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# HIGHLY EFFECTIVE SCHOOL PRINCIPALSHIP

**An investigation of the views of six Solomon Islands' Community High School principals of what constitutes highly effective school principalship and their views on issues that impede their effective practice.**



THE UNIVERSITY OF  
**WAIKATO**  
*Te Whare Wānanga o Waikato*

**A thesis**

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of the requirements for the degree  
of**

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**at**

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**by**

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**Hamilton New Zealand**

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## ABSTRACT

*“Batu velakero iri kenaga, loboro mana vakatikili gira vano muzi”  
(Highly effective leaders are at the front, walk in the middle, and  
encourage those from behind to catch up)*

My uncle Zorapa said, while I was on a ‘pig-hunting’ trip with him some twenty odd years ago, that school principals, like all leaders, can only be called leaders if they make a difference. In modern parlance, one frequently encounters this homespun wisdom in the statement that highly effective schools are led by highly effective principals. .

This study investigates the perceptions of six practicing principals of the elements of highly effective principalship in Solomon Islands’ Community High schools. The study investigates and explores these perceptions and tries to describe the elements of highly effective principalship and the impediments that may prevent principals from becoming effective. The study hopes to contribute towards the possible development of highly effective principalship in the Solomon Islands schools.

The finding of this research reveals that although the participating principals were very experienced, their responses indicate that there appeared to be no theory-driven basis for their practice. Similarly, the perceptions expressed reveal the urgent need for the Solomon Islands to pay more attention to leadership development strategies that will see the creation of national, and personal, leadership philosophies and set the process of ongoing leadership development, enhancement and improvement in the country. The proposed strategies must incorporate current international research and literature on educational leadership theories as well as building on current practice in the Solomon Islands that is nationally and culturally appropriate. In addition, the study suggests that current practitioners should be encouraged to engage in educational leadership research and begin to build a national literature base.

This study suggests that the process of establishing the notion of highly effective educational leadership in the country's school system should start as soon as possible. Those in policy and decision-making positions must have the courage to implement strategies that will contribute to improved levels of educational leadership in order to raise the quality of education for all learners in the country. The children are the future prosperity of the country.

## DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my mother, *Margaret Mary Pigatauguru* who I did not have the privilege and honour of knowing well, as she left me early in my life and did not have the opportunity to see her son come this far.

*Kenakena ke raro dena Kanae! (This is your share of my achievement, Mum!)*

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# CHAPTER ONE:INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 An overview of the study

*“Highly successful schools are driven by highly effective principals”* (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992; Calabrese & Zepeda, 1999; Day & Harris, 2001; Fullan, 2002; Milliken, 2002; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

The schools in the Solomon Islands are charged with the enormous responsibility of preparing young Solomon Islanders for life (Delors, 1996). The school principals are very significant players in seeing that schools are successful (Bass, 1985; Bennett, Wise & Woods, 2003; Caldwell, 2006; Day & Harris, 2001; Hord, 1997; Lambert, 2005; Southworth, 1999; West-Burnham, 2004). This study investigates the perceptions of six current Community High School principals regarding what constitutes highly effective school principalship and their views on issues that impede their practice in the Solomon Islands’ Community High Schools.

The way leadership is practiced in today’s schools is, at times, problematic. There is evidence that these concerns have been commonly expressed by parents and the general public in the Solomon Islands, regarding the lack of effectiveness and efficiency in school leadership (Bass, 1985; Blasé, 1987; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Hoy, & Miskkel, 1991; Malasa, 2007; Yukl, 1994). By viewing such concerns, it is believed that there is a need to explore current school principals’ perceptions of what constitutes “highly effective principalship” which is, itself, undoubtedly, a contestable concept not least of all because of the contextual specificity of the concept. At the same time, the study will encourage the principals to identify and articulate prevailing issues that prevent them from performing well in their schools. It is believed that unless the current and future principals are made aware of the elements of highly effective principalship, they will continue to lead our schools without basing or informing their leadership practices with reference to current literature. Leading today’s Solomon Islands schools, without having any knowledge of what the current literature says on highly effective principalship, is like a captain on a ship journeying out into the

ocean without navigational equipment. The journey will depend on the Captain's trial and error tactics and can only reach the destination by sheer luck. From a long term perspective, it is imperative that the Solomon Islands schools are led by principals who are highly effective and who appropriate knowledge, skills, vision and foresight, based on professional experience and current leadership theory.

## **1.2 Introduction**

The Solomon Islands schools must ensure to provide and facilitate learning experiences built on the existing world knowledge and skills in this field, to successfully celebrate and enhance social capital (Bourdieu, 1971; Morrison 2006). Young Solomon Islanders must be encouraged to use contextually appropriate learning approaches that encourage critical inquiry, creativity, and experimentation. They must also approach learning independently and collaboratively (Claxton, 2002). This learning undertaking will need highly effective principals to lead the schools (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992; Bourdieu, 1971; Calabrese & Zepeda, 1999; Day & Harris, 2001; Fullan, 2002; Milliken, 2002; Morrison, 2006; Stoll & Fink, 1996).

Researchers are explicit in emphasising the fact that for any school to be successful, it must be lead by a highly effective principal (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992; Calabrese & Zepeda, 1999; Day & Harris, 2001; Fullan, 2002; Milliken, 2002; Stoll & Fink, 1996). Consequently the need to examine the current Solomon Islands school leadership/principalship is necessary to ascertain whether current leadership practices are congruent with current literature, and are contextually appropriate.

### **1.3 The concept of school leadership**

Leadership within the Solomon Islands traditional context is not a new concept. In fact leadership plays an important part (Keesing, 1989; Malasa, 2007; Sikua, 2002) in the diverse and complex social structure of most communities throughout the country (Stevenson, 1988). Among the Melanesian communities, leadership is mostly determined by the 'big man' system. This is discussed in greater detail in a later chapter.

However, leadership within the school context is new and though there are similarities it is conceptually different. Most school leaders in the Solomon Islands are finding it difficult to come to terms with this different view of leadership.

Since the Solomon Islands gained political independence in 1978, the country has experienced a decline in effective leadership in the schools. The lack of effective leadership becomes more noticeable as the country established Community High Schools. Since 1995 a number of school leadership issues have arisen. A large number of these are directly attributable to the fact that the schools were staffed by untrained teachers and inexperienced principals (Ministry of Education, 2004). Additionally, the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Education Authorities do not have the capacity to follow up and support these school leaders. Furthermore, there is insufficient up to date literature available for school leaders in the Solomon Islands which can inform their practice. This has led to comments and criticisms from public and senior members of the community about the deteriorating state of leadership in the Community High Schools.

Although the claims made above cannot be substantiated based on any research, the underlying problems arise because of the way the country has approached the notion of school leadership development. This means that successive governments have paid little attention to preparing or training future school principals. Similarly, the tertiary educational institutions in the country do not have established leadership programs. As a result, there is an observable lack of

available literature on educational leadership and school leadership/principalship in the libraries throughout the Solomon Islands.

As a serving principal, I am interested in establishing how my colleagues interpret or understand the concept of highly effective principalship. It is obviously a contestable notion. However, it would be beneficial to the country if principals could begin to develop a shared generic understanding of the concept as it could arguably inform the professional development of future principals. In a pilot study I was alerted to a potential dichotomy between espoused theory and theory in action. Therefore, I have added another dimension to the study which seeks the participants' views on issues and problems that might inhibit their effective leadership practices. Consequently, my central, dual question is:

*In the opinion of principals, what are the elements of highly effective principalship and what issues inhibit their effectiveness in Community High schools in the Solomon Islands?*

#### **1.4 Principalship studies**

I have a compelling and personal interest in this area as I am a serving principal in the Solomon Islands.

My career as a school principal began when I was first appointed as the principal of Avuavu Provincial Secondary School in 1987. I started off with very little idea of what this responsibility entailed. Over the years, I started to explore what it means to be an effective school principal. My interest in undertaking this study was further enhanced by the leadership studies I have pursued in the University of Waikato Leadership centre. The vast amount of literature describing the leadership experiences and studies by researchers in schools in many Western and developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, intrigued me and I began to wonder if some of these leadership styles would be appropriate to improve the Solomon Islands school leadership, in particular school principalship. How many of these experiences discussed in the literature are applicable, relate to, and can be adapted to improve school principals

in the Solomon Islands schools? Can the stories of how principals successfully lead and manage their schools, be adapted to different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds like the Solomon Islands schools? Can this available knowledge about how principals lead schools in a developed country be valid in developing countries such as the Solomon Islands? These questions have fuelled my interest in pursuing research focusing on the elements of highly effective principalship and the issues that impede these highly effective practices? An initial literature search indicated that very little research has been done on Solomon Islands school principalship practices.

### **1.5 The purpose of study**

There are national policy issues inherent in the inadequacy of leadership practices in Solomon Islands. Over the years successive governments have failed to allocate resources for the positive development of leadership in Solomon Islands. The information gathered from this study has the potential to assist current school principals, in the Solomon Islands schools. It could also be useful for the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education in formulating systems and procedures for effective leadership of schools throughout the country, and contribute to leadership development programmes nationally. This study can also further assist the Provincial Education Authorities, school boards and local communities in identifying areas in which school principals may need support in leading schools.

### **1.6 Background features**

The Solomon Islands is an archipelago of islands in the Southwest Pacific about 1,900 kilometres northeast of Australia. The country stretches from Papua New Guinea across to Vanuatu. The six main islands of Choiseul, New Georgia, Santa Isabel, Guadalcanal, Malaita, and Makira have rain forested mountain ranges of mainly volcanic origin, deep narrow valleys, and coastal belts lined with coconut palms and ringed by reefs. The smaller islands are atolls and raised coral reefs and lagoons. These features impact substantially on logistics and communication in effective delivery of services such as education throughout the country.

The Solomon Islands comprise diverse cultures, languages, and customs. The country's population is approximately 500,000 of which 93.3% are Melanesian, 4% Polynesian, and 1.5% Micronesian. In addition, small numbers of Europeans and Chinese are registered. Many different vernacular languages are spoken in Solomon Islands. Most people reside in rural areas in small, widely dispersed settlements along the coasts. The capital city of Honiara, situated on Guadalcanal, the largest island, has over 70,000 inhabitants. There are other principal towns such as Gizo, Auki, and Kirakira. The recognition of bonds of kinship, with important obligations extending beyond the immediate family group, and local and clan loyalties, far outweigh regional or national affiliations. This is considered one of the factors that have fuelled recent ethnic tension. The social structure of most communities is generally egalitarian, emphasizing acquired rather than inherited status, and a strong attachment of the people to the land. Most Solomon Islanders maintain this traditional social structure and find their roots in village life (Malasa, 2007).

### **1.7 The education system**

The education system in the Solomon Islands is administered under the Education Act of 1978 (Education Act, 1978, Solomon Islands). The Act provides the legal basis on which much administration of the country's education system was decentralized to the education boards of the nine provincial governments, the Honiara City Council, the various churches and private controlling authorities. This decentralization was perceived to be necessary for reasons of geographic isolation and the associated issues of communication and transportation, and the religious and cultural diversity of the country (Bray, 1991; Malasa, 2007; Sikua, 2002).

In a matter of one year the number of schools, principals, teachers and students has increased dramatically. Malasa (2007) has quantified the schools as over 600 primary schools with a student enrolment of 85,000 and 140 secondary schools with a student enrolment of 29,000 and a teaching establishment of over 4,000 principals and teachers. The figures for 2007 show a dramatic increase in all areas; 761 primary schools, 155 secondary schools, and the principals and

teachers number stood at 6,460 with total student enrolment of 130,000 (Ministry of Education 2007).

There are three types of secondary schools:

- The first type to be established was the National Secondary Schools administered by the national government through the Ministry of Education or the churches. Being national schools, they enroll students from all over the country from Forms one to seven (years seven to thirteen). There are currently nine National Secondary Schools throughout the country.
- The second type to be established was the Provincial Secondary Schools. These schools, as the name suggests, are located in the country's nine provinces. Their host provincial governments, including the Honiara City Council, administer them. There are currently fifteen provincial secondary schools throughout the country. These schools enrol students from Form 1 to Form 6 (year seven to year twelve), with the majority of the students taken from the host province.
- The third and latest to be established are the Community High Schools. These schools are mostly rural and community-based and are administered by the Churches and Provincial Education Authorities. Most are extensions of existing primary schools and enrol students up to Year 9, although some schools go up to Year 12. The school leadership structure consists of a principal, and two deputy principals, each representing the primary and secondary sectors.

### **1.8 School principalship**

The increase in the number of secondary schools has resulted in an increased demand for principals. The principals in both the Provincial and National secondary schools work with the Deputy Principal and subject department heads and teachers. However, in Community High Schools, the principals work with two Deputy Principals and primary senior teachers and heads of subjects in secondary. Thus the decision base is broader than the other two types of secondary school.

The next chapter reviews the relevant literature on educational leadership/principalship and in particular the relevant literature on the role of school leaders, within the context of what has been found about effective educational leadership.

## CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 Introduction

*“Leadership develops potential and builds community”* (Noonan 2003, p.3) is a simple but highly meaningful definition of what leadership connotes. Some authors would consider this definition inadequate. A literature review of the studies of ‘leaders and leadership’ is necessary in order to explore further, other authors’ perceptions of the concept of leadership. Chemers (1997) suggests that one of the reasons why there was so much interest shown in this area was because it was closely linked to large profits in business organizations.

This project is specifically focused on leadership in schools and focuses on the concept of highly effective school principalship.

The notion of “highly effective” is contestable but one that is nevertheless commonly used in the literature. A number of authors make the claim that highly effective schools are led by highly effective principals (Beare, Caldwell, & Millikan, 1992; Calabrese & Zepeda, 1999; Day & Harris, 2001; Fullan, 2002; Morrison, 2006; Thody, 1998). This has led a number of researchers to explore the concepts of effective educational leadership, school leadership and principalship. This has resulted in a range of emerging theories, paradigms and perspectives (Fullan, 2002; Goddard, 2003; Robertson, 1995; Sergiovanni, 2001; Sigford, 2003; Southworth, 1999). The demands and expectations that our societies have on schools and the school system continue to exert great pressure for more effective school leadership (Bennett & Anderson, 2003; Chemers, 1997; Day & Harris, 2001; Leithwood, 2005; Robertson, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992; Soder, 1990). The perception that effective school leadership is the important key to successful schools has prompted the need for educational reforms and improvements in a number of countries, as well as Ministries and other educational organizations (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Fullan, 2002; Harris, 2002; Stewart; 2000).

The review of the literature will begin by comparing and exploring the concepts of educational leadership, school leadership and principalship. It will then discuss briefly the eurocentricity of the existing research. The project will later review and explore traditional leadership paradigms and how the various Solomon Islands communities have selected their traditional leaders. Similarly, it will explore and review the different theories of leadership as viewed by eurocentric writers. The project will later explore the educational leadership paradigms, in close consultation with the available literature. In the same way, the project will look at the varying definitions of leadership, management and administration as concepts. Finally, this literature review will explore the elements of effective principalship as perceived by the literature. It is anticipated that this review exercise will assist this research project to identify suitable theories and paradigms that can best be utilised to suit the Solomon Islands' school principalship context.

## **2.2 The concepts of educational leadership, school leadership and Principalship**

Developing and using consistent vocabulary on these three concepts, Educational leadership, School leadership and Principalship is important. The literature often uses educational leadership as an overarching term to refer to those who lead schools, and those who are in "official" positions of leadership. However, school leadership can connote the process of leading or can also mean a group of leaders in a school. The principal is the head of a school and represents a position and a function. In some circumstances the three terms can all refer to a single person. Lambert (2003) suggests "that leadership is the cumulative process of learning through which we achieve the purposes of the school" (p.3). Glanz (2006a) described leadership as persons who collaborate towards shared goals and influence cultural changes for school improvements. Although this project will be exploring the views of some current school principals on highly effective principalship, it is essential to understand the different vocabularies used to describe the leadership concept.

### **2.3 Eurocentricity of existing research**

Most of the literature I have discovered and utilised in the research process is strongly eurocentric. It appears to focus primarily on research undertaken in the United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, United States, and European countries (Bennett, & Anderson, 2003; Bishop, 1997; Blackmore, 2002; Caldwell, 2006; Duignan, 1989; Fullan, 2003; Glanz, 2006a; Goddard, 2003; Robertson, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1990, 1995, 2001; Southworth, 1995, 2005; Strike, 2007; and West-Burham 2005). In spite of that, much is yet to be explored in the developing countries, especially the South Pacific Region where the Solomon Islands is located. This means that the theories and perspectives of school leadership/principalship portrayed in the current literature may not apply directly in the Solomon Islands' context. They may lack context, specificity and relevance, as most are based mainly on eurocentric or Anglo-American perspectives, values and beliefs (Dimmock & Walker, 2002). Dimmock and Walker (2002) state that there may be dangers in failing to recognise that theories and practices and imported expertise may not readily apply to different nationalities or cultural backgrounds, although 'cross-fertilization' of ideas and approaches can be beneficial. Smith (1998) supported the same idea and suggested that only those who understand the cultural background of a community can best develop appropriate and effective theories and practices. Therefore, for any theory, ideas and approaches to be successful in developing countries such as the Solomon Islands, the researcher or educational practitioner needs to understand the cultural background of these countries.

