provided '*an opportunity to reflect*' (Jim) on their leadership. Could this group of Principals set aside their concerns surrounding the competitive market, and create opportunities to meet and share? Not about policy and strategy, but about leadership challenges, reflections and learning; perhaps working together to generate a supportive space for discourse, developing understanding, improving practice, and further research.

Limitations and future research

There are three main limitations to this study which will now be discussed. The first limitation relates to the interviews and lies at the centre of participatory insider/outsider research. As a fellow Principal, occupying the same world as participants, one we have seen to be competitive, did they sometimes tell me what they thought I wanted to hear? Did they tell me the full story or did they seek to hide elements? Walford (2001: 81) asserts that interview data is 'notoriously unreliable' and information can be filtered through the views of the

respondent (Creswell, 2003) and the research only gathers the perspectives of the leaders not their community. However, I kept this in mind at all stages of interpretation and analysis and recognise that the interviews themselves are social processes with participants perhaps constructing their narratives around notions of excellent leadership.

Qualitative analysis of data is the second potential limitation to this study. Interpreting and analysing qualitative data is, to a certain extent, a subjective process since the researcher filters the data through a personal lens (Creswell, 2003). However, I acknowledged possible bias and took steps to limit it. As suggested by Mason (2002: 5) I maintained a high level of reflexivity, challenging my assumptions and questioning at all times the extent to which my 'thoughts, actions and decisions' shaped the interviews themselves and the process of interpretation. Nevertheless, another researcher may code the interview data differently and identify different emerging themes. The interpretation, analysis and conclusions are mine and must be understood as such.

Finally, the third limitation to this study is that it is contextual and as such limits generalisability to other settings. Through the lens of successful school leadership and learning in national settings, this study explores the experiences of successful international school Principals in Kuala Lumpur and a number of important themes have emerged. Further research would be needed to examine the extent to which these might be relevant in other contexts.

This study clearly answers the initial six research questions and identifies important themes. It also raises additional questions, which lead naturally to areas for possible further research.

Firstly, in the under-researched area of international school leadership, contemplating the data presented in this study and being unable to generalise, the following questions are pertinent:

- How does the Kuala Lumpur context reflect the wider Malaysian or South-East Asian educational environments? Are there similar challenges relating to impermanence and isolation? To what extent do international school Principals in other settings adopt the strong ethic of care demonstrated in this research?
- This research proposes two additional core leadership practices for this context, arguing that successful Principals navigate complex intercultural situations and acknowledge and embrace their role in creating a supportive community; to what extent are these two core practices present in other international school contexts?
- What are the experiences of Principals in international schools in Kuala Lumpur that did not meet the 'successful' school criteria for this research, such as being a premium school with strong examination results and university placements (further defined in Chapter 5)? Considering this further, what happens when international leadership is not successful? What might the barriers be?

Secondly, we now have some information about how international Principals learn. With the lack of face-to-face opportunities, participants embraced the use of social media, creating virtual communities of practice; they read and have highly developed reflexive practice, learning from experience. Further research could explore the organisational and personal socialisation process in international schools, reflecting on the added dimensions of intercultural understanding, isolation and impermanence. Furthermore, earlier in this chapter I considered emotional intelligence and personal leadership resources. Reflecting the oft-asked question 'are leaders born or made', a rich area for future research could be to explore whether successful Principals develop personal leadership resources whilst leading international schools in Kuala

Lumpur or if they have them prior to arrival, being by nature someone open to the challenges and adventure involved in moving internationally for work.

Finally, in Chapter 7, an exciting new model was presented to conceptualise and understand the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading. I have discussed this model with a number of colleagues who were immediately engaged, asked questions and began to apply it to different situations. For example, a Principal new to Kuala Lumpur and international school leadership this year was able to apply his experience of no longer developing and growing as a Headteacher in England due to his context, with the model of stagnating leadership (see Figure 7.9). He immediately reflected on his experiences and the various stages of the model and how he has become a different leader this year. This then leads us to ask:

- How can the emergent models of Growing (Figure 7.2), Stagnating (Figure 7.9) and Regressing (Figure 7.10) Leadership and Learning be used in other leadership contexts?
- How can these models be applied to experiential learning and becoming in different contexts, for example, teacher development?
- How could this model be used to assist reflection and learning at the time of learning moments?

Three areas rich for further study have been presented and research in these areas could continue to contribute to the knowledge on international school leadership and on the interrelationships between learning from experience and becoming. To conclude this chapter, we will now consider the contributions that this research makes.

Overall conclusions and contributions

The Principals' narratives and reflections on their learning, becoming and leading, provided rich data to be explored and conceptualised. The findings of this research are significant in a number of ways and it makes clear

contributions to the body of knowledge on leadership in international schools and situated learning.

Firstly, it has highlighted two important themes (impermanence and isolation) that permeate and span the narratives and provide powerful lenses for understanding and exploring international schools together with Principals' experiences of learning, becoming and leading in this under-researched context.

Furthermore, it makes a number of distinctive contributions to the body of knowledge on international school leadership and learning, and they are:

- In addition to the four core leadership practices (Barber, Whelan and Clark, 2010; Leithwood and Day, 2007; Leithwood and Riehl, 2003; OECD, 2008) this research suggests two additional core practices for international school Principals:
 - Navigating complex intercultural situations
 - Acknowledging and embracing their role in creating a supportive community
- There is no single model of leadership and flexibility is important. The leadership needed in this context suggests expanding the model of integrated leadership (Marks and Printy, 2003) to include not only learning-centred and transformational leadership, but distributed leadership with a strong ethic of care and focus on people and relationships.
- Learning and preparation for the complex role of Principal in an international school is challenging. Principals learn from continued on-the-job experiences coupled with critical reflection. Their learning is self-directed, leading to the use of social media and the creation of informal learning networks.