Additionally, the idea of adapting theories and practices of effective school leadership from developed countries to developing countries may not fit in well, with the social, cultural and socio-economic norms of a developing country such as Solomon Islands. Consequently, a number of considerations are important. For example, this includes considerations of whether the teachers and school leaders are adequately trained to implement the imported educational leadership strategies, whether they have the capacity to adapt the strategies to suit the local environment, whether the current educational system can accommodate and sustain these changes, the relevance of the strategies, whether the developing

countries need the Eurocentric notions of ‘effective principalship’ and who should benefit from the introduction of such strategies (Blackmore, 2002; Caldwell, 2006; Court, 2005; Smith, 1998).

## **2.4 Leaders and leadership**

In the current literature, ‘leaders and leadership’ can be seen as having multi-dimensional, complex meanings. In some circumstances they mean the same thing. However, in other situations the meaning differs. The search for a better world view on these two concepts continues. There is no universally accepted definition of the terms as they are culturally contextually specific. The various definitions reflect different contexts and perspectives (Andrews, 1989; Bainbridge & Thomas, 2006; Bass, 1985; Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1997; Blackmore, 2002; Blasé, 1987; Caldwell, 2006; Court, 2003; Creswell, 2005; Fullan, 2001; Hallinger & Heck, 1996b; Leithwood, 2005; Noonan, 2003; Ogawa & Bossert, 1997; Parkes, 2004; Robertson, 1995; Schein, 1985; Starratt, 2004; Thomas, 2006).

Thomas (2006) stated the unpredictability of leadership in this context:

“Leadership is one of those words we assume we know. Nevertheless, it is almost impossible to predict that a particular person(s) will become a leader in a particular situation. Historically the world is full of people who assumed to have no leadership qualities, yet at the right time turned in spectacular performances, the opposite can also be true” (p.6).

Bainbridge and Thomas (2006) expressed:

Educational leadership can be madness or it can make a contribution to improve our schools. It can be a frantic effort to fix every-thing, or it can be concentrated on a few important items. It can be a futile exercise of power, or it can empower individuals to help themselves. In the face of dramatic social change, a troubled sea of governance conflict, and excessive demands on schools, it can be said that one who aspires to school leadership must be either mad or a supreme egotist (p.1).

The Solomon Islands Education Authorities have yet to publish any definitive work on “official” notions of leadership in schools. Any published accounts are strongly administrative and managerialist, and appear to lack both depth of understanding of current leadership literature and any serious attempt at

describing an educational leadership philosophy that would be nationally acceptable or appropriate.

However, leadership can be interpreted as a fluid practice which is not static and does not point to a clear direction, destination or have a confirmed standard practice (Bainbridge & Thomas, 2006; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Schon, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1991; Thomas, 2006).

The fluidity of leadership practice is best portrayed by the definitions as perceived by some researchers on the paradigms of leaders and leadership. Leadership is fluid. It is not an object but a style of social relationship (Robertson *et al.*). Leadership as a concept and an activity ranges from authority and power (Dubin, 1968), task related (Fielder, 1967), relationship process (Stogdill, 1950), sharing (Southworth 2005), transitional (Thomas, 2006) and transformational (Leithwood & Riehl 2005). Dubin (1968) viewed leadership as the exercise of authority and power. He believed that the use of power and authority will enhance successful leadership. However Fiedler's (1967) perspective is that the leader is: "...an individual in the group who is given the task of directing and co-ordinating task-relevant group activities" (p.8). Interestingly - almost thirty years later - Leithwood and Riehl (2005) agree with Fielder (1967), although with a more transformational approach to leadership. This involves guiding, setting directions, developing people and redesigning the organisation. Stogdill (1950) defines leadership even more broadly than Dubin and Fiedler as: "... the process of influencing the activities of an organized group towards goal setting and goal accomplishment" (p.4). His views include the setting of goals and the influence of activities associated with the accomplishment of goals. His version of leadership focuses more on relationships, sharing and dialoguing. Lippman (1964) defines leadership as; "...the initiation of a new structure or procedure for accomplishing organizational goals and objectives..." (p.122). From this viewpoint, it can be argued that a principal will not be a leader at all if the activities are limited to the maintenance of existing tasks. Management rather than leadership may be a more appropriate description of such activities (Robertson, 1995). Greenfield (1986) noted that leadership is a wilful act where one person attempts to construct the social world for others. He suggests that leaders: "...will try to influence others to

acquire the values that they perceive are good” (p.142). Organizations are: “...built on unification of people around values” (Greenfield, 1986, p.166). Greenfield (1986) challenges us to think of leaders in terms very different from those of the traditional view. One of the examples he uses is ‘the debate on school’s discipline policy’. He argued that the debate on school discipline policy may be seen as a contest of values reflecting different beliefs about ‘what ought to be’ and once policy is determined, he becomes a successful leader in this sense. When the policy is presented to parents, teachers and students, it becomes an expression of the values of the school. The leader builds commitment towards the agreed policy. This is seen by Greenfield (1986) as an attempt to bring about ‘unification of people’ around values and to ‘construct the social world for others’.

Robertson (2005) stated that leadership is a relationship:

Leadership is not an “it”, from which we can abstract behaviours and tasks, but is a relationship...highly political and is a struggle within practice, theory and research. Furthermore, leadership is not located in job descriptions but in the professionalism of working for teaching and learning. ...leadership denotes transformative practices.....not about the position one holds, but rather the action taken to improve opportunities for learning (p.40).

Thomas (2006) notes, “Leaders are individuals who make ordinary people do extraordinary things in the face of adversity” (p.14). The way leaders assist and encourage subordinates to do extra-ordinary things is through relationship building. This view is similar to Stogdill’s (1950) view. Sigford (2003) describes leadership as “an entity” and “the traits of leaders” (p.4).

Caldwell (2006) goes on to highlight that teamwork and team learning can enhance and improve the learning of all members of the school community. Similarly, Glanz (2006a) noted that a well-organized team functions smoothly and produces the best result. Too often teachers work in isolation from other teachers which can sometimes lead to unclear practices and result in poor performances. He cites Biech, (2001) who identifies twelve advantages of working as a team. These advantages support the goals and objectives of collaborative leadership within a school. The twelve advantages are:

- more in-put leads to better ideas and decisions;
- higher quality output;
- involvement of all in the process;
- increasing ownership and buy-in by members;
- higher likelihood of implementation of new ideas;
- widens the circle of communication;
- shared information means increased learning;
- increased understanding of others perspectives;
- increased opportunity to draw on individual strengths;
- ability to compensate for individual weakness;
- provides a sense of security, and
- develops personal relationships.

Conversely, Biech (2001) also lists twelve disadvantages of working as a team which he suggests should be seen as caveats. These are:

- requires more time;
- can lead to many meetings;
- often difficult to schedule mutual time;
- requires more self-giving from individuals;
- may take longer to make decisions;
- may be used as an excuse for a lack of individual performance;
- personal conflicts are magnified;
- disagreements can cause strained relationships;
- potentials for sub-groupings to form;
- teams can be exclusive rather than inclusive;
- may lead to unclear roles;
- and group thinking can limit innovation.

Although leaders may be wary of these disadvantages, Glanz (2006a) positively points out that effective collaborative leader can build supportive mechanisms that can ameliorate or avoid these limitations. Some of the ways to minimize the negative consequences are: facilitating time for committees to work, minimizing the number of meetings with a well prepared agenda and well-organized meeting process, input creativity in programs; reward individuals for their time and efforts rendered and at the same time charge team members with explicit instructions and monitor regularly.

A number of theorists argue that there are four underlying assumptions inherent in school leadership. They are: the function of leadership; the organisational roles; the traits and behaviours of individual leaders; and the school culture ( Noonan, 2003; Ogawa & Bossert, 1997; Pfeffer, 1981; Schein, 1985; Senge,1990 ).

However, Bainbridge and Thomas (2006) state that there is no perfect model for examining and critiquing leadership. They noted that leadership is so complex that at best we can only obtain clues, study a variety of styles, and partially understand it. They stated that:

There is no single way to prepare leaders or to prepare for leadership. Leaders come from every segment of society and have a variety of styles. There is no set of characteristics which leaders possess, and there is no single educational program which will produce individuals who possess leadership qualities. A leader is someone who has followers. Without followers there is no leadership act. The leader guides them to where they wish to go. If no one is going anywhere, there is no need for leader. Leadership has ethical implications. Even the best intentions may have adverse consequences on others. Sometimes doing what one considers right hurts other people. At the same time, inappropriate leadership acts may have beneficial effects. The leader must always consider the moral validity of what is done or not done. In the behaviour of people, the ethical dimensions are always present. The study of historical figures helps us to understand leadership. Socrates teaches us how to make ultimate sacrifices by taking the hemlock; Martin Luther King Jr. and Mahatma Ghandi teach us passive moral resistance; Thomas Jefferson instructs us on the imperatives of education (p.4).

This emphasises that leadership as a concept is fluid and cannot be prescribed in a single or particular way. The Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education and various education authorities need to be aware and understand the fluidity of leadership in order to assist in the development of effective and suitable school leaders.

## **2.5 Traditional Solomon Islands leadership paradigm**

It is important to include the Solomon Islands' traditional leadership paradigm in this literature review in order to identify any practices/concepts that are congruent, with western concepts of leadership that might feature prominently in local practice in Solomon Islands Community High Schools. Furthermore, it will be revealing to see if any correlation exists between modern Solomon Islands school leadership and traditional leadership.

Traditionally, the Solomon Islands have two distinct ways of selecting traditional leaders: One is called 'the big-man' method of leadership selection and the other is hereditary chieftainship.

Traditionally Solomon Islands, like most traditional Pacific societies were an oral society where information was passed to the next generation by word of mouth. Therefore this research project will need to cite authors from other countries like New Zealand, who have written about the Maori traditional way of life which is similar in many ways to the Melanesian and Polynesian traditions of the Solomon Islands.

The common characteristics of the traditional Solomon Islands' social structure are: the practice of subsistence economy; the recognition of bonds of kinship with important obligations extending beyond the immediate family group; local and clan loyalties that far outweigh regional or national affiliations; generally egalitarian relationships, emphasizing acquired rather than inherited status; and a strong attachment of the people to the land. Most Solomon Islanders maintain this traditional social structure and find their roots in village life (Barns, 2003b; Keesing, 1989; Lather, 1992; Malasa, 2007; Mead, 2001; Reinhartz, 1992; Smith, 1998). For both Polynesian and Melanesian cultures the traditional leaders were selected if they have the following characteristics: has accumulated wealth (wealth measured by capacity to grow more food, feed more pigs and be industrious), able to mediate, manage and settle disputes; courageous; a good planner/good strategist and leader in times of trouble; has knowledge of the arts and crafts of the place, knows how to look after people; has command of the traditional knowledge and technology; has sound knowledge of the boundaries of the tribal lands; committed, and aspiring( Barns, 2003b; Bishop, 1997; Holmes & Holmes, 1992; Mead, 2001; Ngan-woo, 1985; Keesing, 1989; Lather, 1992; Smith, 1998 ).

Colonisation towards the end of the nineteenth century altered or disrupted to an extent, the two traditional leadership selection methods in Solomon Islands.

In the absence of research-based literature focusing on Solomon Islands educational leadership, it is interesting to note that although school principals were leading modern schools, their leadership practices seem to reflect the traditional regional leadership styles. There appears to be congruence between the modern educational leadership practices and the Solomon Islands traditional leadership characteristics. In some cases, the incumbent principal seems not to be

accepted by the school community because of his or her traditional social position in the community despite the academic training he or she may have acquired. Malasa (2007) noted that the cultural practices of the Solomon Islands community can have a bearing on the way the principals perform their leadership duties. The cultural norms and values in the Solomon Islands community may have a bearing on the way the school community perceive these school leaders. Consequently, these school leaders may not enjoy the same respect and trust from the community as traditional leaders. Thus there is potential for conflict between traditional and modern leadership. The contemporary leaders in Solomon Islands may find for themselves that the new found positions they occupy may be alien. Narokobi (1983) stated that Melanesian leaders are trustees or custodians of the wealth of the Melanesian societies.

Malasa (2007) points out that one immediate bearing which the Solomon Islands traditional leadership style may have on the current Community High School principals is their view on serving the nation versus their own tribe or clan. Although this view may still be evident, it is slowly changing towards a more nationalistic feeling, as more and more school principals attain higher educational qualifications and appreciate the value of collaboration at a national level.

## **2.6 Theories of leadership**

It has been noted that successful schools are lead by highly effective leaders, ((Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992; Calabrese & Zepeda, 1999; Day & Harris, 2001; Fullan, 2002, Miliken, 2002; Stoll & Fink, 1996; Watkins, 1986). It is important to explore the current literature in order to develop a greater understanding of the leadership strategies and knowledge of the principals in this study. Such a review will further assist in establishing understanding of commonly held perspectives of highly effective principalship which might then be applicable to principals in the Solomon Islands high schools. In the absence of direct applicability, the review will at least inform the researcher and assist in the development of questions for interviews with principals.

### **2.6.1 The trait theories**

Trait theories (or ‘great man’ theories) according to some researchers like Earley & Weindling (2004) and Blasé (1987) were popular in the 1920s. These theories evolved by examining the leaders’ characteristics and behaviours which were found to be different from their followers (Blase, 1987; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Robertson, 1995; Rossow & Warner, 2000; Senge, 1990). These theories emphasised that there are certain talents/attributes possessed by those leaders that set them apart from their followers (Bass, 1985; Blase, 1987; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Hoy & Miskkel, 1991; Robertson, 1995; Rossow & Warner, 2000; Yukl, 2002). Robertson, (1995) has noted that there are signs of many of the trait theories still in operation today. Blasé (1987) completed an in-depth and comprehensive qualitative study among teachers that suggested that effective principals exhibited what he termed “five consideration-related factors – support in confrontational/conflict; participation/consultation; fairness; equitability; recognition praise/reward; willingness to delegate authority” (p.602), and “nine ‘task-related’ themes(factors) - accessibility, consistency, knowledge/expertise; clear and reasonable expectations; decisiveness; goal/direction; follow-through; ability to manage time, and problem solving orientation” (p.594). The literature is clear in that some aspects of these trait theories remain current in school leadership.

Traditionally, the most common reason for disputing trait theories is the inherent suggestion that humans either possess these innate leadership qualities or not (Leithwood, 1994; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Sergiovanni, 2000; Soder, 1996; Southworth, 1998). Those who advocate these theories perceived that leaders were naturally born so. Consequently, there was an assumption that those who did not appear to be born to leadership were unlikely to ever become effective leaders, and could not be developed as such.

In a Melanesian context, both dominant election methods rely on the assumption of innate leadership qualities that can be further developed with life experiences. The dominant position in the literature I have consulted is that leadership is

situational and contextually specific, and that different leader will excel in different contexts but will nonetheless continue to develop their leadership capacities (Barns, 2003b; Bishop, 1997; Holmes & Holmes, 1992; Mead, 2001; Ngan-woo, 1985; Keesing, 1989, Lather, 1992; Robertson, 1995; Smith, 1998). This leads us on to look at situational theories which are similar in a number of ways to the Melanesian “big man” style of leadership.

### **2.6.2 Situational theories**

These theories were largely derived from the notion that different situations influence the styles and nature of leadership practices (Stogdill, 1950). Unfortunately these theories were short-lived and tended to lack empirical evidence (Robertson, 1995). Researchers pointed out that to develop these theories they needed to find specific variables of the situations that had relevance for the leader’s behaviour and performance. Some of the variables noted included organizational climate, technology, and human factors such as characteristics of the subordinates and the leader. These variables would then determine the appropriate leadership style.

However some researchers argued that these theories did not adequately allow for different personalities of leaders and pointed out that what appeared to work for one person may not work for another in the same or similar situation. (Campbell, Dunette, Lawier & Weick, 1970)

### **2.6.3 Contingency theories**

These theories emerged as the result of matching between individual traits and particular situations and the recognition that leadership was an action which involves other people and varying contexts. Researchers began studying the situational variables such as task, power and power relationships, attitudes of subordinates, and others, all of which influenced the relationship between leadership and the performance. (Blake & Mouton, 1964; Fielder, 1970).

Blake and Mouton (1964) developed a managerial contingency theory model which was used widely for training purposes in education. The two main dimensions linked to leadership were: ‘concern for production (outcomes)’ and

‘concern for people’. They developed a grid system with concern for people on one axis and concern for production on the other. The grid was supposedly an analytical tool and by using the grid a principal could develop an indication of leadership style.

Fielder’s (1970) research found that in schools where the principal was well supported, a task oriented approach was seen to be most effective. Where principals were less well supported, a relationship-oriented approach was more associated with school effectiveness.