Finally, my ever-present need to visualise concepts to better understand them led to the development of the new model to explore and understand the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading. The model is, in itself, a significant contribution to, and development of, theories of learning, such as Kolb's experiential learning theory and Lave and Wenger's work on learning being a process of social participation, identity formation and belonging. It enables the interrelationships between learning, becoming and leading to be conceptualised and analysed at the time of 'learning crucibles' (Bennis and Thomas, 2002), possibly facilitating greater reflection and learning, either individually or with a coach. In addition, it is an adaptive model; for example, it is able to conceptualise both stagnating and regressing leadership.

This new knowledge can support and encourage development in-practice through its application coupled with reflection, for the Principals themselves, future international school leaders and governing bodies. In addition, it plants a number of seeds for further research within the fertile context of international schools.

Appendix 1: Personal reflections on my leadership journey

I gained my BA (Hons) in Applied Language Studies in 1995 and went straight into studying for my PGCE. I had never really had a burning ambition to become a teacher but in my final year of undergraduate study I had begun to consider a range of possible futures and, more by understanding about what I knew I definitely didn't want to do, rather than what I did, I applied and was accepted for teacher training. The initial theory and lectures were interesting but I will always remember the first time I stood in front of a class on my first teaching practice, with Year 7 bottom set French, as it was at that moment that I realised that this was exactly where I was supposed to be – teaching. From that moment on, I worked harder than I had ever worked before; planning and preparing lessons trying to create the most engaging and interesting activities to capture hearts and minds, inspire learning and ensure progress, followed by marking and providing feedback so that students knew where they were in their learning, their strengths and areas for development.

I was energised and interested in what I was doing - in learning, and the theories of learning from lectures came alive through practical application in the classroom. How do children learn? How could I reach quiet Simon in the corner who seemed afraid to contribute to class? How could I support and enthuse Hardip who would much rather be playing football than learning the intricacies of gender, and definite and indefinite articles? These questions remain today but have developed to include a passion about understanding and facilitating adult learning alongside children.

As a linguist I was fortunate to spend part of my PGCE year studying at university in Barcelona and my second teaching practice was in a school in the city, once again stoking my passion for travel and experiencing other cultures. Whilst there I was struck by the differences in the education system, from curriculum to expectations, systems to relationships; everything was different. The questions that formed there which continue with me today relate to how culture, language and experiences influence education and learning? I was like

a fish out of water for a while, thinking how transferable is my knowledge? How would a student move from one system to another? This was before I had any knowledge of about international schools; I hadn't even started my journey as a teacher in the UK.

Having met my (now) husband whilst on my PGCE, I left London and moved to Coventry with my first teaching position at an 11-16 comprehensive school in a very socially deprived area. It was clear very quickly that what I had learnt at university would be tested to the hilt with high levels of disaffection, serious behavioural issues and a committed but cliquey staff body. I will always remember struggling with a Year 10 class and one boy in particular who used to prefer to stand on the table rather than sit at it. The Headteacher told me that the reason for him misbehaving was down to me not making my lessons interesting enough. His words impacted me hugely as a newly qualified teacher, I felt useless and a rubbish teacher, after all, it was my fault. This was in sharp contrast to my Head of Department who sat with me, nurtured me, built my confidence and together we planned strategies to use to build engagement and manage behaviour. She made me feel safe, supported and inspired to improve my practice. Through this and in my first few months at the school, I took on my first leadership challenge, which was to organise the school's first ever trip to Spain, gaining valuable experience and also inspiring and motivating students with real world opportunities to use their language skills.

With my Head of Department's encouragement I applied later that year to lead, along with a primary teacher, the first Summer Literacy School in Coventry. This was a new government initiative across the country to raise the literacy levels of students moving from Year 6 to Year 7. We were told we had a fixed budget to create a 50-hour summer programme to increase the reading and writing levels of 30 children! What followed was a baptism of fire into leadership and management; planning and developing curriculum, devising the timetable, recruiting students and teaching assistants, bringing parents on

board, liaising with the LEA, budget and resource management and then actually teaching on the programme. I thoroughly enjoyed this experience and the programme was a great success. I gained confidence from this and a desire for further leadership, realising that I could have a much greater positive influence on students alongside my classroom teaching.

In my second year at this school, I was basically running the Spanish department, I led a second trip to Spain and even though I was again leading the Summer Literacy School, I decided I wanted further leadership opportunities and applied to one school to be Head of Spanish and was appointed. This school was much bigger and enabled me to hone my skills of A Level teaching, leading trips again and running the department. For a number of reasons, I was not particularly happy there and following the death of my father, which was a very challenging time for me both personally and professionally, my husband and I decided we would seek a new challenge abroad.

I applied for and had interviews for two positions, one in Bermuda and one in Sri Lanka. Both positions were for mainscale teaching as there were limited advertisements for leadership of languages. I was offered both positions and the draw of pink sand beaches and a higher salary meant I accepted the position in Bermuda. This contract was for three years and I learnt so much more as a teacher in a very different setting to the UK. Everything was different – curriculum, attitudes, expectations. Also, as one of only four expatriate teachers working at the school, I encountered both veiled and open hostility from many teachers. I developed huge amounts of resilience whilst there and still remember being in a room for a Christmas party, surrounded by 100 staff members and feeling the most alone I had ever felt.

Even though I was learning in the classroom (further strategies for behaviour management and motivation) and improving my people skills to deal with uncooperative colleagues, I wanted something more and so when a position

was advertised for a whole school Director of Literacy, I applied. In Bermuda there is a law about employing Bermudians over non-Bermudians so I knew it wasn't likely for me to be appointed. However, after much work by my Principal, the Ministry of Education approved my appointment. The belief that my Principal had in me as the best candidate for the job and the lengths she had to go to in order to prove this, really developed my confidence. When I think back, she was an inspiration in many ways, never wavering in her belief that all students in her school would be successful.

I held this position until the end of my three-year contract and I developed hugely as a leader. There was even more open hostility towards me in this role and I had to work very hard to win trust, demonstrate my commitment to the students and my colleagues, build teams and importantly learn how to get things done through others.

During my time in Bermuda, professional development was not easily accessed so I decided to do further academic study and embarked on an MBA in Educational Management by distance learning. This course was fascinating and each unit involved action research in school to facilitate and contextualise learning, and I began to learn about the 'bigger picture' in schools and in educational leadership.

My next move was to an excellent private international school in Dubai as Head of Faculty for Modern Foreign Languages, where once again I stayed for three years. Here I had the opportunity to further enhance my middle leadership skills, learn from senior leaders and work in the primary phase, and I began to develop and lead workshops on middle leadership (the topic of my dissertation) and completed my MBA. In this role I learnt how to work with students and colleagues from a range of diverse nationalities and backgrounds together with their parents, and the concept of high stakes private education in an increasingly competitive market. My faculty was high performing but also high maintenance and I was still developing my people skills and being able to

have challenging conversations about practice and attitudes. I made a number of mistakes in conversations and began to use reflection as a tool for learning and developing myself. I was determined to be the best leader I could be and researched and read articles, having to be proactive and forward thinking.

I took on as much additional responsibility as I could, trying to expand my horizons and learn. I joined and established whole school working parties on school focus areas such as assessment and differentiation, linking my studies with practice whenever possible. Knowing I wanted to move into senior leadership I asked to shadow senior leaders and be mentored, and to support tasks such as the timetabling process to learn key skills I thought may be useful. I learnt much in the few years I was there, about what to do and what not to do. My confidence and identity was still developing as a leader and I thought I should work to fit a certain mould. In my final year there, a new Principal came to the school and was completely different to any Head I had worked with before. He was personable, visible, humorous and engaged – he also was confident and comfortable to raise issues and put them on the table for discussion. He challenged appropriately and wouldn't let anyone hide, and began to develop a much more open and transparent culture. In the short time I worked with him I learnt that leaders come in many different forms, that challenges should be faced openly, that discussion should be encouraged and probably most importantly that it was ok to be yourself as a leader.

After three years in Dubai I moved into my first senior leadership position as a Vice Principal at a high-performing international school in Hong Kong. My first two years were tough and I quickly, and often painfully, developed a thicker skin, grit and determination, coming quickly to the realisation that people are an organisation's greatest asset and how to work alongside people to best lead. I discovered a depth of character and strength that I didn't know I had through handling a seemingly never-ending range of problems. An early experience sticks in my mind - I was in many ways handed a poisoned chalice, to lead a new ill-conceived reporting system that I had no role in developing

nor believed to be the best option for the school. However, I was told to implement the new system so I set about trying to make it meaningful and get teachers, students and parents on board. This was hard to do because the changes proposed were not viewed by many to be positive. Nevertheless I ploughed ahead and had some quick wins and learnt a lot about the politics in school along the way.

To compound the problem the school had agreed to pilot the use of a new reporting program, which was difficult to use and unfortunately kept crashing, losing data inputted through hours of work from teachers - a recipe for disaster. I needed to resolve this, so worked quickly to identify who could support technically with this and began to log the issues so that we could provide a full evaluation of the program. I then worked to identify who could help in moving reporting forward, formed a team from diverse areas of the school and began negotiations to bring on board a disenfranchised member of staff with huge and untapped talents in this area. Whilst making the system manageable for all in my first year, we worked hard as a group to design considerable improvements for the following year, and developed a five-year plan to create an online reporting system through consultation with all stakeholders, including students and parents.

My learning here was to identify key people with knowledge and skills and bring them on board, creating a team with a shared purpose and clear goals, putting in place a plan, consulting at key stages of development, providing opportunities for other to learn and lead and clear communication. The importance of people in these processes cannot be underestimated – the power of a team based approach. I followed this model to lead on a number of school improvement areas, which were equally successful.

Through the early experience of reporting, I learnt that I needed to have confidence in my convictions and to have the courage to say no, to pull back,

to change course if necessary and most importantly to involve the right people and the right time.

Whilst in Hong Kong I had the opportunity to learn from observing and working closely with a number of experienced and skilled leaders. Distributed leadership was in place in the school and the Principal delegated full responsibility for development areas to his team, providing many opportunities for growth and on-the-job learning. I forged strong relationships with fellow Vice Principals and we shared best practice, talked through ideas and found solutions together. We sought inspiration, guidance and support from each other, and I continued to develop a clear idea of who I wanted to be as a Principal, someone who supported, nurtured and inspired others, someone who made team members feel safe and secure and empowered.

Whilst in Hong Kong I continued to seek out opportunities to learn and develop as a leader, leading the development of others, facilitating leadership learning, training as a coach and learning through challenges, successes and mistakes. Reflection continued to be a vital tool for me in my daily practice and I often kept a reflective journal of my on the job learning.