Further investigation of these theories by researchers found that under one set of conditions, one style of leadership was effective and under a different set of conditions, a different style of leadership was effective (Redding, 1970). While a somewhat interesting finding, it is probably self-evident in the light of current research and literature. Importantly however, this was an early formalisation of the notion of contextual specificity which has become a dominant concept in current leadership research. In summary, contingency theory suggests that leadership is not necessarily about individual traits but rather a transactional process between those who lead and those who follow and the context within which this transaction occurs (Robertson, 1995).

The supporters of contingency theory argue that there are certain attributes and skills that can be learned and used according to the dictates of different contexts. The implication here is that these theories are gender and race neutral. More recent literature has argued that this is not the case (Blackmore, 1998; Strachan 1998).

Weick, (1976) perceived that schools were loosely coupled organizations, and that the school social environment can be subject to change. He perceived that teachers and students were free to interact and were not bound by rules, regulations and beliefs. He believed that it was the culture, the norms and the beliefs of the school which were most influential to the way teachers work. Apple (1982) perceived that teachers acted in a subversive manner towards an autocratic leadership in schools. They were seen working well under a leader who

demonstrated shared values and beliefs (Apple, 1982; Blackmore, 1998; Fiedler, 1970; Weick, 1976).

#### **2.6.4 Culture-building theories**

These theories focus on the importance of school leaders building an organisational culture within the school (Duignan, 1988; Glanz, 2006b; Robertson, 1995). Some researchers have argued that to be culture builders it was important that principals be transformational leaders (Anderson, 1998; Beare, 1993; Glanz, 2006b; Hargreaves, 1994; Lipman, 1997). They must be able to motivate and develop staff commitment to personal and organizational growth (Anderson, 1998; Barker, 1993; Beare, 1993; Duignan, 1988; Glanz, 2006c; Robertson, 2005). Saphier and King (1986) identified twelve norms of school culture that they believe were conducive to growth and school improvement. They stated that if a school leader established these conditions, school improvement efforts would be more likely to succeed. However, other researchers dispute Saphier and King's work and argue that Saphier and King's (1986) research results do not show the principal as being the chief culture builder and did not have a great deal of impact on whether the school was effective (Court, 1994; Maxcy, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1992). For example, Sergiovanni (1992) noted that 'good leadership is a necessary but insufficient condition for successful schooling' (p.144). The insufficiency which Sergiovanni (1992) pointed out was the exclusion of others in the leadership team - for example, the rest of the teaching staff, the senior management team, parents, the school board, student leaders and others who could contribute to the school's advancement.

Duignan (1988) noted that team effectiveness "was related to the ability and performance of the team leader and to the personal values and commitment of the team members" (p.20). A number of researchers have agreed with Duignan's work. They perceived that the wider the consultation is on the decision-making and school development processes, the more successful the school will be (Anderson, 1998; Barker, 1993; Blase & Blase, 1998; Caldwell, 2006; Glanz, 2006b; Harris, 2002; Leithwood, 1992; Lipman, 1997; Sergiovanni, 2001; Southworth, 2005). Hall and Hord (1986) states that highly effective principals do not work alone; they were part of a team. They agree with Duignan's view that the

more people contributing to the process of education, the more successful the schools will be. Purkey and Smith (1985) agreed with this opinion, but went further to emphasise that principals were the prime leaders of schools. Although there can be groups of teachers involved in the leadership processes and roles, the prime responsibility rested with the school principals. Continuous probing into these theories has resulted in some significant findings. Some of these findings were; the concept of 'building communities', 'caring for families', 'democracies', 'team leadership', 'collaborative cultures in schools', 'relationship building' and 'addressing barriers' (Court, 1994; Fullan, 1992, 2003; Glanz, 2006b; Handy & Aiken, 1986; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1992; Taylor, 2003; Walther-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003). Again constant calls have been made for new theories of school leadership (Blackmore, 1998; Sergiovanni, 1992; Strachan, 1998) and that the new theories should involve all the agencies in the school community including pupils, teachers, school board, parents and principal (Giddens, 1979).

### **2.6.5 Agency theories**

As a result of criticisms made about culture-building theories, Giddens (1979) noted that in a school there are many leaders and that the entire leadership group affects the way a school operates. These theories seek to utilise the strengths of the individuals who are involved in the processes of leadership (Davies, 1990). The agency theories denote that a person 'could have acted otherwise' (Giddens, 1993). These theories involve a well informed person who has a sense of vision and can act on behalf of the system. It also means that there is a sense of delegation of duties to other leaders. Thus the individuals have been empowered (Maxcy, 1991) or emancipated (Carr & Kemmis, 1986) or in a process of conscientization (Freire, 1970). Educational leaders were empowered to do more, given more opportunities to widen their perceptions and have a sense of future, thus encouraging them to act positively. Some researchers viewed these theories as very important in processes of emancipation and development, especially in countries such as New Zealand (Robertson, 1995). Further investigations of these theories suggest that this could lead to the empowerment of others. These theories offer support for educational leaders' attempts to find better alternative methods of managing and leading schools through on-going critical and self-reflection

(Blackmore, 1999; Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Caldwell, 2006; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Day & Harris, 2001; Fullan, 2005; Guillemin & Gillam, 2004; Robertson, 1996a, 2005).

### **2.6.6 Critical theory**

Based on agency theories, some researchers challenged the paradigms of scientific management and enthusiastically emphasised the importance of reflection on practice and the examination of the values and norms that are the foundation of society. These critical theories implied the type of leadership which led to an examination of the power structures in society and people's values and beliefs and how these factors affect schooling and people's life chances. It is suggested that these theories are perhaps a reaction against technicism and the positivist views regarding leadership and administration as scientific in the 1990s (Greenfield, 1986; Habermas, 1974). For example Thomas Greenfield in 1986, endorsed the view suggested by Hodgkinson (1978) that the central questions of administration are not scientific at all. They are philosophical. Greenfield further points out that "the devaluation of administrative studies had impoverished understanding: without the element of values, consideration of the conduct of organizations is reduced to technicalities" (p.146). Grace (1997) in citing Greenfield's work suggests that the need for further enquiry is essential. She suggested the use of;

interpretive and qualitative methods of enquiry, which would focus more upon the use of power, conflicts, values and moral dilemmas in educational leadership. In addition the enquiry should include examining the changing role of language and explore the discourse in constructing new administrative realities (p.4).

## **2.7 Educational leadership paradigms**

Jansen (2005) states that educational leadership should be courageous, steadfast and able to dismantle the symbols of racial differences. In school, the principal needs to maintain positive views towards others and have confidence in them. He suggests that a key factor in the emerging strength of a school's leadership is the strength and reliability of the staff and students. Having faith in the staff, parents and students encourages them to work hard and high levels of trust enables them to progress towards the school's vision and goals. The principal's leadership

should demonstrate trust in the school community and the leaders should expect trust in return (Blackmore, 2002; Bryk, & Schneider, 2002; Day & Harris, 2001; Dimmock & Walker, 2002; DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 1993, 2001; Gardner, 1990; Glanz, 2006c; Goddard, 2003; Sergiovanni, 1992, 1998; West-Burnham, 2001).

In the same way, principals must be good ‘role models’ (Creighton, 1999; Fullan, 2001; Gibson 2005; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Southworth, 1999; Strike, 2007; West-Burnham, 2001). Principals must be conscious of being a role model in the school community, and need to make sure that there is mutual understanding present among the staff, students, parents and the school authority. The principal needs to learn to listen and pay attention to views and needs of the people who are working under her/his leadership (Blackmore, 2002; Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; Day & Harris, 2001; Grady, 2004; Hall, 2001; Harris, 2002; Kotter, 1996; Leithwood & Riehl, 2005; Sergiovanni, 2001; Walther-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003).

### **2.7.1 Situational leadership**

Goddard (2003) quotes the work of Fredler (1993) who states that an effective leader utilizes the context to gain power and control to influence and support the actions of subordinates. Situational leadership requires administrators to fully immerse themselves in their school community and be intimately knowledgeable about the context within which they work. This implies that the many different situations require different forms of leadership style. Bainbridge and Thomas (2006) point out that leadership is situational and varies with individuals and events. The situation usually helps make the leader, and at times the leader happens to be in the right place at the right time (Bainbridge & Thomas, 2006; Blasé, 1987; Goddard, 2003). This style is similar to the traditional leadership style in the Solomon Islands, where a leader is chosen because he displays the right leadership capacities in a given situation – “*cometh the hour, cometh the man*”. It could also be assumed that the school system of the Solomon Islands would be capitalising on this form of leadership. While there are clear theoretical links between the eurocentric theory and traditional leadership styles here, there is a fundamental anomaly in that effective educational leadership requires a level of professional understanding, expertise and experience. Consequently, an “effective

leader” of a school cannot be plucked from a community, but rather needs to emerge through the ranks of teachers, gaining appropriate experience.

### **2.7.2 Managerial leadership**

Managerialist leadership styles focus on the maintenance of a system. The leader puts great effort into planning and organizing the daily operations of the school (Abu-Dubou, 1999; Andrews, 1989; Calabrese & Zepeda, 1999; Duignan, 1989; Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Senge, 1990, 2000; Sigford, 2003). Although this approach often results in a hierarchical and bureaucratic structure that some authors of current leadership theories disagree with, there is still the need for such diligence. The critical point mentioned here by Robertson (2005) is that the school leader needs to identify and understand which tasks are administrative, which are managerial and which the real basis of organisational leadership is. This understanding may well diminish the potential for accusations of reductionism and an undue focus on performativity.

Sergiovanni (2001) alluded that in order to lead a school, it is important to pay attention to the underlying theory of management and life, and the values, beliefs, and norms that underpin this theory. He considers how the school looks when representing its outer structure. The values and beliefs that constitute a school’s governing theory make up its inner structure. He points out that getting at the inner structure of the school requires paying attention to seven basic principals which are: “invert the rule, know the difference, think amoeba (ready to change), emphasize sense of meaning, build with canvas, be humble in decision-making, and remember moral aspects of leadership.” (p5)

In the Solomon Islands schools, the need to distinguish between managerial, administrative and leadership activities is vital for principals. Understanding the distinction will assist them to understand and create strategies to lead highly effective learning in their schools rather than retreating into the relative comfort of efficient administration.

### **2.7.3 Instructional leadership**

A number of theorists suggest that the primary responsibility of the Principal as an effective instructional leader, is leading a learning-centred school (Collins, 2004; DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2003; Kedian, 2006; Leithwood, 1992, 1994; Morrison, 2006; Southworth, 1999; West-Burnham, 2005), teaching in the school and instructional

leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 1996a; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000a) in the form of providing teachers with advice and support as they deliver the curriculum. The current literature notes that whether the principal directly or indirectly teaches the students, similar outcomes will be achieved (Hallinger & Heck, 1996b; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2000a; Morrison, 2006). The principal can influence indirectly in a number of ways. Some of these practices include regular visits to classrooms, encouraging teachers to talk about their successes and shortcomings, or ensuring that meetings are focused on learning (Fiedler, 1967; Fullan, 2001; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Leithwood, 1992; Schein, 1985; Sergiovanni, 2001; Southworth, 2005; Wright, 2002).

Furthermore, Robertson (1991) purposely recommends that those in leadership positions in schools needs to delegate managerial duties and concentrate on instructional leadership. In addition, professional development based on reflection on their daily experiences was suggested as an effective form of learning for these professionals. Robertson (1991) further suggests that networking with other principals of similar-sized schools with like philosophies is another way of improving the capacity of principals. She continued by stating that;

...successful school leadership is associated with setting a strong administrative example, recruiting appropriate staff, and being fully supportive of teachers. In the same way, skilled leadership in providing a structural institutional pattern in which teachers can function effectively and high levels of parent/teacher and parent/principal contact. Highly effective principals can achieve a balance between a strong leadership role for themselves and maximum autonomy for teachers. Strong instructional leadership involves purposeful professional discipline and providing a strong learning role model for teachers and pupils alike (p.9).

These views were supported by other authors (Bass, 1985; Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992; Bennett & Anderson, 2003; Caldwell, 2006; Fullan, 2001; Glanz, 2006; Hall, 2001; Harris, 2002; Lambert, 1998; Lipham & Hoeh (Jr), 1974)

Lipham and Hoeh (Jr) (1974) point out that the essence of principalship is threefold: It includes instructional leadership, decision making and innovation.

#### **2.7.4 Collaborative leadership**

Collaborative leadership, as the term implies, refers to sharing leadership in a collaborative way. The school principal needs to establish external and internal linkages in order to facilitate the collaborative process for the school. Externally these linkages require better communication, co-operation, collaboration and co-ordination with school authorities and community agencies (Court, 1994; Fullan, 1992, 2002, 2003; Gibson, 2005; Glanz, 2006a; Hall, 2001; Handy & Aiten, 1986; Leithwood, 1992; Southworth, 2005). Internally, the principal must establish trust and collegiality between teachers, students and administrators. The principal must facilitate these collaborative processes if his/her leadership is to be highly effective (Blackmore, 2002; Caldwell, 2006; Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; Coleman, 2002; Kotter, 1996; Lambert, 1998; Leithwood, 2005; Rizvi, 1986; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 2000; Southworth, 1999).

Purkey and Smith (1985) state that effective schools are associated with high student academic performances, democratic decision-making, shared leadership, staff stability, curriculum articulation and organisation, parental involvement, collaboration and maximised learning times. This view was supported by Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Caldwell, 2006; Cerr & Jacoby, 2004; Cheng, 1996; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Goleman, 2000; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; Hord, 1997; Kedian, 1999 and Strike, 2007.

Some authors perceived participation as a form of collaborative. For example, Cheng (1996) noted that school leaders need to participate in all the school programs as a positive form of collaboration. He emphasized that;

...participating provides important human interactions, in terms of time, experiences, knowledge, skills for better planning and implementation. Similarly participation can give rise to high quality decisions and plans by

involving different perspectives and expertise. This will also promote greater responsibilities, accountability and commitment. As a result, there will be enriched professional experts, professional development will be pursued, changes ineffective practices and overcoming resistance (p.71).

Fullan and Hargreaves (1991) emphasized the importance of improving the internal interactions and relationship building of schooling. They noted that schools can be re-cultured into making space and time available to stimulate interactions to improve teaching and learning environments. To create a culture of educational change requires a shift towards developing more collaborative working relationships between principals and teachers and among teachers themselves. In order for the relationship to be more collaborative, the building of trust, openness, risk-taking and commitment must be initiated, supported and facilitated by the school principal (Fullan, 2003; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Glanz, 2006a; Hargreaves, 1997; Hord, 1997; Lambert, 2005; Parkes, 2004; Ryan, 2006; Southworth, 1998, 2005; West-Burnham, 2004). Southworth (2005) stated that the need to extend the collaboration beyond the school boundaries is also important as this will develop better understanding and mutual relationships between the school and wider community.

### **2.7.5 Ethical leadership**

Glanz (2006e) states that an ethical and spiritual leader is concerned with the following areas of leadership:

examining one's personal and innermost beliefs and values to ensure that one acts with compassion and affirms justice for all people,... realizing the impact of one's actions on others within the school organization, aligning one's personal, cultural, and even religious values with organizational codes of ethics, making well-reasoned decisions to moral dilemmas that do not have easy solutions, leading others by example, knowing oneself very well; one's strengths and limitations, remaining sensitive to circumstances or events that others may overlook, attuning oneself to personal convictions and organizational norms, knowing and sensing what others may not, and striving for high ideals (p.xvi).

Various ethicists suggest that the three fundamental goals of ethical school leadership are motivating staff, serving the welfare of the school community and transforming learning for students to new heights (Creighton, 1999; Fullan, 1992; Gibbs, 2005; Hall, 2001; Robertson, 1995; Schon, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1990, 1992;

Soder, 1990, 1996; Strike, 2007). Soder (1990) also highlighted the need for principals and teachers to be ethical in their practice, so that they can reciprocate parents' trust in the school. Various authors and educators (Bishop 1997; Fullan 2005; Fullan & Mascall 2000; Hall 2001; Punch, 1998; Purkey & Smith, 1985) have highlighted the importance of ethical leadership qualities in schools. The school principal has an ethical duty to promote integration and collaborative processes within schools and simultaneously maintain integrity and respect for others. The leader must have a moral purpose to improve the quality of learning, create equity, fairness, and be committed to changing context at all levels. Fullan and Mascall (2000) further suggest that the ethical leader should seek to up-grade the skills, knowledge and professional development of the staff, demonstrate exemplary practice, plan lessons and work collegially. Ethical leadership implies performing in a more democratic way, caring for 'the common good', helping the disadvantaged and encouraging those who can excel (Bishop 1996; Fullan 2005; Fullan & Mascall 2000; Hall 2005; Punch, 1998; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Sergiovanni, 1990, 1992; Soder, 1990, 1996; Strike, 2007). Starratt (2005) points out that principals and teachers have a responsibility to practise ethics as educators. He further suggests that ethical practices should enable the school leader to be transformational, encouraging staff and students to reach beyond self-interest for some higher ideals as something heroic. The leader should at all times adhere to moral rules such as being truthful, have a caring attitude and advocate stewardship, and demonstrate a willingness to accept accountability for decisions made without trying to impose control over others (Creighton, 1999; Fullan, 1992; Gibbs, 2005; Hall, 2001; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Robertson, 1995; Schon, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1990, 1992; Soder, 1990, 1996; Strike, 2007). Leadership in Solomon Islands schools does not appear to display many of the characteristics of ethical leadership and standards highlighted here. Specific examples are given in the subsequent section.