I knew I was ready to become a Principal when I stopped thinking I could do the job better and being inwardly critical about others' leadership, and when I could articulate exactly how I would do things differently if I was in the same situation and why. When I knew that my values and beliefs about education and leadership were strong and when I could see how they were beginning to underpin all my actions as a leader. The organisation I was working with had a number of schools and I applied for two positions at the same time, making it through to the final three-day selection processes for both. I was unsuccessful in both and was bitterly disappointed with both the process and the subsequent lack of constructive feedback.

This was my first experience of 'failure' with applications and I didn't like it. I had to really dig deep to come out the other side and seek to reenergise in my role and further develop. This resulted in me requesting a change in portfolio, moving from a data, systems and technology based leadership role to leading staff development and leadership of the Middle School. These new roles led to much on the job learning and the opportunity to explore grey areas and solve problems, mainly involving people, and I developed negotiation and mediation skills in the process. I also focussed much energy and time on my newly begun doctoral studies, stepping outside of my comfort zone, even in the choice of not applying for an EdD. From the beginning this was a humbling experience, having never really had to work hard to get good grades and for someone who had always found learning easy, I was challenged and stretched, and it was fabulous!

Having decided to stay and develop in my new role and complete my doctorate, early the following year I spotted an advert for a headship in Argentina and wanting to challenge myself again with leadership in a Spanish speaking environment and wanting my son to have the opportunity to become bilingual like me and experience a very different culture, we discussed as a family and I applied. Only a few weeks later I was flown from Hong Kong to Buenos Aires for a three day interview process and appointed to start the following August.

It became apparent in a very short space of time in Argentina that my first headship was going to be challenging in a number of ways. Firstly, my staff comprised of over 70% part-time teachers - meaning any kind of meetings, training and team building were challenging, and there was a lack of any sense of community and loyalty to the school and children. Teachers came in, delivered a lesson or two and then moved onto their next school. I discovered that only a small percentage of teachers held a teaching qualification or had any real training. Argentine labour laws protected the employee completely and teachers could take time off on full pay for any reason they chose to.

Secondly, students' attitudes to learning were not positive and poor behaviour was not only common but tolerated both inside and outside the classroom. Thirdly, there was no strategic or short-term plan, no use of data, monitoring or tracking systems. Fourthly and probably most importantly, in the first few months of discovering this, I realised that the values system of education in Argentina and its culture, would make any kind of change in the school difficult, without a societal change too.

Undeterred to begin with, I set about creating a three-year development plan to turn the school around, established professional development programmes for teachers (some workshops and importantly year-long courses drawing on PGCE and NQT expectations, and middle leadership), tried to increase the number of full-time staff, created working parties to look at policy and practice regarding learning and teaching and behaviour, and met with students, staff and parents. The previous Head was very directive and nothing happened in school unless he led it. This was a challenge as it was unsustainable and I worked hard to empower middle leaders and teachers to take greater responsibility, with baby steps to begin with.

Sitting alongside all this was learning how to function successfully in a Latin-American culture. Punctuality was non-existent; once people finally arrived you couldn't start a meeting without at least a 15 minute discussion of family, weather, politics or sport; interruptions were common and accepted; an indirect approach to everything was more effective than direct; it was not what you knew but who you knew; and the ability to obtain resources was limited due to government import, manufacturing and purchasing restrictions. Nothing was straightforward and nothing was easy. Lastly, having wanted to return to a Spanish-speaking environment I found myself facing all of these challenges with over 75% of my meetings in Spanish, and Argentine Spanish bears little resemblance to the Spanish I spoke fluently.

By the end of the first 9 months we were making very slow progress but I was exhausted; mentally, physically and emotionally. Everything that I had ever known and believed in about education was called into question on a daily basis and this was tiring. My values were challenged and it became increasingly evident that there was complete discord between my educational philosophy and the educational ethos of not only a school but a society. This was evidenced also by my son's experience in the primary section of the school. He was very unhappy, bullied and alienated, unsupported in his learning and interests and began to withdraw into himself. We made the decision to home-school him, which was not an easy decision to make, after all I was a Head in the same school, not to mention the additional pressure this put on me and my husband. However, his emotional and mental wellbeing, and education was at stake. His welfare and the clash of values and slow progress, made me realise that unfortunately our time in Argentina would be short term rather than long term and our goal of integrating into society, rather than living as an expat, was unattainable, and I began to keep a look out for possible headships in South East Asia.

Fifteen months into my time in Argentina I applied for my current role and was successful, meaning I had 8 months remaining to do my best for the school, staff and students at school. Knowing that this was a finite period of time made it easier to manage and we continued to make progress, introducing a new behaviour for learning policy and a 1:1 technology programme, which were significant successes in this context.

It was hard. It was my first headship and it was all different. I would never repeat it but I am glad I did it as I learnt so much about leadership, different cultures, how to speak with anyone, problem-solving skill, spheres of influence, strategic planning and review, implementing systems and structures, dealing with difficult people and situations to name just a few; and I developed greater resilience, tenacity, determination, humility, and an understanding of the importance of outwardly being calm with a positive and optimistic outlook. I

developed confidence in my leadership, through successes and failures I realised that there is a solution to everything, you just need to calmly and methodically find it. Most importantly though I learnt the importance of working somewhere where my values and my moral compass are aligned with the culture of the country and school.

I am now three years into my second headship back in South East Asia. There have been and continue to be challenges of varying degrees but I meet them with an increased confidence.

Learning in my international headships has been very much self-directed. There is no requirement for an NPQH or its equivalent. I have sought out all my opportunities for learning, mainly through reviewing and highlighting the needs of my school and self, and researching ways to develop and fill the gap.

Appendix 2: Example of invitation to Principals to participate in the research

Dear

We haven't met yet but my name is Sarah Howling and I am the Secondary Principal at the Alice Smith School and also studying for my Doctorate in Social Sciences with the University of Leicester.

I am currently working on my thesis and the title is - Learning, Becoming, Leading: the experiences of international school Principals. I am writing to introduce myself and to invite you to participate in my research, which would be by a face-to-face interview. I have attached further information, which I hope will explain more the scope of my research and methodology.

As a principal myself I am deeply aware of the demands on our time and that this is a big ask at a very busy time of year. I am, however, hopeful that you will read the attached information document and consider being part of this research, which I really believe will be of interest both academically and for us as serving school leaders.

Thank you for taking the time to read this email and attached information, and for your consideration. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions at all. I will contact you again in a few days in the hope we can arrange a time to meet.

My number is 0126864736 and I look forward to hearing from you and hopefully meeting you soon.

Best wishes

Sarah

Appendix 3: Information for participants

My name is Sarah Howling and I am the Secondary Principal of a school here in Kuala Lumpur and a doctoral student at the University of Leicester in the United Kingdom. I am working towards the Doctorate in Social Science and am currently writing my thesis. I am interested in finding out more about the experiences of school leaders and how they learn, and how they develop their professional identity and their leadership in the context of international schools in Kuala Lumpur. I am also interested in finding out the relationships between these themes.

This research is important because the principal's role is pivotal in school improvement and finding out more about the ways in which principals learn and lead will enable leaders to be better supported in their roles. The international school sector is very much under-researched and the findings of this study will be valuable for supporting, developing and improving the professional development of international school leaders.

What does the study involve?

The research involves interviews with between twelve and sixteen Principals or Heads in successful English-medium international schools in Kuala Lumpur. The criteria for selecting schools included being a 'premium school' according to the International School Consultancy (ISC), 2015, (with criteria such as fee level, accreditation by external international bodies, belonging to recognised educational organisations, and being a registered centre for international examinations) together with high enrolment, strong examination results and high level of first choice university destinations for students. The criterion for selection of participants is being a Principal or Headteacher in such a school who has a direct responsibility for leading and managing teaching and learning.

As such a leader, I am writing to ask you to participate in this research. This will involve taking part in a one-to-one conversation ('interview') with me that will last approximately one to two hours between April and July 2016. The date, time and venue for the interview will be convenient for, and agreed by, you. In the interview I will be asking questions relating to your experiences as a leader - past and present; your learning and professional development - past and present; and the forming of your professional identity as a school principal.

The interview will be recorded and transcribed with all identifying information removed. You will receive a transcript and be invited to make comments and/or provide further information in follow up by email, phone call or face-to-face conversation.

This research is for academic purposes and is about developing an understanding of leaders: their learning, identity and leadership in an

international context and not in any way an evaluation of a school or its leadership, or to make judgements about experiences and practice. You will also be provided with information about any emerging themes from this research that may be pertinent to the international school principals' role and professional development.

Agreeing to be part of this research is completely voluntary. You may choose not to answer any questions you do not wish to for any reason and should you change your mind you would be able to withdraw from the project. You will not be asked any questions about why you no longer wish to take part.

Your name and your school's name will be removed from all the information collected from you which will be stored securely in password protected computer files and/or locked filing cabinets. Only I will have access to this stored information. Your name and school's name would not be used in the thesis and pseudonyms will be used.

If you have any questions about this research please do get in touch. I can be contacted on sehowlingkl@gmail.com or 012 686 4736. I will contact you again in a few days' time to ask for your decision or you may contact me if that is more convenient.

Thank you very much for considering getting involved in this research.

Sarah

Appendix 4: Pilot interview guide

Part 1 Demographic information gathering and establishing rapport

Open questions such as: tell me yourself and your current position to elicit:

Name, age, gender, nationality, job title, school leadership structure, time in role, qualifications (why did you study and when.....)– length of tenure etc

Part 2 Question Guide

- What did you do before you became a principal? How did you decide to become a principal? What specific incidences or experiences can you identify as being influential in your desire to become a school leader? Describe your journey to principalship.
- How do you spend most of your time at work? How does this differ to previous positions/contexts? Describe how you feel about the distribution of time.
- From your current experiences, can you please identify an analogy to best summarise your job?
- What do you find most enjoyable in your role?
- What do you find most challenging?
- Describe what you consider to be the most effective leadership style for a principal to address the challenges faced in leading School? To what extent to you employ this leadership style? Has this always been your 'style'?
- What training, development programmes, and qualifications did you undertake before taking up your first principalship? When you first took up this position, what were your initial actions? How did you decide what needed to be done and the order you needed to do them? Have you modified your decision-making strategies over the years? How?
- What do you consider to be the most important knowledge for a principal in an international school to have? How have you learnt/do you learn this knowledge?
- How do you feel you learn best? What forms of learning have you used during this principalship? How have these influenced your practice? Which do you find most useful? Least useful? Which would you like more of?
- What do you consider to be the most important skills and attributes for a principal in an international school to have? How have you developed/do you develop these skills?
- What are the steps you take when you encounter a problem? How/where did you learn these problem solving skills? How have they developed over time? Can you share a recent example of this? (Reflective stories of important events from current/past experience?)