Another way in which ethical practice can be promoted is through a professional code of ethical conduct. Hall (2001), reports that institutions usually have a written code of ethical conduct as a guide for the teacher. In the Solomon Islands, the Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development have set the expected code of professional conduct for all teachers as provided in Chapter Ten of the

Solomon Islands Teaching Service Handbook. The code is however inadequate and does not spell out the necessary ethical norms and applications adequately or explicitly. Furthermore, a code of ethics or practice does not necessarily define the nature and quality of any particular aspect of professional practice such as leading a school.

Sigford (2003) stresses the essence of effective leadership is displaying an understanding and acceptance of ethics and spirituality. She quotes Chopra (2002) describing ethical leadership as a system where the leaders and followers co-create each other, and leadership is a symbolic soul of the group. The leader allows the individuals and organization to grow from inside out and inner qualities determine the results. The vision is only as good as the inner qualities of those carrying it out. A multitude of responses are available because the leader must understand the mixture and contradictions of possible responses to solving problems. Sigford (2003) continue to state that; “the leaders must be fully committed to lead, and must clearly recognise the problems and solve them accordingly” (p.7).

Strike (2007) argues that an ethical school leader projects a clear image of the type of community he wishes the school to be and then understands the notion of legitimate authority and legitimate decision making. He warns that ethics can be oppressive. He also points out the danger of assuming a particular code of behaviour as universally appropriate and that human actions in terms of that code will always be considered acceptable. This may hold true in monocultural contexts, but is unlikely to be appropriate in multicultural contexts. In the Solomon Islands the existence of tribalism, regionalism and “islandism” result in a so-called monocultural country having multiple ethical contexts. This is problematic and potentially confusing for school leaders who move from one province or island to another.

Glanz (2006e) discusses in depth the essence of ethical and spiritual leadership. He notes that effective leaders build integrity and character through their work. Good leaders lead not through knowledge and skills, but through responsibility and integrity. He also notes that ethical and moral leadership is an imperative in building and sustaining effective learning communities.

### 2.7.6 Dialogical leadership

In the Greek tradition, *dia-logos* (dialogue) refers to communicating effectively through words, meanings and relationships. To enhance maximum learning outcomes in schools, the principal and the staff need to develop and practice the concept of dialogue. This practice depends on mutual trust, collegiality and a genuine desire to develop the thinking of the group. Thus, questions often become more important than answers, and wondering becomes more significant than knowing. It is a form of collegial communication and learning and arguably forms the basis of effective professional learning communities. Goddard (2003) quotes Freire (1970) that sometimes teachers in schools can be more experienced and knowledgeable in certain areas than the principal. In these instances it is the principal's responsibility to establish a learning dialogue with the teachers. Additionally it is essential for the principal to ensure the community of learners is being led successfully. This may require trust as well as the use of an external agency to assist the staff to develop appropriate skills and capacities (Caldwell, 2006).

It is important to note here the necessity for high levels of trust in dialogic contexts. Bryk and Schneider (2002) suggest that there are four dimensions of relational trust: "...respect, competence, personal regard for others, and integrity"(p.17). Fullan (2003) agrees with Bryk and Scheneider (2002) that principals who are highly effective are instrumental in embedding relational trust "in the culture of relationships across all participants" (p.43). Fullan (2003) went on to say:

The actions that principals take play a key role in developing and sustaining relationship trust. Principals establish both respect and personal regard when they acknowledge the vulnerabilities of others, actively listen to their concerns, and eschew arbitrary actions. If principals couple this with a compelling school vision, there is affirmed. Then assuming principals are competent in the management of day-to-day school affairs, an overall ethos conducive to trust is likely to emerge (p.64).

Dialogical leadership is an essential element of highly effective principalship (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Bryk & Schenider, 2002; Caldwell, 2006; Cerr & Jacoby, 2004; Cheng, 1996; Kedian, 1999; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Goleman, 2000;

Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; Hord, 1997; and Strike, 2007). It could be argued therefore, that this should be an important aspect of leadership in Solomon Islands schools.

### **2.7.7 Transformational leadership**

There is evidence in the literature that transformational leadership is inextricably linked to changes of culture and the development of vision (Glanz, 2006d; Kedian, 1999; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; West-Burnham, 2004).

Kedian (1999) noted that culture provides a perceptual framework or lens through which the organization and its activities are viewed. This includes the assumptions of the organization. It is equally significant that in order to lead the cultural changes in the schools, the school leaders must be equipped with appropriate knowledge, skills and best options in order to make the best transformational changes needed (Bennett, Wise & Woods, 2003; Hord, 1997; Lambert 2005; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 2001; West-Burnham, 2004). Assumptions can be made that most of the current Community High School principals in Solomon Islands do not fully understand what a school culture is or how to go about transforming it. Most Church Community High Schools have their denomination-based ethos, handed down to the schools by the particular churches that control these schools (Creighton, 1999; Gibbs, 2005; Hall, 2001; Schein, 1985). Robertson (2005) states that:

...transformational leaders: are people in educational institutions who: continually search for more effective ways of facilitating learning and are not content with the status quo. Furthermore, they will act within the system to redesign education and see the importance of being transformative, innovative and encourage considered risk-taking by their colleagues. Moreover, they have a strong set of values and beliefs that focuses them on social justice and continues to facilitate their critique of policies and practices within their educational communities (p.42).

Equally importantly, transformational leaders also stand out from others as leaders who want to make a positive difference in the lives of others. Similarly, they are enthusiastic, energetic and believe that enhancing the learning opportunities of others is central to their work. They also believe that modelling is important in transforming the learners to a higher level (Anderson, 1998; Bainbridge &

Thomas, 2006; Barker, 1993; Bennett & Anderson, 2003; Blackmore, 2002; Blase, 1987; Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cornwall, 2003; DeFour, 2004; Freire, 1970; Fullan, 2005; Glanz, 2006c; Robertson, 2005; Sapier & King, 1986; Senge, 1990; Southworth, 2005).

### **2.7.8 Constructivist leadership**

This type of leadership paradigm refers to a form of collaborative leadership in which leaders and the followers work together to develop and implement leadership activities. There is usually a sense of co-responsibility inherent in the paradigm. Lambert *et al.* (1998) suggest that leadership is not learnt but rather created by the leader and the followers. This can be achieved through collaboration. Similarly, Goddard (2003) states that constructivist leadership involves redesigning initial ideas of leadership that will enable the school to develop its own understanding of effective leadership. The community eventually develops a sense of ownership in the leading of the school (Bennett, Wise & woods, 2003; Hord, 1997; Lambert 2005; Leithwood, 1992; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 2001; Southworth, 1999; West-Burnham, 2004). Some theorists contend that constructivist approaches would include many aspects of both feminist and democratic leadership styles. According to Rizvi, (1986) democracy in the community means there should be a substantial degree of equality among members of the community, whether it be a school community or a community of any other kind. He emphasised that without equality there can be no reciprocity in social relationships which is essential to collaborative sharing. Harris, Smith, and Hale (2002) argue that traditional leadership models are a male-orientated approach and there is a need to include women in the leadership arena. They further noted that feminist ways of leading show high tolerance, careful listening and mutually sharing – and are therefore more constructivist in their approach. These characteristics are also evident among female school leaders in the Solomon Islands.

## **2.8 Leadership, management and administration**

It is vital for the principals in the Solomon Islands schools to understand the definitions and the nature of the three concepts mentioned here. Leadership,

management and administration seem to mean the same thing and can be used interchangeably. Duignan (1988) points out that some theorists believe it is counter-productive to a theory of educational leadership to maintain a distinction between leadership and management functions. In contrast, Robertson (1995) disagreed with Duignan and stresses that there are times that distinctions need to be made. She suggests that good management does not necessarily mean that leadership is taking place. Furthermore, she argues that these concepts need to be explored further to enable a greater understanding of the study, which then can be set out to develop a number of workable models for educational leadership development.

Schon (1984) pointed out that leadership and management are not synonymous terms:

Leadership and management are not synonymous terms. One can be a leader without being a manager. One can, for example, fulfil many of the symbolic, inspirational, educational and normative functions of a leader and thus represent what an organization stands for without carrying any of the formal burdens of management. Conversely, one can manage without leading. An individual can monitor and control organizational activities, make decisions, and allocate resources without fulfilling the symbolic, normative, inspirational, or educational functions of leadership ( p.36).

Some researchers viewed administration as the umbrella term which incorporates both management and leadership (Duignan, 1988; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1991; Starratt, 2004). Sergiovanni (1991) stated; “administration can be broadly defined as a process of working with and through others to accomplish school goals efficiently. The essential elements of this definition are; action, goals, limited resources and working with other people” (p.15). Kedian (2006) viewed leadership, management and administration as a continuum. He explains that where management ends, administration starts and where these two end leaderships starts, but he cautions that different situations have different cut-off points on the continuum. One could assert that most of the routine tasks of a school principal could be termed as management tasks (Duignan, 1988, Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Senge, 1990). Dealing with parents, financial and personnel issues, the dealing with staff, student discipline, and building buildings are management functions. Duignan (1989) believes that...“leadership within an

organization is filtered, transacted and transformed through the myriad brief, fragmented, everyday routines or 'chores' that are part and parcel of complex organizational life" (p.74). Robertson (1995) challenges this definition by questioning whether there is any leadership taking place. She points out that "...doing all of these things efficiently could be good management, but may not be effective leadership" (p.20). In other words, management is doing things right, at the expense of doing the right things. According to Senge (2000) management is controlling and overcoming human failures, boosting productivity and improving organizational effectiveness. Some authors perceived managing, as not leading. According to these authors, the school leaders (administrators) are forced to do rather than decide; to implement rather than to lead (Robertson, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992; Schein, 1985). It would be inappropriate to say that school leadership is management. School leadership incorporates management techniques, values, beliefs, morals, visions, leading and educating (Grace, 1993; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1992). Leadership involves people interacting, communicating, sharing, and at times confronting each other (Duignan, 1988). Sergiovanni (1992) denotes that leadership involves the hand, the head and the heart. Similarly Mitchell and Tucker (1992) state: "Leadership involves different ways of thinking and feeling..." (p.30). In addition, Robertson (2005) reinforces the notion that school leadership involves innovation, exploring, growth and improvement of learning. For Kedian (2006) the determining characteristic of the distinction between the three concepts is purpose. He argues that the same activity, performed in three different contexts, could be perceived individually as leadership, management or administration, depending on the reason why the activity is being performed.

According to the literature consulted, the notion of leadership can be distinctly different from administration and management. At the same time, there are similarities as well (Duignan 1988; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992; Robertson, 1995; Soder, 1990).

Caldwell (2006) mentions three dimensions in the framework for leadership. These are strategic leadership, educational leadership and accountable leadership. According to Caldwell (2006), strategic leadership involves;

Keeping abreast of trends and issues, threats and opportunities in the educational environment and in society at large; both national and international and “discerning the megatrends” and anticipating their impact on education generally and on the school in particular. This can also be through sharing such knowledge with others in the school community and encouraging all leaders in the school to do the same in their areas of responsibility. More over, establishment of structures and processes which enable the school to set priorities and formulate strategies which take account of preferred futures are being a key source of expertise. Consequently, ensuring that the attention of the school community is focused on matters of strategic importance and monitoring the implementation of strategies as well as emerging strategic issues in the wider environment and facilitating an ongoing process of review. Next, educational leadership refers to a capacity to nature a learning community and can include a nation, state or school system but more often with school. Such leadership is concerned with pedagogy and curriculum, but there is a ‘hard edge’ to “learning community” or “learning organization”. This type of leadership calls for “helping” teachers and those who support them to gain state-of-the-art knowledge about what works for every student and finally, accountable leadership accepts there are many stakeholders who have the ‘right to know’ how well schools are doing. Its importance is reflected in the current interest in ‘evidence based leadership’. School leaders will be comfortable in collecting, analysing and acting on data and will be concern at all times with how their schools ‘add value’ to the learning experience (p.120-121).

It is important to acknowledge how current literature has revealed the best ways to be highly effective leaders, and that the paradigms and epistemologies presented can contribute to developing a strong foundation for school leadership practices in developing countries (Robertson, 2005; Schon, 1984; Strachan, 1998).

## **2.9 Elements of effective principalship**

Principals tend to first develop many of the skills of leadership and management. Having developed these skills and the confidence that appears to go with those base level skills, the principals tend to move their focus to more abstract and conceptual capacities. This dualism is captured by Kedian (2002) when he discusses the bimodality of the leadership learning process. He suggests that the learning process begins with development of base level competencies and skills in the realms of administration and management – the first modality. Mastery of these leads to a point where the new leader feels confident enough to address some of the more conceptual areas of leadership – the second modality. He further

suggests that the order is usually sequential beginning with the skills level and then moving to the conceptual level.

Some literature emphasises more strongly the role of highly effective principals as seen in determining the quality and quantity of students learning outcomes (Harris & Chapman, 2002; Parkes, 2004; Walther-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003).

Fullan (2003) describes nine practices observed in successful school leaders as:

setting high expectations for all students, sharing leadership and staying engaged, using assessment data to support success, encourage collaboration among faculty and staff, keeping the focus on students, addressing barriers to learning, reinforcing classroom learning at home by engaging families, employing systems for identifying interventions, and defining special education as the path to success in the general education program (p.40).

This is a useful list of capacities or attributes, but runs the risk of being narrowly interpreted as a technicist approach. The majority of authors, including Fullan, would see a more heuristic description of effective principalship as preferable – not a check list, but rather a narrative of the process of “becoming” effective.

### **2.9.1 Good communication skills**

When leading any entity, it is considered important for principals to have a high level of communication skill (Bennett, Wise & woods, 2003; Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; Hall, 2001; Hord, 1997; Lambert 2005; Senge, 1990; West-Burnham, 2004). The leader needs to be able to communicate effectively for a plethora of reasons ranging from consulting and engaging with staff regarding esoteric professional issues to the leader needing to give clear and explicit instructions so that subordinates can carry out their duties well and achieve success for the entity.

Cerra and Jacoby (2004) shared their experiences on the importance of effective communication. They noted that “communication is the genuine exchange of information, ideas, and thoughts, whereby an agreement is reached, a schedule is established, a goal is promoted, or conflict is resolved” (p.17). The overview of their book, suggests that successful school principals are those who can communicate effectively. They continue to state that: “successful school principals are those who have a shared vision which they can communicate effectively to all

school stakeholders. They promote peace and safety, and at the same time maintain a positive school climate. They have an understanding of the needs of children, parents, teachers, staff, and even their own, and lead with love” (p.22).

Danis (2006), states that effective communication goes beyond a mere technical capacity to communicate orally or in writing. The school leader should possess an understanding beyond the culture of the school community, the values of the organization, the board, the parents, the teachers and the students. She states that:

... in order to communicate effectively and demonstrate sound judgement the leader must embrace a skill set that goes well beyond understanding curriculum and instruction, managerial skills, and the ability to delegate. Today’s leader must also be a skilled anthropologist or, at the very least, a knowledgeable demographer (p55).

Grady (2004) states that successful principals master the following:

... interpersonal skills, by recognising the importance the interpersonal skills can contribute to the positive culture of the school. For example, the principals would see the importance of greeting teachers well, rewarding teachers who have work extra hard, be tactful and diplomatic in approach. Similarly the principals need to recognize the efforts made by the staff and students, and treating everyone equitably are standards in their interpersonal repertoire” (p2) “The principals also need to acquire communication skills in terms of verbal, non-verbal, aural and written. Clear communication is the most important element (P11-20).

Teachers and staff as professionals bring a tremendous amount of expertise to their work. People are the greatest resource of an educational organization. Successful principals recognize this and enlist it in achieving the goals of the school. Effective principals encourage the work of teachers. Conversely, beginning teachers as well as experienced teachers rely on the principal for support and guidance.

Any school principal must be clearly understood; therefore her/his communication must be clear, diplomatic, sharing, caring and show leadership. The school community must be able to transform all that the principal says into observable changes or actions. This attribute is similar to the traditional leadership attribute, that the cultural leader must be understood and followed accordingly (Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; Fullan, 2003; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992).

### **2.9.2 Building good relationship**

Leadership arguably is a relational activity. Therefore building mutual relationships is an essential element of highly effective leadership practices. Successful schools hinge on a peaceful, warm, loving, caring and trouble-free environment. The main player in creating such an environment is the school principal. She/he must be skilful to ensure that the school environment is conducive to maximum learning (Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Schon, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1991; Thomas, 2006). When Principals build relationships with their students and colleagues, their role is not to become their best friend, but to communicate with them so that they have their best interests at heart and genuinely care about their lives and success. In addition, the principal must show interest in what interests students, listening and getting to know them. Relationships are an investment in time, energy, self and soul (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Grady, 2004; Hargreaves, 1997; Kedian 2006; Lambert, 1998; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992; Robertson, 1995; Soder, 1990; Southworth, 1998; West-Burnham, 2004).