- What are one or two experiences over the course of the past year as a leader that you can identify as being critical in your development as a school leader?
- How did this/these experiences shape your leadership?
- Can you describe an experience you have had as a principal when you have learnt something important through facing a challenge/making a mistake? Can you talk through this learning process? Reflection - when and how do you use reflection as a learning process?
- What (learning) experiences have made you more confident in your role?
- To what extent do you reflect on your personal strengths and weaknesses? How does this impact your learning?
- How do you want to be perceived as a principal? By children, staff, parents? What do you do to develop this persona? What factors influence this development? How has this changed over time?
- How do you manage your personal emotions alongside behaviours and actions?
- To what extent do you feel able to discuss emotions and stress and with whom?
- How do you look after yourself?
- Describe your level of confidence – what are the contributing factors to this? How has this changed over time? Why is this do you think?
- How has your level of enthusiasm and motivation changed over time? Contributing factors...? Why?
- How has your level of job satisfaction changed over time? Contributing factors...? Why?
- Finally what advice would you give to a new principal coming to work in an international school such as?

Appendix 5: Revised final interview guide

Section 1 – History, experiences and school

- Tell me a little about yourself and your current position
 - Name, age, gender, nationality, job title, school leadership structure, time in role – length of tenure etc
- Tell me about your school
- Describe your journey to principalship.
 - What did you do before you became a principal? How did you decide to become a principal?
 - What specific incidences or experiences can you identify as being influential in your desire to become a school leader? What led you? Were there any people that were influential?

Section 2 – Qualifications and training – professional socialisation

- What training, development programmes, and qualifications did you undertake before taking up your first principalship? What did you study, why and when?
- In what other ways did you prepare for your first headship?

Section 3 – The role of the international school principal

- Can you tell me a little about how you spend your time at work?
 - How do you feel about that?
 - How does this differ to previous positions/contexts?
- What is it that you enjoy about that? Why? What do you find most enjoyable in your role?
- What do you find most challenging?
- Describe what you consider to be the most effective leadership style for a principal to address the challenges faced in leading School?
 - To what extent to you employ this leadership style?
 - Has this always been your 'style'? How has this developed and evolved over time?

Section 4 – Learning and organisational socialisation

- What do you consider to be the most important knowledge for a principal in an international school to have?
 - How have you learnt/do you learn this knowledge?
- What do you consider to be the most important skills and attributes for a principal in an international school to have?
 - How have you developed/do you develop these skills?
- How do you feel you learn best?
 - What forms of learning have you used during this principalship?
 - How have these influenced your practice?
 - Which do you find most useful? Least useful? Which would you like more of?
- When you first took up this position, what were your initial actions?
 - How did you decide what needed to be done and the order you needed to do them? Have you modified your decision-making strategies over the years? How?
- What are the steps you take when you encounter a problem?

- How/where did you learn these problem solving skills? How have they developed over time?
 - Can you share a recent example of this? (Reflective stories of important events from current/past experience?)
- What are one or two experiences over the course of the past year as a leader that you can identify as being critical in your development as a school leader?
 - How did this/these experiences shape your leadership?
- Can you describe an experience you have had as a principal when you have learnt something important through facing a challenge/making a mistake?
 - Can you talk through this learning process?
 - Reflection - when and how do you use reflection as a learning process?

Section 5 – Personal Socialisation and the inner leader

- What (learning) experiences have made you more confident in your role?
 - To what extent do you reflect on your personal strengths and weaknesses? How does this impact your learning?
 - Describe your level of confidence – what are the contributing factors to this?
 - How has this changed over time? Why is this do you think?
 - Were there any points when your confidence was knocked and if so why?
- How do you want to be perceived as a principal? By children, staff, parents?
 - What do you do to develop this persona?
 - What factors influence this development?
 - How has this changed over time?
- How do you manage your personal emotions alongside behaviours and actions?
- To what extent do you feel able to discuss emotions and stress and with whom?
 - How do you look after yourself?
- How has your level of enthusiasm and motivation changed over time? Contributing factors...? Why?
- How has your level of job satisfaction changed over time? Contributing factors...? Why?
- From your current experiences, can you please identify an analogy to best summarise your job?
- Finally what advice would you give to a new principal coming to work in an international school such as?

Appendix 6: Participant consent form

Learning, becoming, leading: the experiences of international school leaders in Kuala Lumpur

Researcher: Sarah Howling (doctoral student)
University: University of Leicester, United Kingdom
Email: sehowlingkl@gmail.com
Phone: 012 686 4736

Please initial box

1. I confirm that I have read and understand the information provided in the invitation/information sheet and I have been given the opportunity to ask any questions I may have ☐
2. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time. ☐
3. I agree to take part in the above study ☐

Please initial box

Yes No

4. I understand that taking part in this study will include being interviewed and being audio recorded ☐ ☐
5. I agree to be contacted after the interview for clarification of information and further discussion of points raised ☐ ☐
6. I understand that all written records of the interview will be anonymised and my name or my school's name will not be used ☐ ☐
7. I understand that my personal details such as name and the name of my school will not be revealed by the researcher ☐ ☐
8. I understand that my words may be quoted in the thesis but my name will not be used ☐ ☐
9. I agree that my data gathered in this study may be stored (after it has been anonymised) according to the Data Protection Act and may be used for future research by Sarah Howling. If not used for such further research within a period of 5 years it will be destroyed. ☐ ☐

_____ Name of Participant	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Name of Researcher	_____ Signature	_____ Date

Appendix 7: Non-disclosure agreement for transcription service

Learning, becoming, leading: the experiences of international school leaders in Kuala Lumpur

Researcher: Sarah Howling (doctoral student)
University: University of Leicester, United Kingdom
Email: sehowlingkl@gmail.com
Phone: 012 686 4736

Please initial box

1. In transcribing interviews for this research, I agree to fully adhere to the Data Protection Act ☐
2. I agree to keep the contents of the interviews including personal information and general responses confidential and not disclose any details during transcription or at any time following completion ☐
3. I agree to delete both the audio files and any transcriptions within one week of transfer to the Researcher ☐

Name of Transcriber

Signature

Date

Appendix 8: Principals' profiles

Helen

Helen is the Primary Principal at Kuala Lumpur International School, a well-established school of 800 students and she has been in post for five years. An experienced UK Head, she moved to Kuala Lumpur with her husband when she became incredibly disillusioned with education in England.

I had to take a school through redundancy and turn it into something I knew would fail. I was sat in a coffee shop in tears, telling my husband that I just didn't know how I could be in education and how my experiences had led me to this point. I leafed through the TES and saw the advert – it was fate. I wanted something different and something meaningful again.

Helen's moral compass is very strong and she has a set of core values, which she holds dear.

Education is a vocation ... we don't do it for the money and we don't do it for the holidays, despite the press. We do it because we genuinely want to make a difference. Or I certainly do. I chose it, I didn't fail into it, I strived to do what I wanted to do and I work incredibly hard to get better at what I do. I want to be the best I can be. It isn't for me, it's for all the people that I touch.

For Helen, being a Principal is about touching as many lives as possible and making a difference. She doesn't believe in one effective leadership style and believes international Heads 'have to be able to draw from a leadership toolkit ... switching between styles when necessary'. She uses the analogy of geese flying in formation to describe leadership:

Know when you need to be at the front taking the brunt of it head on into the wind, doing the fighting and then know when to step back from that and let someone else take the lead and to allow them to do that.

Karen

Karen is Principal of Lakeview and has been working internationally for twelve years. This is her first headship and she has been in role for four years having worked as a Deputy Principal in Hong Kong for eight years.

Learning, teaching and pedagogy are the key interests and drivers for Karen.

There's no excuse for bad teaching in an international school, so making sure that the best teaching can happen is my priority, so yeah, being a pedagogical leader is for me the most important thing of a Principal.

People are also important and Karen thinks of herself as a relational leader and one with strong principles:

I think that relationships are really important but not at the expense of people doing the right thing.

And her pragmatic, yet relational approach to leadership can be summed up by her analogy:

It's like trying to get an octopus in a string bag on a bad day and on a good day like conducting an orchestra, it is entirely satisfying when the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

Richard

Richard has been working internationally for over sixteen years and in his present position as Head of Secondary at Lakeview for just one. Richard's own education was in independent boarding and much of his early career was spent working in the same sector and house mastering due to his love of the pastoral side of education.

Richard has a strong awareness of the human nature of organisations and thinks that 'being one type of leader is a fallacy' as to be a successful international school leader you need to be able to do everything and deal with people and instances in different ways. He sums up his leadership style as 'collaborative' emphasising again the importance of people and relationships in his daily work.

Richard feels 'just so gosh darn lucky' to be in his current position and is committed to young people and education, with a strong sense of purpose.

I enjoy being part of an organisation's driving force, you know, moving the culture and developing that. It's a vocational thing. It's not something you can take off like a jacket.

Josh

Josh is an experienced international educator and leader having spent his entire career outside his home country. His current role as Principal of Arch International, a large school of over 2000 students, is his third headship. His interest in and experience of leadership began at college through sports and fraternities, and has continued into education and wanting to make a difference to as many people as possible.

He is driven by a core set of values:

I have come to the conclusion that [leadership] is values driven and it's having your core values that you're unwavering from. And really sticking to those and coming back to them for all your decisions ... if you've got

that integrity and you come out and live those values in everything you do, I think that's the most important.

People and relationships are also important in Josh's leadership:

Connections with people, relationships, the more individual relationships you can have, the more as a whole you can pull the community together. You need to have a telescope and a microscope to be a Principal, the skill of going out far away and seeing the big picture but then getting the microscope and zooming in.

Neil

Neil is Head of Primary at Lakeview and has been in position for nine years having had a career in international education spanning 18 years in a number of different countries and varied leadership positions. His current post is his second headship and he has been with the school since it opened, playing a leading role in its development and growth.

Neil firmly believes in a team-based approach to leadership and focuses on empowering and developing others through powerful relationships built on trust and distributed leadership.

I wouldn't put my house on it but I'd make a good bet that if you asked most teachers in the school they would say they have a big say in what happens and I think that's fantastic ... And my team they can do it without me. And in a way that makes you feel, well what am I doing? But that's the best way!

Maria

After an early career in medical research Maria became a teacher in the UK, moving into middle and senior leadership there before moving to Kuala Lumpur for her first international position as a middle leader. She has been at Arch International for seven years gaining several internal promotions and has been in her current role as Head of Secondary for two years.

Maria is passionate about learning, for herself, her staff and her students, and has a strong moral compass and she is prepared to fight for what she believes will make improvements for her school. She has what she terms as '*passion with a sting*'. Being human is also important for Maria and making connections with people and growing others. This is reflected in her leadership style:

You need to have a balance of styles but a coaching style combined with collaborative have the biggest long-term impact in that you are going to build up sustainable systems. So things will ... I love the idea of, you can take a Head away and they could just watch it and everything will just carry on, because actually your job was to set to make that happen.

Mark

Mark has been working and leading in international schools for seventeen years and his current position of Head of Primary at Arch International is his first headship, and he has been in position for one year. Mark is passionate about education and learning and working with young children, and has always been motivated to improve these areas in a range of contexts. He is driven by a sense of purpose and developing relationships:

I went into teaching as a sense of vocation, and I enjoy working with people and love the sense of community.