### **2.9.3 Visions, goals and mission**

According to Kedian (2006) the notion of leading a school is like a journey, moving from point A to point B. He stated that the journey may not be linear nor circular but could rather be represented as a mosaic – where aspects of the organisation's strategic direction are slowly filled in until the picture is complete (2006 Lecture). During the school's learning journey, the principal is responsible for setting the course and ensuring that the school is going towards the planned and desired strategic endpoint. It is therefore important for the principal to have clear ideas of where the school should be heading, the direction (vision), the end point (goals) and the nature of the journey (process). These three elements are considered by the available literature as the essentials of leading a school successfully (Hargreaves, 1997; Parkes, 2004; Robertson, 1996; Walther-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003).

Cornwall (2003) defines a vision as the ideas of the founder and subsequent leaders of the school which must be clearly translated into a form that the school community understands. If a vision is not defined well it very often cannot be

clearly articulated for others. He points out that the goal in developing a vision is to develop it to the point where it can be written down and easily communicated to others. He argues further that the most effective vision statements have four main components. The first is the founder's core values, based on ethical principles and morals of the founder and should be the heart of the vision statement of the school. Secondly is the purpose and focuses, a clear statement of purpose is sometimes referring to as an elevator answer. The statement of purpose must be clear, consistent, compelling and have continuity.... Thirdly, is the mission statement, which defines specifically what the school is doing to achieve the vision that has been articulated. It can be referred to as the process. Next are the goals and aspirations in a more generalised statement pointing to the future and forecasting the end of the journey.

The Solomon Islands' school principals need to be aware of this very important process. They need to understand the process and be able to use it to lead their schools well in order to attain higher success rates.

#### **2.9.4 Everywhere, every time, everything, everybody principal**

It is becoming more and more clear and some researchers continue to say the same thing in many different ways; to be an effective principal, leading a successful school, can be summed up as 4Es; "to be effective, the principal needs to be everywhere, everytime, attend to everything, be expected to see everyone all in a day's work (Gardner, 1986; Hargreaves, 1994; Hord, 1997; Sigford, 2003). This implies a level of omnipotence and unreality impossible in most contexts. Kedian (2002) refers to this as "crafted wisdom". He suggests that the way in which a principal leads often reflects both wisdom and the extent to which they have mastered the 'craft' of leadership.

A similar view is also expressed by Hayes (2004) who signals that besides the administration and management skills, other skills and tasks are also essential if a principal is to lead a school effectively. He emphasised that research has demonstrated the importance of the principal using other skills to bring about maximum learning outcomes. These skills include:

ability to articulate school mission; a visible presence in classrooms and hallways; hold high expectations for teachers and students; spend a major portion of the day working with teachers to improve instruction; actively involved in diagnosing instructional problems; create a positive school climate; recognizes teaching and learning as the main business of a school; spends time in classrooms and listening to teachers; promotes an atmosphere of trust and sharing; builds a good staff and makes professional development a top concern and; does not tolerate bad teachers ( p.viii-ix).

## **2.10 Conclusion**

This literature reviewed has aimed at identifying and being familiar with the core practices of highly effective school principalship from the current theories in order to have an understanding on the topic. In the same way, it explores ways and means that this new found knowledge can be applied in the Solomon Islands school leadership/principalship scenario.

This has implications for a number of stakeholders in the Solomon Islands to recognise and build in mechanism(s) to eliminate the gap that currently exists between the school leadership practices and the current leadership theories.

## **CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter explores aspects of research methods that are appropriate to this study and considers the research approach to be used in this study. The study area involves human research, and investigates the perceptions of six participating principals from Solomon Islands Community High Schools. This research project will gather information from the social world perspective (Bell, 2005; Bouma, 1996; Burns, 2000; Clark, 1997; Creswell, 1994, 1998; DePoy & Gitlin, 1998). It will consider various methodological approaches and research methods, paradigms and strategies. Based on this exploration I hope to make clear the underlying reasons for my choice of research method.

### **3.2 Educational research**

Broadly speaking, educational research is a controlled and systematic investigation to unveil a certain phenomenon, issue or problem in order to solve problems or to increase one's own knowledge of the world (Burns, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Kumar, 1996). Research is one of the means by which we set out to discover and appreciate the world around us (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000). It is defined as "a systematic investigation to find answers to a problem" (Burns, 2000, p.3) and has been closely associated with the traditional objective scientific method. Its activities extend beyond casual observation, and involve a systematic, critical and self-disciplined endeavour to enhance knowledge and wisdom. The purposes of conducting educational research is to address gaps in the current knowledge, replicate knowledge, expand knowledge, broaden our perspectives on views and keep us informed (Creswell, 2005).

### **3.3 World views**

There are many ways of looking at the world of social knowledge. Therefore it is worth mentioning the major paradigms that underpin educational research practices, before exploring the principles of qualitative research. These paradigms can be seen as lenses through which reality is viewed, a set of assumptions about

what knowledge is and how it can be researched (Bell, 2005; Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Weaver & Olson, 2006). The lenses or paradigms include: normative/positivistic/empirical-analytic research, interpretive/naturalistic research, and critical research (Popokewitz, 1984).

### **3.3.1 Normative/positivistic paradigm**

A researcher located in a positivist research paradigm would view the world as being detached and external to the knower. It is hard, real and involves objective reality (Cohen & Manion, 1994; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Popokewitz, 1984). This is the hard-line scientific approach to knowing the social world. Interestingly, positivists believe that, like the physical sciences, the social affairs and realities are governed by law-like regularities that can be unveiled and manipulated to arrive at a definite or concrete result (Popokewitz, 1984). According to O’Leary (2004) the world is: “knowable, predictable and singular” (p.5). For my research project, using this paradigm as the lens through which to view and analyse the information that I will gather, seemed not to be applicable because I will be exploring the views, perceptions, beliefs and values of the research participants which are considered by some traditional scientific researchers as not hard, unpredictable and not singular in nature (Richardson, 1998; Wright, 2002).

### **3.3.2 Interpretive paradigm**

Unlike the positivist research paradigm, the interpretive research paradigm is more concerned with how individuals make meaning of their social situations and settings (Bouma, 1996). An interpretive researcher would seek to discover the intrinsic or humanly created meanings and experiences that are shared by the research participants (Clark, 1997). That means in interpretive research, meanings and experiences are constructed by individuals to create meaning out of their lived experiences and the actions exhibited in their natural social contexts (Creswell, 1998). In addition: “...imposition of external form is resisted as it aims to understand the subjective world of human experiences.” (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; p.3) The interpretive paradigm which developed from concerns regarding so-called scientific strategies contains a wide variety of research views. Wright (2002) points out that this paradigm suggests that people are: “...the actors

in their own lives, operating with free will and independently” (p51). Though there are many different views, the focus on people’s own meaning-making is central (Bell, 2005; Bouma, 1996; Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 1998; Richardson, 1998; Wright 2002).

The interpretive paradigm is frequently criticised for being too general (Markula, Grant & Denison, 2001). The other perceived weakness concerns the assumptions and interpretive scope allowable to the researcher who is free (to an extent) to create their own meanings (Grumet, 1991). Importantly though for the purposes of my study, this paradigm acknowledges the influences of politics, economics and cultural forces on the way people think and behave. The notion of power relations becomes part of the field of inquiry, leading to the development of the critical paradigm (Sparkes, 1992; Wright, 2002).

### **3.3.3 Critical paradigm**

The critical paradigm aims to uncover the rapid social changes and to find out the ways through which these changes have occurred in society (Popkewitz, 1984). Critical theorists believe that the obstacles or social realities that mystify or obstruct our practical activities need to be identified and reflected upon for proper action. “This means that it is not just the matter of preconceived rules and/or procedures but also depends on the researched to provide the necessary information to make meanings as well as for emancipation and to achieve concrete changes” (Popkewitz, 1984; p.7). This paradigm may be applicable for my research project as I will not only be seeking deeper understanding, but looking for suggested ideas or ways that will improve the effective leadership of schools by school leaders - in particular the school principals.

### **3.3.4 Quantitative research**

Quantitative research has dominated educational enquiry for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Creswell, 2005). Quantitative research methods, as mentioned earlier, were scientific in their approaches (Bell, 2005; Burns, 2000; Cohen & Manion, 1994; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Popkewitz, 1984). This is the hard-line approach of knowing the social world. Interestingly, some researchers

(positivists) believe that like the physical sciences, the social affairs and realities are governed by law-like regularities that can be unveiled and manipulated to arrive at a definite or concrete result (Popkewitz, 1984). This usefulness of quantitative research methods in educational leadership continues to be strongly challenged by a number of researchers such as Fullan (1993); and Richardson (1998).

### **3.3.5 Qualitative research**

Qualitative research stems from the inadequateness of the standard, traditional scientific endeavours and has been mostly allied with the term “positivism”. Wright (2002) also noted that positivism does not allow any input from the researcher. Thus, the feelings, experiences and values of the researcher should be left out. This could mean that when interpreting the data, researchers would find it difficult to add any of their own feelings, beliefs and experiences to the body of information being explored. Potentially then, when researching the social world, the attributes that make meanings in the social world will be left out, making the task ‘un-human’ (Burns, 2000; Lather, 1992; O’Leary, 2004; Popkewitz, 1984; Wright, 2002). Wright (2002) quoted the works of Fullan (1982; 1993), House (1991) and Richardson (1998) on this point, who argued that obtaining the views and perceptions of participants would not work using the positivist methodology or methods. The reason was that the type of information explored here involves; feelings, beliefs, values, norms and experiences that are not necessarily real and hard as advocated by the physical world view and therefore require a form of interpretation different from the traditional scientific method. The social world is not hard and cannot be replicated as in the case of research in the physical world (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Fullan, 1993; Lather, 1992; Richardson, 1997). This brings in the idea that qualitative research fosters understanding more than finding the exact answer or solution to problems. It has been argued by some researchers (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Fullan, 1993; Lather, 1992; Wright, 2002) that broadly speaking, qualitative research practices developed in response to the growing uneasiness with the traditional, scientific views of what constituted research and the place of the researcher within it. While positivists look for hard evidence in the practical world, interpretive theorists sought to understand it (Fullan, 1993; Lather, 1992; Richardson, 1997; Wright, 2002).

Qualitative research approaches are often used in the interpretive/naturalistic research paradigm. Qualitative researchers believe that social reality is often associated with human beings (Burns, 2000; Fullan, 1993; Lather, 1992; Morrison, 2006). Therefore, human knowledge is deeply rooted in human actions rather than being generated through statistical manipulation and quantifiable research approaches which objective science relies on. This is not to overrule positivism but a qualitative researcher places his/her validity on multiple realities, meaning structures and holistic analysis of a social phenomenon (Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 1994). The qualitative research paradigm enables a researcher to conduct studies in the natural setting, using multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic (Creswell, 2003). Wright (2002) noted that qualitative enquiry involves establishing the type of information one explores which involves feelings, beliefs, values and experiences which could not be taken into consideration for a quantitative enquiry. Therefore, in my view, it is more appropriate that the main focus of this research be a qualitative investigation of the core elements of effective principalship in the Solomon Islands Community High Schools. The use of qualitative inquiry can be helpful to probe deeper into the participant's views, thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs, attitudes and experiences so as to accommodate various different assumptions, allowing collaboration, making a holistic approach appropriate to meanings that emerge, critically interpreting the complexities of the elements of effective principalship and comparing this view with the views emerging from the current literature on the topic (Bishop, 1997; Bouma, 1993 & 1996; Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 1994; Petrie, 2005; Punch, 1998).

“Qualitative” implies a direct concern with experience as it was ‘lived’, or ‘felt’ or ‘undergone’ or ‘believe in’ (Sherman & Webb, 1988). I am interested in exploring the lived experiences of a small group of principals regarding their views of principal effectiveness. Consequently they will be drawing directly on their personal experiences as leaders, as well as anecdotal evidence they may have encountered. The qualitative method allows collaboration and critical interpretation of the elements of effective school principalship in the Solomon Islands schools. Therefore I have decided to use a qualitative strategy – and while

it is noted that this is not the only method available, nor is it a perfect method to use, it appears to be the most effective for my purposes in this particular research project.

An amicable rapport between the researcher and the participants is essential and this can only come about if the researcher is seen as a credible part of the research project. While I am a researcher in this study, I also remain a Community High School principal. This reality will, I suggest, offer a degree of credibility that may not be possible for an 'outside' researcher. As a serving principal I have views which will inevitably impinge and impact on the interpretation of the data. While I shall make every attempt to minimise the impact of my own professional experiences in the interpretive process, it would be academically dishonest to assume that they will have no effect.

### **3.4 The research methods**

To ensure that this research project collects reliable information, it will employ more than one method of data collection. Burns (2000) advised that because of the richness and complexity of human behaviour in the social world: "Exclusive reliance on one method may bias or distort the researcher's picture of the particular slice of reality being investigated" (p.419). When collecting information I shall attempt to triangulate the data in order to enhance its accuracy (Burns, 2000; Bell, 2005; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2000; Weaver & Olson, 2006).

The methods used in this research project will be: semi-structured interviews, personal observation, and consulting primary documents in the schools and at the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development, and other literature available that is relevant to the research project.

#### **3.4.1 Semi-structured interview**

The qualitative method of semi-structured interview is considered most appropriate for my research. It is widely regarded as having the advantage of allowing greater flexibility in a research project. This method will enable the researcher not only to collect the necessary data, but as a means of social and interpersonal encounter with the participants as well (Bishop, 1997; Burns, 2000;

Cohen et al., 2000; Fontana & Frey, 1994). A semi-structured interview guide will be developed for the study, which will focus on the research questions: “*What are the elements of highly effective principalship?*” and “*What issues impede the development of highly effective principalship?*”

In the semi-structured interview format, the researcher will be able to capture the participating principals’ perceptions (thoughts, feelings, views, experiences and beliefs) on the elements of highly effective principalship and the issues that prevent highly effective practices in schools. At the end of the interview, the researcher should: “...leave the interview with a set of responses that can be fairly easily recorded, summarised and analysed” (Bell 2005, p.162). This is particularly important for my research as I have a limited time in the schools. Therefore obtaining a set of data that can be easily recorded and analysed will facilitate the process of the research project. The other advantage of using a semi-structured interview method is that the participants will be able to express their views and experiences on the subject, increasing the authenticity of their responses.

Oakley (1981) noted that the quality and the depth of information gathered from semi-structured interviews can be of high quality. She suggests that information gathered in a more discursive context where there is a breakdown of the hierarchical division between interviewer and participant is often found to show more depth and insight on the part of the participant. Because of the time factor, the interview process will only be done once. By preparing carefully for the interviews, and ensuring that initial and probing questions are clear, the nature of the interaction taking place during that single interview should be sufficient to ensure quality of the data. Furthermore, this project will make an attempt to: “generate a collaborative approach to the research which will engage both the interviewer and respondent in a joint enterprise” (Oakley, 1981; p.44). Bell (2005) noted that one major advantage of the interview is its adaptability. She suggests that a skilful interviewer can follow up ideas, probe responses and investigate motives and feelings. “It is highly subjective but can yield rich material and can often put flesh on the bones of responses” (p157). The research will permit greater flexibility and valid response from the participant’s perception of reality. In addition, Burns (2000) noted that; “...the researcher must be mindful not to

impose his/her own assumptions and making sure the scope of find out the beliefs and feelings of the participant is widen. (p.424)

### **3.4.2 Constraints of Semi-structured Interview**

Despite the advantages and appropriateness of the semi-structured interview, there are a number of constraints or limitations of the method as well. Bell (2005) points out that those interview methods are time-consuming, covering only a relatively small number of people and can be highly subjective. The presence of the interviewer may prevent participants from expressing their views openly. The loss of anonymity may result in the participants feeling threatened or intimidated. Fontana and Frey (2003) supported this view, as they feel that the routine, pervasive nature of interviewing causes some researchers to overlook the impact of the social dynamic of the interview regarding the nature of the knowledge generated. This includes the researcher's gender, race and status, which can have an effect on the participant's responses, leading to collection of poor interview data (Fontana & Frey, 1994). This is considered crucial in my study as I am a serving school principal (albeit absent on study leave) and a male researcher. I may influence my participants' freedom to express themselves during the interview sessions. I shall attempt to minimise the impact of these extraneous factors by careful preparation for the interviews and by maintaining an awareness of the potential of some of the unchangeable factors. While the interview process is intended to be as natural and as flexible as possible, it is crucial that the focus of the conversation remains relevant to the research question. This is because it is easy to get carried away in an open-ended interview. Though deeper probing would lead to more interpretation of the concept, it can make the participants feel indifferent (Bishop, 1997; Burns, 2000; Fontana & Frey, 1994; Petrie, 2005).

### **3.4.3 Personal observation**

The other method this project will employ is personal observation. The researcher will not follow the standard practice as noted by those who use this method extensively. Burns (2000) noted that observational studies have involved spending longer periods of time, and start off as unstructured and finally progress to using a check-list. He also stated that "implicit assumption behind observation is that

behaviour is purposive and expressive of deeper values and beliefs” (p411). For this research project, personal observation will be informal and elements collected, should complement the information collected from the semi-structured interview in order to validate the espoused practice described in the interview.

#### **3.4.4 Constraints of observation**

Some weaknesses of the observation method which this research project needs to be aware of, are as follows: limited time spent on observation may affect the reliability of the data collected. It is acknowledged that the filtering of observable behaviours is quite a difficult task as sometimes the observable behaviour noted may not be what it is interpreted to be. Thus observation and existing context may lead the researcher to misconstrue the meaning of a particular behaviour. However, it is my intention to observe the participants in a staff meeting and other, less formal, interactions with the staff. I further acknowledge the point made by Flick (2002) that: “The act of observation may influence the observed in many cases” (p.139). Furthermore, limited observation may result in important data being missed.

#### **3.4.5 Documents and school records**

The third method I shall use to collect data for this research is to consult relevant documents and records available in the schools and Ministry of Education and Human Resources Development of the Solomon Islands. Documents in the schools would include diaries, memos, field-notes (Hodder, 1998), enrolment history, staff numbers, and disciplinary statistics. It is hoped that this data will be useful in itself as well as contributing to the corroboration of data from other sources. It is further anticipated that the data collected will be useful during the discussion part of this research project (Bishop, 1997; Hodder, 1998). Hodder (1998) pointed out that frequently documents are prepared for personal rather than official reasons and to access these documents in schools may be restricted as with having access to school records.

### **3.5 Selection of participants**

In order to have a wide representation of the Community High School principals' views, the sample will include two rural, two urban and two church-run Community High School principals in Solomon Islands. The research will bear in mind gender equality as well. However this sample in no way implies an attempt to develop a comparative study.

### **3.6 Ethical consideration**

Although, it is a common knowledge that there is no strong tradition of academic research in the Solomon Islands, it is still considered necessary, as part of this study, to follow very closely and conform to the University of Waikato Human Research Ethics Regulations (2006) and the relevant sections and requirements of the Research Act of 1982 (Research Act, 1982, Solomon Islands) which provides for guidelines governing any research activity in the Solomon Islands. This project shall ensure that the following generally accepted notions in research ethics are followed:

*Informed consent:* I shall fully inform the research participants about the purpose and procedure of the study so that they understand the nature of the research and any likely impact on them. Thereafter participants will be required to sign the consent form before they engage in the research.

*Voluntary participation:* I shall ensure that the participants in my research understand that participation is entirely voluntary.

*Right to withdraw:* I shall ensure that the participants in my research are fully aware of their right to withdraw from the research project at any stage up to that point that they confirm the accuracy of the interviewed transcript and the analytical process begins.

*Confidentiality:* Participants for my research will be assured that any data they provide will remain confidential and will only be used for academic purposes in this research project.

*Anonymity:* I shall ensure that the identity of my participants is not revealed and will eliminate identifying descriptors.

*Privacy:* At all times during the research process, I shall ensure that the questions I ask are focussed on the research question and that my research participants are not made to feel that their privacy has been invaded or their time improperly used.

*Participant safety:* As far as possible, I need to ensure that my research participants understand the implication of participation and that they should not be subject to physical, psychological, emotional, or cultural harm. Also I need to inform them about who to approach if they have any concerns about how my research is conducted.

### **3.7 Data collection and analysis**

Data collection and analysis will involve three linked sub-processes (Huberman & Miles, 1998) these will be data reduction, data display, and conclusion. It is necessary that these processes occur before data collection, during methods design and planning stages; during data collection as interim and early analyses are carried out and after data collection, as final products are approached and completed (Huberman & Miles, 1998, p.180). Soon after the interviews are completed, the data collected will then be transcribed and interpreted for analysis. I will use the thematic analysis approach to analyse my research data. This approach according to Mutch (2005) is commonly used for analysing qualitative data. The main focus of this approach is to look for patterns and themes. I will be aware that I am analysing the perceptions of principals as humans meaning that each response will be somewhat unique, and as such in the social world, the meanings obtained may only apply in the individual situation. On the same note the likelihood of the views being applied in other situations may well be true. Although this approach can be more demanding on my personal resources and intellectual craft, the size of the research project will not cause so much of a problem.

#### **3.7.1 Conducting the semi-structured interview**

The interview process will involve one face-to-face conversation with each participant lasting approximately an hour. Questions for the interview are based on my core research questions: *What are the elements of highly effective*

*principalship of schools in the Solomon Islands and what are the issues that prevent highly effective practices?*

### **3.7.2 Data transcription**

The interview data will then be transcribed into English. Each interview transcript will be returned to the participants to confirm accuracy and for the participants to include further reflections if they wish. The transcribed interview notes will then be further discussed with each participant for validation purposes.

### **3.7.3 Data analysis**

The collected data will be interpreted using the thematic analysis (Burns, 2000). The interviews will be transcribed, as I believe that this will make the analytical process more convenient and effective. The process of analysis will begin with the identification of themes and similarities. It will also be important to reflect on the silences in the data as these may be just as revealing as emerging themes.

The project will compare current literature with the responses of the participants to note any correlations, differences and silences. The analytical process will take cognisance of all the data and, in addition, pay particular attention to any views that may be regarded as new or not congruent with mainstream perspectives.

## **3.8 Conclusion**

In summary, this research method has ventured into describing and analysing the theoretical perspectives of my chosen methodologies, which is qualitative and the method of data collection which is semi-structured interview. Observations and documentation, school records consultations and addressing the ethical issues and considerations are needed for the research project to proceed forward. Though I do not have much experience in carrying out research, it is my interest and belief that there is a gap issue here needing to be addressed on school principal practices and the literature available and it is this interest and belief which will fuel the energy and the foresightedness I need to complete this research project.

## CHAPTER FOUR: THE FINDINGS

### 4.1 Introduction

*“Leadership practice, as a result, is always concerned with both what is effective and what is good; what works and what makes sense; doing things right and doing the right things”* (Sergiovanni, 1990, p.28).

The main data gathering of my project fieldwork has been the semi-structured interviews conducted with six participants, who were currently practising school principals. The objectives of the semi-structured interview were to allow the Community High School principals in the study to state their perception on what constitutes highly effective principalship and express in their own words the impediments that have inhibited their effectiveness. I hope that the findings of this project will enable me to identify the elements of highly effective principalship, and learn the issues which prevent principals from being highly effective in leading and administering the Solomon Islands' Community High Schools. Informal observation and document consultation were also employed as part of the triangulation data collection methods. However, these two methods only complement the semi-structured interview data collection method.

In reporting the views, beliefs and perceptions of participating principals, I have made an explicit decision to quote these verbatim in the interests of authenticity and academic honesty. Some of the quotations are grammatically incorrect, but true to the participant's responses.

From the analysis of the interview transcripts, I have grouped the recurring themes that emerge, into four sections: The first section contains the perceptions of highly effective principalship as expressed by the participants, the second section contains the capacities commonly anticipated or displayed by practicing school principals, the third section reflects the importance of traditional Solomon Islands leadership and the professional ethics and ethical values and the fourth section collates issues or factors that may impede their effective leading and managing of their schools.

A: Elements of highly effective principalship

- i. Commitment and dedication
- ii. Individual qualities of the leader
- iii. Highly effective interpersonal skills
- iv. Deep understanding
- v. Managing and leading
- vi. Being knowledgeable
- vii. Christian values
- viii. Modelling
- ix. Highly interested and passion for the job.
- x. Visionary

It should be noted that there is no mention here of some of the most basic elements of leading learning, such as leading for the future, preparing a nation for social and economic development and other macro issues. This implies a micro-managerial focus rather than an appreciation of the broader role of an educational leader. This omission is, itself, important data and is referred to in Chapter Five.

B: Capacities commonly referred to:

- i. Competency
- ii. Commitment
- iii. Dedication
- iv. Honesty
- v. Kindness
- vi. Listening
- vii. Participation
- viii. Patience
- ix. Persistency
- x. Punctuality
- xi. Reliability
- xii. Trustworthiness

#### C: Traditional leadership concepts

- i. Importance and understanding of the powerful impact of traditional Solomon Islands leadership concepts.
- ii. Professional ethics and ethical values of the modern Solomon Islands schools.

#### D: Issues that prevent highly effective principalship

- i. lack of pre-principal training and support for ongoing professional training.
- ii. lack of positive and timely response to the school principals' enquiry and requests from the Ministry of Education and Education authorities.
- iii. Unfavourable conditions of service for the teaching profession
- iv. Insufficient financial and other resources
- v. Lack of an inspectorate leading to lack of evaluation/ appraisals from authorities
- vi. Lack of collegial learning opportunities for serving principals

### **4.2 Elements of effective principalship**

There was a large degree of commonality in the views expressed by the participants. Some of the responses correlate with current literature but seem not to be based on any particular theory. This may be due to the fact that all the participants have been practicing principals for a long time and may have developed what they consider to be the best ways to be effective in leading schools, without having any knowledge of the current literature on highly effective principalship. Although they have expressed their views with some degree of confidence and clarity, they seem not to have any literature alignment or significant familiarity with current literature on leadership and effective principalship. This can be noted from their responses which are largely theoretical. In some cases their answers have deviated from the question and in others they have conflated the issues. This is seen throughout their responses. The way the participants either do not answer the questions fully or have conflated the answers can be interpreted as an indication of their lack of clarity on issues of

highly effective principalship. This is data in itself and can be seen as an impediment to effective leadership.

#### **4.2.1 Commitment and dedication**

The common perception of all the participants was that to be highly effective was to be committed and dedicated. There was congruence on this point between the perceptions of the participants and available literature (Campbell, Dunnette, Lawler, & Weick, 1970; Creighton, 2005; DuFour, 2004; Freire, 1970; Goddard, 2003; Noonan, 2003; Scapp, 2006; Sergiovanni, 1990, 2000; Sigford, 2003; Soder, 1990; Starratt, 2005). This congruence may be due to a number of factors, one of which could be that the participants have many years of experience (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986) and another could be that they have learnt these concepts during their teacher-training days or must have heard it by attending workshops and conferences. One of the participants stated:

*“In my view, I suppose to be effective one must be committed and dedicated to the job as a principal, because when one is committed and dedicated, one can get all the necessary tasks through, in time for the school. As such the school community will benefit and will go a long way in achieving the school’s goals and objectives. I have learnt to be dedicated and committed throughout my years of service as the fundamental to being effective in whatever areas I have worked through.”*

When asked how one can become highly effective, the response was:

*“One thing that I see that could make a person very highly effective is to have a vision for the job one performs and to see the end result of that vision. To see that the work is being accomplished properly, all aspects of the work especially the school; whether it be infrastructure or learning performances, all these including staff successes are fulfilled. One needs to be fully committed and spend time in supervising. All these needs one to be dedicated to the job of being a school principal.”*

The participant has deviated from committed and dedication by mentioning visions as well, although this is probably an attempt to describe his view of commitment and dedication. However, the response – typical of those of the other participants too - is theoretical and makes no reference to the literature. Furthermore, his initial response appears to refer to administrative and managerial activities, implying a lack of distinction between the concepts and associated activities. The participants appeared to perceive that leading is the same as supervising. Thus, despite further probing questions, I was left unsure whether the commitment and dedication referred to leading or administering. Other data collected by observing staff meetings and reading primary documents suggested an emphasis on administrative and managerial activities. In general however, there seems to be consensus in the literature that successful leaders are those who are committed and dedicated to leading their various entities (Duignan, 1988; Fullen & Hargreaves, 1992; Hord, 1997; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; West-Burnham, 2004).

The participants perceived building up cordial working relationships with higher authorities as an element of being committed and dedicated leader. For example Participant #2 noted:

*“As a committed leader, the principal must build a cordial working relationship with the Ministry of Education and the education authorities. I see building up relationships with our employer as important and bring about effective principalship in schools. Because we can relate to them well because we know them.”*

Participant #4 expressed the same perception in this way:

*“A committed principal must do the following: one builds good working relationship. Two: spend time and energy working in the school and with the school community. Three: must be sensitive to the needs of the staff and students. Four: must show caring and loving attitudes. I see that if the principal do these things he or she will be highly effective and will be most respected in school.”*

Being committed and dedicated can and will work in the Solomon Islands' schools. However the practise of these two virtues is not easy, as one of the participants lamented that there were usually unforeseen disturbances or obstacles confronting the principals. The problems can come in many different forms and include personal problems, financial problems, cultural problems and ethical problems. It was unclear how these problems reduced the level of commitment and dedication or impeded their emergence.

#### **4.2.2 Individual qualities of the leader**

The participants perceived that for one to be a highly effective leader, one must be born with some leadership qualities. Some of these leadership qualities were skills in organising, being visionary, being respectful, honesty, humility, firmness and making the “right” decisions. The literature agrees with the qualities the participants identified, although not necessarily with the need for them to be hereditary (Blasé, 1987; Dubin, 1968; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Fiedler, 1967; Kedian, 1999; Lipham, 1964; Robertson, 1995). Participant one illustrated the need to be born with leadership qualities in this way.

*“I see that highly effective principal, as one first of all; I see a person must inherit some qualities. Because you cannot just depend on anybody else to be a principal, if he has no leadership qualities within him or her. It is important that in my opinion somebody who is to be highly effective principal needs those leadership qualities. If those qualities are not there he or she cannot become a highly effective principal.”*

When asked to clarify these qualities he stated;

*“Well some of the qualities are: being able to organised, consistency, using only one tongue, being honest, humble, respectful, supporting staff, be at the right place at the right time and encourage teachers to work above their capacity and being able to make the right decision. He or she must possess leadership qualities to lead the Community, and there are not many people who*

*have these individual qualities. Yes I can also understand that these qualities can be learnt as well, but it will be one step ahead if a principal already have these qualities in him or her. The other point I forget to mention is: Like our traditional leader, to be highly effective the principal must show confidence in consultation skills”*

Another participant noted:

*“To be highly effective, the principal must have a sense of equableness - he or she must treat everyone equal, be fair when deciding and include everyone. I see treating everyone equally and fairly [as important] for being effective in leading the school. The principal must be a willing person and must be willing to listen to others as well.”*

The ‘born-leader’ concept is also an integral part of Solomon Islands traditional leadership practice. Most Solomon Islands traditional leaders earn their various leadership position based on the qualities they have displayed over their rivals (Keesing, 1989; Lather, 1992; Mead, 2001; Narokobi, 1983; Smith, 1998). The participants were aware of the qualities of a ‘born-leader’. In traditional Melanesian society, the leader can be identified earlier in his life by the way he behaves, speaks, carries out tasks and makes decisions ( Keesing, 1989; Mead, 2001; Narokobi, 1983; Smith, 1998). However in modern Solomon Islands’ schools, leadership can be acquired through formal training.

#### **4.2.3 Highly effective interpersonal skills**

One participant spoke compellingly of her belief that highly effective interpersonal skills, including communication skills, enhance highly effective principalship. Five of the participants expressed their positive opinion that interpersonal skills, including how to communicate, were crucial for highly effective leadership. The participant stated:

*“Briefly I would say that you have to have highly effective interpersonal skills. Highly effective interpersonal skills enhance highly effective*

*leadership ... with interpersonal skills, a leader can manage relationships and breathes understanding within the school community. To enhance effectiveness in school, the principal must have effective interpersonal skills including effective communication skills”.*

When asked to clarify further, she responded by saying:

*“Well, interpersonal skills here means all forms of interacting with the school community. You must know what you are doing, what things you value, what your dislikes are, and where the school is going. The community needs to understand you and what you are trying to tell them. It’s only when they understand the leader through proper interpersonal skills that they will follow. Some leaders have failed in this area. That is why it is essential that new and upcoming principals must train to master interpersonal skills including verbal communication. They must acquire proper interpersonal skills to share the school’s vision and missions”.*

The participant appeared to suggest that interpersonal skills needed to be taught as an explicit component of principal development even though these skills can also be developed over a period of time by the school principals (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Leithwood, 1992; Scapp, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2000). It is vital that eventually the practising school principal must master these very important skills and be able to use them for the school’s advancement (Caldwell, 2006; Glanz, 2006; Schumaker & Sommers, 2001; Sigford, 2006; Tomlinson, 2004).

The same participant continued:

*“.....Right, according to my experiences, I would say that like I said earlier, you have to have ‘good communication skills’. You have to really have them in a school environment and in an educational institution. You must have a competency in communication and also your relationship with your teachers and students, and proper planning and so on... but it all starts with being able to talk to them all [staff, students and parent community] and tell them what you want”.*

The participant (above) has taken two concepts to mean the same. She might have meant that the principal could use his/her interpersonal skills to build good relationships with the school community. The other interpretation could be that she equates effective communication with effective building of relationships with staff, students and the whole school community. Building cordial relationships between the members of the school community will certainly develop a better level of understanding and a more effective working environment that will be conducive to positive advancement of any school to accomplish the vision and mission. This is congruent with aspects of the literature. (Hargreaves, 1997; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1992; Parkes, 2004; Robertson, 1996a; Sergiovanni, 1990, 2000, 2001 and Walter-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003). The response indicated that the participant has not only deviated from the question, but seem not to be clear in what she was trying to say. It would be of great help for our principals, to make available the current educational leadership literature to inform their leading. In this way the school leaders will better understand how to lead their schools.