When asked about his leadership style he responded with the following analogy:

Leadership is about managing the goo; you can grab it really tightly and control it or you can let it go free. It's neither of those two, it's everywhere in between, and it's knowing how to manage that goo. When to bring it in and when to let it go ... you need to encompass all leadership skills and styles within that to achieve any kind of given goal at any given time.

Jim

Jim is an experienced international school head who has been working outside of this native Canada for 27 years, with his position as Middle School Principal at Malaysia International School his third headship and with nine years in role. He is a passionate people person, student centred with a sharp focus on learning. This quote from Jim encapsulates his leadership platform and style:

Schools are about people and relationships and the people business and that's messy, it's a messy, wonderful, chaotic jumble of development and it's exciting and wonderful and it's got to be joyful. I always like to say that I am playful in approach and serious in intent, serious in purpose, and that's the essence of who I am as an educational leader.

Paul

Paul is the Head of Primary at Horizon School and has been there since it opened in 2011. Originally from the UK he has been working in international education for fourteen years and his current position is his first headship. Teaching and educational leadership has always been a calling for Paul and he has taken every opportunity to lead and learn during his career:

I knew from the moment I went to university what I wanted to do, which was to be a teacher, and then from that point I knew I wanted to aspire to be a Headteacher.

Flexibility, valuing people and building relationships for shared leadership are the cornerstone of his leadership philosophy:

Being able to adopt a different, a variety of different ways of approaching things, and being flexible in dealing with things as they come and not sticking to one style of leadership ... and you have to listen to people, to get to know them, find out what's going on. Everyone's got a part to play, like in an orchestra.... You're like the conductor who's relying on people's ability to do their roles in sync with what you are expecting.

Frank

Frank came into teaching after a successful career in industry and is the founding Principal of Horizon School, a school with an enrolment of just over 900 students. He is an experienced international school leader having worked in a number of schools in different countries.

People and core values are at the heart of Frank's leadership practice:

It's a we rather than an I, we're in this together and we're here for the children.

When asked about his leadership style Frank shared:

You have to have a strong leadership style [...] you have to be able to adapt your leadership style depending on a situation and depending on people.

Emily

Emily has been Head of Secondary at Horizon School for the last three years and this is her first headship. After a short career as a physiotherapist during which she realised through training students that what she really wanted to do was teach, Emily started her PGCE and 'loved every minute of it'.

I knew from the outset that this was me and that I wanted to make a difference and want to move up fairly quickly to have a bigger influence.

Emily is committed to learning, for herself, her staff and her students and clearly articulates her leadership platform:

I want to make a difference ... make a community of learners where everyone is communicating with strong relationships and ... being authentic and serving others.

Her care and passion for supporting the development of others is evident through her analogy of her work:

It's like being a craftsman and seeing things and talents in people they might not have seen in themselves ... and building them and

crafting them so they can become these little gems, these little diamonds, who can then really have a massive impact.

Graham

With a career spanning state education and independent boarding in the UK and overseas, Graham is in the third year of his role as Head of Secondary, his first headship, at St George's International School. He has worked to establish the school and student numbers continue to grow. Although a dedicated and able leader he states he '*never had a burning desire to become a head*' and '*was never ambitious in this way.*'

He lives by a core set of principles and believes firmly in consultation, collaborative decision making and distributed leadership:

I really believe in allowing Middle Leaders to make decisions, and I think one of the mistakes that a lot of schools make is not placing enough value in really good Middle Leaders ... they're the ones that transform the teaching and learning.

Appendix 9: University ethics approval

University Ethics Sub-Committee for Media and Communication and School of Management
10/03/2016

Ethics Reference: 4911-seh46-schoolofmanagement

TO:

Name of Researcher Applicant: Sarah Howling

Department: Labour Market Studies

Research Project Title: Learning, becoming, leading: the experiences of international school leaders

Dear Sarah Howling,

RE: Ethics review of Research Study application

The University Ethics Sub-Committee for Media and Communication and School of Management has reviewed and discussed the above application.

1. Ethical opinion

The Sub-Committee grants ethical approval to the above research project on the basis described in the application form and supporting documentation, subject to the conditions specified below.

2. Summary of ethics review discussion

The Committee noted the following issues:

Both reviewers are satisfied that you have a thorough assessment of ethical risks and a clear management strategy to deal with risk. If there are any changes in your field research that changes your assessment of risk, or any changes in the research design please make sure you apply for an amendment to this ethics approval. Our best wishes for your research, Andrea (Dr Andrea Davies, DEO School of Management)

3. General conditions of the ethical approval

The ethics approval is subject to the following general conditions being met prior to the start of the project:

As the Principal Investigator, you are expected to deliver the research project in accordance with the University's policies and procedures, which includes the University's Research Code of Conduct and the University's Research Ethics Policy.

If relevant, management permission or approval (gate keeper role) must be obtained from host organisation prior to the start of the study at the site concerned.

4. Reporting requirements after ethical approval

You are expected to notify the Sub-Committee about:

- Significant amendments to the project
- Serious breaches of the protocol

- Annual progress reports
- Notifying the end of the study

5. Use of application information

Details from your ethics application will be stored on the University Ethics Online System. With your permission, the Sub-Committee may wish to use parts of the application in an anonymised format for training or sharing best practice. Please let me know if you do not want the application details to be used in this manner.

Best wishes for the success of this research project.

Yours sincerely,

Dr. Natasha Whiteman
Chair

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