#### **4.2.4 Systemic understanding and building good relationships**

Another common sentiment expressed by the participants is ‘systemic understanding’. This appears to mean a depth of understanding and appreciation of education policies, procedures, and structures as well as human relationships, the teachers, students and other members of the school community. One of the participants expressed it in this way:

*“.....In addition to that, an effective principalship knows, or having a fair knowledge of the education system, the policies, procedures and structure, understand its governance, and be adjustable to different environments and situations in the school. On the same note, an effective principal needs to understand the people in his or her school community as well as those in the line structure of the education system of the country. Having a deeper understanding on the human side of the system will help a principal to be more effective”.*

Another participant stated what others have perceived, in this way:

*“To be highly effective, the principal needs to tell the students that he wants them to succeed, and that he or she will care and help them to learn. The principal must listen to the staff and students and work for and with them. Only then can the principal be effective”.*

By developing systemic understanding and building mutual working relationships, the school principal can then use his/her interpersonal skills to relate, establish links with the community, and plan and implement workable school programs (Bennett, Wise & Woods, 2003; Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; DuFour, 2004; Hall, 2001; Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1992; Noonan, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2000; Southworth, 1999; Stogdill, 1950).

#### **4.2.5 Personal management and leadership**

Though only one of the participants mentioned this element, the research perceives this to be important. He perceived that to be a highly effective leader, one needs to manage oneself, before being able to manage others and lead them to success. Below is the participant's view:

*“Highly effective principals are people who see their roles as managers and leaders that help them to effectively administer and lead their teachers in their schools. The two elements that I can give you are; they must know that they are managers and they are leaders. They must begin by managing their own activities and leading their own development”.*

He went on further to explain what he meant by being a ‘manager’ and a ‘leader’.

*“I think, in management, you have to know what is required, what you are managing, that is human beings, and of course resources. You also have to know that you are working with people that you must be able to be at the front, leading these people who may be managers. Effectiveness to me starts when one realises that it is human beings who need to manage*

*themselves and assisting your teachers to manage themselves, manage their time, manage their resources, breathes an element of effectiveness into school leadership”.*

Despite attempting to make a clear distinction between management and leadership the participant’s statement makes no reference to the literature. He could not clarify further, the distinction he was drawing between managing and leading. This was another example of personal experience becoming the sole basis for personal theory and action.

However, there are some similarities between this personal theory and that contained in parts of the literature. This is theory which appears to have emerged as a consequence of experience, without the participant having had the opportunity to consult available leadership theories. (Duignan, 1988; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 1991; Wright, 2002). The prime responsibility of any school principal is leading the school. Leadership according to Sergiovanni (1992) involves the hands, the head and the heart. Leadership involves and goes beyond the position held, or position of power. It includes innovation, exploring, reflectivity, growth and improvement of learning (Fullan, 2005; Glanz, 2006d; Hall, 2001; Harris, 2002; Leithwood, 2005; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992; Southworth, 1999; Stogdill, 1950; West-Burnham, 2001).

#### **4.2.6 Being knowledgeable**

The participants suggested that being well-versed in policy, current regulations and current practice, and being knowledgeable, were essential contributors to highly effective school principalship. In addition in today’s modern Solomon Islands’ schools, the principal is expected to have some academic background. A less knowledgeable principal will always be ‘seen as somebody who knows nothing’ (Participant #5) by the school community and be regarded as someone who is not suitable for the principal’s position. Staff and students and the wider community, in most cases, respect and admire a well versed knowledgeable principal. This view was well illustrated by one of the participants in this way:

*“I would suggest that ‘not reading is not leading’. I would suggest teachers and the principal - whoever is in the managerial position - should up-date their knowledge and skills in professional reading, and at the same time they should be able to show or display some of their skills and knowledge. For example, how they counsel students and teachers and or the way they made crucial decisions for the school, based on the knowledge they acquire through formal training and continuous learning.”*

The participant mentions the importance of the principal being knowledgeable as well as other concepts and skills. However, it should be noted that some of the authors in the literature consulted, suggest that there is not necessarily a high correlation between academic excellence and qualifications, and principal effectiveness. While it is preferable for principals to have a thorough knowledge of current educational and leadership theory, it need not necessarily be acquired via formal qualifications. Personal reading is as effective, especially if this personal reading is in conjunction with professional learning communities. Professional learning based on daily reflections on personal leadership experiences is suggested as another highly effective form of learning and leading (Blackmore, 2002; Caldwell, 2006; Carr & Kemmis, 1986; Cheng, 1996; Day & Harris, 2001; Duignan, 1988; Fullan, 2005; Robertson, 1991; Sergiovanni, 1991).

#### **4.2.7 Christian values**

Three of the participants perceived that basing leadership activities and processes on Christian values can develop highly effective leadership. As one of them stated:

*“.....I believe that leadership based on Christian values constitutes highly effective principalship. My leadership is founded on Christian values and principles.”*

When he was asked to explain further what these Christian values and principles were he went on to say:

*“Christian values and principles are based on true love for the school, honesty, prayerful compassion, kindness and respect for all in the school. Therefore if a school principal ignores these fundamental Christian values he or she is bound to be unsuccessful in leading the school.”*

Another participant mentions the same element in this way:

*“In my opinion, to be effective one must ... have some kind of strong and committed Christian values and beliefs..”*

All of the participants are members of the Christian faith. Their belief in the importance of Christian values is therefore to be anticipated. However, they appeared not to make the somewhat broader assumption that a firm set of “human” values would support effective leadership, irrespective of the faith concerned. Leading a school using Christian values is similar to ethical leadership. The principal leads and represents what is good and what is right (Creighton, 1999; Fullan 2003; Gibbs, 2005; Gibson, 2005; Hall, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1992; Strike, 2007).

One participant expressed the belief that impediments to having an underlying set of Christian values as the leader included personal weaknesses, cultural hiccups, organisational workload and conditions of service. It was unclear how these impeded the leadership process and further clarifying questions drew no further explanation.

#### **4.2.8 Modelling**

The participants perceived modelling as the most effective way of leading. They believed that actions speak louder than words. Three of the participants commented on leading by modelling:

*P1: “In my view... the other element of effective principalship is modelling. He or she must be a role model - modelling speaks louder than words, and is the most highly effective way of leading. For example if the*

*principal emphasizes punctuality as a good practice, he or she needs to live by it rather than making announcement after announcement during school assemblies. He or she must be seen as a person who is early or on time for all school programs. The best way to emphasize neat in school is for the principal to dress up neat and tidy. So you see if the leader does not model accordingly, no one will follow his or her command.”*

*P3: “..... Another one is the principal must live by example; it is more effective to be punctual rather than telling the staff and students to do so. Being early to classes, or dressing up properly or being honest or being kind, are the practices a principal needs to display first and prove to the school community that they can be done. In turn, teachers and students are expected to follow.....”*

*P4: “.....I look at role-modelling as a very, very important practice, the principal or the head of the school should be able to model for his teachers in all aspects of work and I think that should be included in effective principalship.....”*

The literature largely agrees with the sentiments expressed by the participants (Blackmore, 2002; Court, 2003; Day & Harris, 2001; DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 2001; Goleman, 2000; Hall, 2001; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Southworth, 1995; West-Burnham, 2005). However, the participants were somewhat vague in precisely what it was that they were modelling. At a general level, it appeared that they were referring to the teaching and learning processes, and classroom management. However, they were silent on whether their modelling included leadership.

#### **4.2.9 Highly interested and passionate**

Though only one participant mentioned this element, others have also indicated that a principal must have deep interest in leading the school, and show *great passion* towards the process. The participant put it in this way:

*“In fact the person must have a very high interest and passion for the job that he or she is doing ..... when one has passion for the job, interest grows and modelling comes automatically. There is a real need for principals and teachers to show more passion for their vocation and not to make money only. ”*

The literature has agreed with this view, School Principals must motivate staff to grow. The participant clearly believed that a more passionate and interested principal would be more successful in leading to transform the school and motivate the staff to perform to the best of their abilities, ultimately to the eventual benefit of the learners (Duignan, 1988; Robertson, 2005).

However, it appears that the unattractiveness of the conditions of service for teachers in the Solomon Islands consistently hampers school principals’ attempts to motivate staff to be passionate and interested in their teaching.

#### **4.2.10 Visionary**

This element was considered by all the participants as important in leading any form of organisation including school. Below are the perceptions of three of the participants.

*“..... Yes, I see a number of activities that a principal must have, which we can probably call practices. One is that you must be able to have a vision for the school, and in making vision, I am talking about envisioning, transvisioning, you must have foresight and insight, these are important practices. I think a principal must... ensure that what he or she wants to happen in school does take place. ..”*

Another commented:

*“..... One thing that I see that could make a person very highly effective is to have a vision for the school, and the job one performs and to see the end result of that vision, and move on to new vision.”*

The third participant said:

*“...so, to become a highly effective principal, it needs somebody who is visionary, innovative and creative to come up with policies and also a developmental plan that the school needs to follow.”*

The research finds that all the participants perceived it as very important for a school principal to develop a vision for the school and set the direction or course for the school with a well defined and achievable set of goals. Cornwall (2003) defines vision as the founder’s ideas translated into a form the school community understands and can articulate to others. In contrast, it was noted that some principals seem not to have a firm understanding and knowledge of how a vision can be transformed into a tangible and workable school program that will enhance high learning outcomes in schools. It is therefore necessary that the Solomon Islands’ Government, through the Ministry of Education, assist principals to understand the process of developing achievable aims/goals from an institutional vision.

#### **4.2.11 Other points**

There were other perceptions shared by participants which the researcher considers important. Below were various opinions expressed by some of the participants in this study.

One participant said:

*“...In judging effectiveness in my own task, I look at three areas which I call ‘PAP’. I look at my own punctuality in making decision, and my own physical punctuality in the school, I look at my attendance to school activities, my attendance to extra-curriculum activities and of course attendance alone to me is insufficient, I must be able to participate,...umm...even in little programs like sports, I see those as the social relationships that you build with your teachers and then you have the professional relationship and of course the teaching and learning*

*relationship that must be created. So I use PAP as my criteria to judge relative importance.”*

The participant’s statement is similar to what some authors like Hayes (2004) may have meant, but the statement made by the participant falls short in clarifying why punctuality, participation and attendance can contribute to creating a positive climate for maximum learning to take place. It seems that the participant only means socialising in school rather than driving a learning institution.

Another stated:

*“.....Furthermore, to make a leader more effective, he or she needs to be organised. He or she must be able to organise in whatever small business he or she is doing, because if you don’t know how to organise yourself, programs or work, that will not reflect well when you become a leader. So I perceive that, the principal must know how to organise.....”*

The participant may mean here the development of a capacity to manage and administer rather than lead. This statement implies a level of administration and self-management rather than leadership. The participant was unclear about leading effectively. This echoes the same sentiment mentioned earlier of the need for making educational leadership theories available and accessible to the Solomon Islands’ school principals. The views made by the next participant, below, covers most of the elements as stated above:

*“..... Highly effective principalship is shaped by the quality of the person, him or herself, the way he or she understands the other colleagues in their posts, the way he or she is frank and honest, in associating and interacting with his or her staff, being open to parents and wider community of the school, and of course with students ... in addition to that an effective principalship is knowing, is having a fair knowledge of the education system, the policies that relates to its governance, and also someone who is adjustable to different environments and situations, and who accepts*

*views and opinions from others and someone who has some kind of strong and committed Christian values.”*

### **4.3 Capacities and virtues commonly displayed**

The participants perceived that certain capacities played an important role in determining effectiveness in school leadership. According to the participants, the following capacities were most commonly displayed by effective principals in the Solomon Islands' Community High Schools: competency, commitment, dedication, honesty, kindness, listening, participation, patient, persistency, punctuality, reliability and trustworthiness. Some of the perceptions expressed by the participants regarding these capacities are as follows:

*P4: “I think, I will say honesty, trustworthiness, reliability. I will put punctuality as well ...umm... and participation. I think they are very important virtues because parents, students and teachers are looking for these types of people displaying, these virtues to work with. “*

*P2: “I think honesty, confidence, and a principal who can display a very strong competency in administration and leadership.”*

*P5: “Be ‘open-minded’ ... don’t stray from the goals and aims you have, meaning be focused on what you do. Have patience, but be persistent towards achieving goals that you want to achieve, and continue to seek information on how to go and ensure that your project or what you wish to achieve is being completed.”*

*P1: “.....and also you must be firm in what you say, or what I always say there must be uniformity, there must be uniformity in what you say ... I believe it is a good virtue people need to respect, respect in the sense that not all human beings are made up or brought up in the same way ... So, okay, kindness I would say is important as well here, when you look at the principal displaying these virtues.”*

P3: *“I think the virtues that have reflected effective principal is someone who believes in the professional ethics of teaching, but someone who is also a sociable person, who creates no barriers between qualification, age gender and even religion.”*

It seems that a number of participants were attempting to refer to particular ways of acting that could be considered virtuous, but were also important leadership capacities. They had difficulty describing them, perhaps because they are somewhat intangible. However, they are important human capacities which they believe they should have – as effective leaders – and would like to develop in the students. For leaders they are seen as capacities, for students they are perceived to be virtues.

#### **4.4 Traditional Solomon Islands leadership concepts**

The participants commented positively on the congruency of traditional Solomon Islands traditional leadership practices with modern principalship. They agreed that the two styles of leadership do have a lot of similarities and can complement each other. However, this does not necessarily refer to the development of leadership capacity and sharing leadership. The participants responded positively to the role of ethics and ethical values in principalship.

##### **4.4.1 Traditional Solomon Islands leadership style**

This research project recorded that there is congruency between the traditional Solomon Islands leadership practices and modern principalship. One of the participants expressed the congruency of the two leadership style in this way:

*“Well I would say here that any leadership whether it be in a traditional Solomon Island society or modern schools, it’s almost the same. They go hand in hand, because you are dealing with the same species: human beings. It doesn’t matter whether we are in a traditional school or in a modern school or a society back in our homes - the kind of approaches, the kind of leadership qualities that leaders demonstrate are the same. The difference here is only the procedures and maybe the form of protocols*

*that you need to apply. That is different in some sense. Whilst in the traditional society, I could say that all approaches are done verbally in an informal way, in modern type of leadership, such as principals, most things need to be done in a formal way, that is; say formally to others or if you need to respond to something, you need to formally get that in writing.”*

Another participant responded this way:

*“I think traditional leadership in Solomon Islands ... I don't think it's very far from becoming an effective principalship. In fact I believe if we put more recognition and more respect in our traditional values and ways of doing things, I believe principals, once they acquire or once they develop those in their traditional setting, that will be a bonus for them when taking up principalship. I said this because, really, the values that are emphasized in schools are the same values that are expressed, shared and quoted in our traditional oral system of passing on information to others.”*

Participant Four stated:

*“I do believe that traditional Solomon Islands leadership practices do assist in effective principalship. A lot of my own leadership practices are probably traditional, only enhanced by my Christian beliefs.”*

Participant Two's response was:

*“In our traditional society, our cultures, they have very strong practices or norms of how a leader should behave and how effective they should be, so that the community can listen to them and follow. So I do not see any reason why these two types of leadership should be different or should have a negative impact on the principal or on principalship. I think they are similar. If you are brought up in a culture whereby your traditional leaders are vocal and stand up for the views and beliefs of your people, I*

*do not think that you will have any problem with leadership. I think that both enhance the skills in a principal.”*

The two leadership styles emphasize similar characteristics of a leader, some of which are; courage, good planning, good strategist, and knowledgeable and committed (Barns, 2003b; Bishop, 1997; Holmes & Holmes, 1992; Keesing, 1989; Lather, 1992). However, it was noted that there were some traditional leadership practices that can be seen as an impediment to modern school principalship. For example, school leadership values equality and does not entertain the cultural practice of the ‘wantok’ system, where a Solomon Islands traditional leader is culturally obliged to serve his/her clan/tribe before others. This would also include genderist views that might see males being appointed as principals ahead of females who might be potentially more capable.

Another area where traditional leadership practices differ from the principalship is the importance of ‘time’. In Solomon Islands’ traditional leadership practices, time means little. It has been noted that some school leaders were usually late in getting to school and leave earlier than the rest of the teachers. It was observed that the practices of traditional leadership have infiltrated into the modern school principalship and were becoming impediments to highly effective principalship.

#### **4.4.2 Professional ethics and ethical values**

Most of the participants believed that the professional code of conduct (ethics) and ethical values do help leadership effectiveness. The principal who shows high moral standards is respected. The school community rallies behind an ethical leader and is usually prepared to follow what he/she proposes because they believe and trust him/her. Ethical practices guide and shape the way the school leader behaves towards the school.

One participant mentioned:

*“This is true in all walks of life, you must have some form of ethics that influences your behaviour towards the job, and I believe that it’s true because it plays the role of strengthening one’s leadership in the job that he is doing. It also satisfies the person and it also encourages one to make*

*or to ensure that his or her administration is becoming better every time. And how do you do this? Well in my opinion, one cannot be fully committed to the work you are doing unless some kind of influences or guiding principles are available for you to follow ... umm ... also ... umm ... one is encouraged by the professional code of conduct and ethical values to reassure a leader that he or she is following the right path. If you have a proper ethics to follow, you are encouraged and strengthened to continue moving forward and complete the job you are doing. And why? Well without these values, one does not have concern for the work. You must have ethics to follow.”*

Another said:

*“Yes I believe very strongly that in my own opinion, I believe that the ethical beliefs a person or a leader or a principal suppose to have goes along with the whatever role that you would like to play in influencing others to become a kind of a student, or a kind of teachers that you want them to be become. I would say here that they go hand in hand, because in order for you to become a principal or a good principal, you have to have certain ethics, you have to have certain values, that you need to follow as a guide. Why? Because after all you are a leader for that particular school, you are an administrator, you are a manager ... all those come together as part of a principal’s job. So you have a lot of roles to play. You are a Counsellor because after all if problem arises in the school between staff and students you’ll be the one called upon to help solve them. So a principal has a lot of roles, a lot of roles in influencing a proper and good learning environment....Therefore it is very important for principals to study, understand and use professional code of conduct and ethical values as a base to guide them to walk on with the leading of the school community and her journey to enhance better learning outcomes.”*

One other said:

*“Yes, I believe our professional ethics and values have a role to play in effective principalship. Because it sets the standard that requires principals to uphold their leadership practices, unfortunately, some people disregard these guiding principles. The code of ethics for the principals are stated very clear in the....whilst it is not fully describe in the teaching service handbook, the principals association also has its own ethics and I believe those are very professional standard that only requires principals to adhere to. And I believe those values of knowing that we are observed by students, parents, guardians and those in the communities are the kind of concern that would help the same principals to be, to reflect well on their duties and the kind of people whom the communities will see as models to follow. And I believe that the roles principals should uphold in their duties are the values of becoming, of knowing that they are leaders.”*

The professional code of ethics for teachers in the Solomon Islands schools is published in the Teaching Service Handbook (revised version 2007). The teachers, including principals, are expected to abide by it. It can be inferred from some of the participants’ responses that not all staff adheres to the code. This is obviously problematic and has implications for serving principals. It is apparent that some of the principals may not meet the required ethical levels, which has possible downstream effects for the teachers who serve under them. If the principals do not meet the standards, then it is unlikely that they will enforce them or insist the teachers meet them. This has severe implications for the national education system – especially in a relatively small country.

#### **4.5 Issues that impede effective principalship**

Whilst the participants had a number of strong views on how to be effective as a principal, they also raised serious concerns regarding the issues that prevent them (or principals in general) developing higher levels of effectiveness as leaders of their schools. They indicated strongly that unless these issues were addressed

earnestly and immediately, most school principals would continue to face an uphill battle in trying to lead their schools.

#### **4.5.1 Lack of principal training and support for ongoing professional Learning**

The participants expressed the view that the foremost issue to be addressed by the government was a training package for all aspiring and newly appointed school principals. They claimed that there were no appropriate pre-principalship training or professional development packages. No educators were trained to be a school principal, including the currently practicing school principals in the Solomon Islands' schools. One of the participants in the study stated:

*“I believe even if the system and structure is there ... most principals in our schools have never taken administration courses to prepare them to become administrators in schools. I think at this point, I wish to acknowledged the efforts taken by principals themselves as individuals to develop ... what they themselves think is acceptable and more practical. So I think this is one of the biggest problems. The system does not identify people and did not put them on training to become an administrator. In the same way as teachers are trained to teach; intending principals should be trained to administer and lead the schools.”*

Another said:

*“From my own perspective and how I see the principals in Solomon Islands, we have a lot of potential principals, but they lack initial principal training. We need the Ministry of Education and education authorities to recognise and identify these potential leaders, and put them into proper training to equip them with proper skills and knowledge on how they can manage and lead the school properly in a systematic manner.”*

Just as there were no pre-principalship professional development opportunities for aspiring leaders, so there no in-service professional learning opportunities for serving principals to review, upgrade or otherwise improve their knowledge base. All input from the Ministry concerned procedural matters with no engagement at a meta-level with professional learning. One participant in the study commented:

*“.....Another issue I think is worth noting here is, when the Ministry of Education or the Education Authority appoints a principal to a school, he or she will remain there for quite sometime. There is no effective mechanism so that he or she can continue to learn or do further professional development. Individual principals struggle to get themselves upgraded professionally ... because some of these principals they are there for ages, but still it seems that there is no proper recognition from the Ministry or Education Authorities. They just leave them down there and indirectly over the years it really affects their performance.”*

One other participant stated:

*“I think the other area is on continuous professional development for the current practicing principals. Many of my colleagues since their first day of appointment have never given the opportunity to upgrade professionally. Professional development for principals is an urgent matter for the Ministry of Education to seriously think about putting in a professional training program for practicing principals. Unless this is done, we will see the effectiveness or the performances of school principals in our schools going down. And this will in turn affect our students learning achievements. We had no training to begin with, and now nothing to help us develop.”*

It was clear from the participant responses that this is seen as the primary impediment to their professional development and leadership effectiveness. It is promising however, that the participants hold this view that they require professional learning opportunities as principals. A more regrettable position would have been if they had never had any professional development but were

coping and therefore did not need it. I suggest that this constitutes a ray of hope.

#### **4.5.2 Lack of positive and timely response from the Ministry of Education and Education Authorities**

The participants were deeply concerned with the lack of positive and timely response from the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education and education authorities on important issues which affect the smooth and effective administration of the schools in the country. As one participant in this study commented;

*“I think it's too bureaucratic to say the least. I think the Solomon Island organisational culture especially the Ministry of Education is too bureaucratic, and you literally find it very difficult to get anything out from them ... So this is the problem, they want you to do things, but they do not provide you with the tools and the assets that you need to effectively administer the school. The other thing is they usually respond very late to your enquiries.”*

When asked to mention some areas which affect his leadership in schools he responded by saying;

*“Finance, I think is one of the areas. The Ministry of Education continues to respond very very late. For example, the giving of the quarterly school grants ... unfortunately the system of securing and retiring of those grants is poor. The system used is highly accounting orientated as well. Another area is conditions of service for teachers. For example, appointment and promotion of teachers, reports submitted for teacher's promotion usually vanish (lost) in that high office. The other is on curriculum matters. They seem to be very slow in facilitating the school's learning needs.*

It was clear from the participants' comments that they felt disempowered by the organisational gap that exists between the Ministry of Education and the schools.

They feel powerless to assist their school or the staff and students. One participant hinted that this created tensions between principals and the code of conduct as some principals attempted to get results in any way they could rather than let their staff down. Their priority is clearly the learning of the students. They want to minimise the disruption to the learning process but also wish to be fair to staff who are applying for promotion or other activities that require collaboration or authorization from head office.

#### **4.5.3 Unfavourable conditions of service for teaching profession**

This was and still is one of the most important areas which affect not only the principals' effectiveness but that of the entire teaching force throughout Solomon Islands' schools. All the participants agreed that this area needs immediate attention by the current government. One of the participants stated:

*“I think the most important area that affects my performances and others as school leaders is the unfavourable conditions of service. Those people in the public service sectors, though we may all have the same qualification, receive better conditions for their service than teachers. Imagine, a teacher in level three is paid approximately \$200 dollars gross with a take home pay of around \$150 which is not even enough to pay for the teacher's essential needs. No houses were made available, no other non-cash benefits. So it's an issue that hits hard on the teaching profession. Someone needs to urgently do something about this area, before we can see improvements in the teachers, including the principal's performances.”*

This year, 2008, the cost of living in Solomon Islands is expected to rise by 33% (Solomon Star newspaper, 1/02/08 issue). Consequently, the matter of poor conditions of service will be further compounded, creating greater differences between the teacher workforce and other sections of the public service who have received salary increases. The potential for industrial action is heightened, which itself creates further ethical tensions for principals.

#### **4.5.4 Insufficient financial and other resources**

Three of the participants in this study mentioned, “Insufficient financial and other resources” as a hindrance to effective principalship. Again, according to them, the Solomon Islands’ Ministry of Education does not give sufficient money to adequately finance all schools. This means that schools do not have enough money to buy curriculum materials, develop the infrastructures and pursue more learning-centred programs. This problem is amplified in two ways for some schools. Schools located further away from the main centres have less money to spend on materials as their budgets have to devote greater amounts to transport. Secondly as more new schools open, the static national budgetary allocation or grant is stretched yet further. As participant three in the study lamented:

*“Yes there are a number of issues ... which are very important and I think you would agree, has affected the way schools are administered in this country [Solomon Islands]. As I have mentioned, funding is one. There is insufficient financial assistance from the government to schools ... without enough funding, schools would not be able to purchase all educational materials needed to operate properly ... it is sad to note that the country does not have enough money for all the schools’ needs. Each year there are new schools opening, but the government shares the same size cake [School grant] to all the schools. Some schools buy fewer materials than others depending on their location in the country.”*

It was observed that church-run schools seem to have fewer financial problems than most provincial and national schools. Further investigation revealed that these schools were directed by the Church Controlling Authorities to raise the extra funds needed to accommodate the shortfall in the schools’ budget. This must be the way forward to curb or minimize State schools’ financial problems. School principals must be innovative, creative and business-minded, even though it is not a central part of their educational roles. This does however raise the issue of whether it is the role of the State to provide adequate funding or whether part of the funding should come from the community.

#### **4.5.5 Lack of an inspectorate leading to lack of evaluation/ appraisals from authorities**

According to the participants, the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education and Education Authorities officials fail to visit schools and carry out school inspections or even visit schools as a way of reassuring the principals, teachers and students. They are occupied in their centralised offices and are not able to devote sufficient time for school visits. The reasons for this are not clear to the principals. It could be due to the same budgetary constraints imposed on schools, bureaucratic requirements for submission to the central Ministry offices, or other reasons. Any attempt to describe these other reasons would be speculative. Regrettably there is a feeling among some of the participants that it could involve matters of quality and professional ability. This has the potential to be detrimental to an entire system. One participant in the study illustrates this point well:

*“I think the other area is of course is inspection. I have not seen any inspection at all since my principalship began. No one has inspected what I have done, no one seems to be interested in the things that I am doing, no one is here to tell me; ‘you are doing the right thing’, ‘yes this is good’, ‘you should be doing it this way’ there seems to be no interest from the Ministry of Education regarding the leadership in the schools.”*

It is clear from the responses that many of the principals are now beginning to speculate on the reasons for these inefficiencies, to the detriment of the system. This speculation is occurring, inevitably, in the absence of information from the Ministry of Education. Arguably, at least some of the speculative responses could be eliminated by the Ministry of Education offering plausible reasons for the status quo.

In the next chapter I shall explore the significance of a number of these issues.

## **CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS**

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with a general overview of the research findings and goes on to discuss the elements of highly effective principalship as perceived by the participants, and the issues that promote or impede their leadership effectiveness in their schools. Furthermore, the chapter will link the discussion to the literature reviewed reported in Chapter 2. In addition, it will include other concepts such as the Solomon Islands' traditional leadership perspectives, virtues and ethics. The chapter will further suggest ways in which this body of knowledge can be used to help existing and future Solomon Islands' School principals. This work will be made available so that people may consult in order to help them enhance highly effective leadership of schools in the Solomon Islands and the South Pacific region.

### **5.2 An Overview of the findings**

The purpose of this study was to identify what constitutes highly effective principalship and what issues impede the effectiveness of principals in the Solomon Islands' Community High Schools. The study was directed by the research questions: What constitutes "highly effective principalship" and what issues prevent the principals from being highly effective in leading their schools.

Common themes emerged from the responses of the six participants regarding what constitutes highly effective principalship in the Solomon Islands' Community High schools. As one would predict, there were some issues about which the participants agreed strongly and similarly some areas of strong disagreement. Views expressed by the participants are inevitably a function of personal experiences. There frequently appeared to be no rational, theory-driven basis for their statements. All participants admitted a lack of familiarity with, or significant knowledge of, current educational leadership theory.

Many of the perceptions of the participants were congruent with the literature findings of this research project. For example, the participants perceived that for

any school to be a successful learning entity, the principal must set the school's vision, goals and mission ( Bainbridge & Thomas, 2006; Blackmore, 2002; Blasé, 1987; Cheng, 1996; Day & Harris, 2001; DuFour, 2004; Fullan, 1992, 2002; Glanz, 2006d; Grace, 1993; Hargreaves, 1997; Leithwood, 2005; Parkes, 2004; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Robertson, 1996a; Walter-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003).

A common theme expressed by participants suggested that high levels of interpersonal skill including the ability to communicate effectively were a crucial element of highly effective principalship. This is supported by Bennett, Wise & Woods, 2003; Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; DuFour, 2004; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Fullan, 2002; Glanz, 2006c; Hall, 2001; Hord, 1997; Lambert, 2005; Senge, 1990; Sergiovanni, 2001; Southworth, 1995; West-Burnham, 2004.

The participants agreed that school leadership in the Solomon Islands is congruent with the traditional “Big-man” leadership style and as one of the participants noted:

“I do believe that traditional Solomon Islands leadership practices do assist and are in line with effective principalship practices. The two styles of leadership: traditional Solomon Islands' leadership and school leadership or principalship advocate many of the same values, norms and are parallel and moving towards the same direction; that is to have the best possible outcome for the society.” (Participant 3)

This is congruent with, Barns, 2003(b); Keesing, 1989; Lather, 1992, Narakobi, 1983; Sikua, 2002; Smith, 1998 who express similar views.

### **5.3 The Elements of highly effective principalship**

Although the current literature indicates that there is a positive correlation between highly effective principalship and highly successful schools, there is still a need to quantify this statement (Fielder, 1967; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Schon, 1984; Senge, 2000). In the Solomon Islands today, people promote high levels of effectiveness in the belief that it will ultimately improve the quality of the educational experience of most students, with a flow on effect of increasing

the quality and quantity of semi-skilled and skilled person-power in the country. The participants described highly effective principalship in various themes which are discussed below.

### **5.3.1 Commitment, dedication and equity**

Commitment and dedication in the Melanesian traditional leadership system means caring for others, equal distribution of wealth and ensuring that all are equal, i.e. no dominant and/or working class. The leader(s) serve well the interests of the people (Lather, 1992; Narokobi, 1983, Smith, 1998). Today, it appears that leaders of various sectors of Melanesian societies have moved away from serving the way Narokobi (1983) explained. Today, Melanesian countries including the Solomon Islands embrace a more global approach to leadership practices. This change in leadership attitudes by current Government officials was also pointed out by Narokobi (1983). The influence of money and extreme power has possibly made leaders vulnerable to corruption resulting in the misuse of funds (Malasa, 2007; Narokobi, 1983; Sikua, 2002; Smith, 1998).

In the current Solomon Islands' school system, it is seen as vitally important that the principals show full commitment and dedication to their work in order to achieve high school success (Bass, 1985; Blackmore, 2002; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Chemers, 1997; Creighton, 1999; Creswell, 2003; Fiedler, 1967; Glanz, 2006; Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Schon, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1991; Thomas, 2006). According to the participants in this research, spending time, thought and energy on the school's environment, programs and activities are the essence of effective leadership and in the long term bring about continuing high levels of school successes (Creighton, 2005; Freire, 1970; Goddard, 2003; Sergiovanni, 2000, 2001; Sigford, 2003; Southworth, 2005; Strike, 2007; Thomas, 2006; West-Burnham, 2004). As participant 2 points out: "It's only through real commitment and dedication that one gets all the necessary school tasks through in time and with some degree of success." To be a committed principal calls for an unselfish contribution to the local community and the broader society. Whilst the participants perceive these virtues as elements for highly effective principalship, the practice of being committed and dedicated is not always easy. It frequently requires a change of attitudes, will-power and

patience, energy, time and effort (Andrews, 1989; Bainbridge & Thomas, 2006; Blasé, 1987; Claxton, 2002; Coleman, 2002; Court, 2003; Glanz, 2006c; Lambert, 2005; Rossow & Warner, 2000).

The participants perceived that establishing a warm and cordial working relationship with higher authorities, such as Ministry of Education officials and the school's Controlling Authorities were an element of being a dedicated principal. This idea was in tune with the current literature on culture-building theory (Andrew, 1989; Bass, 1985; Bennett & Anderson, 2003; Calabrese & Zepeda, 1999; Cornwall, 2003; Court, 1994; Duignan, 1988; Glanz, 2006b; Hall, 2001; Hords, 2004; Jansen, 2005; Maxcy, 1991; Saphier & King, 1986; Southworth, 1995, 2005; Yuki, 1994).

It is noteworthy, however, that a gap appears to exist between the school principals and the Ministry of Education. Most of the participants referred to this in various ways. It is clear that this is a major impediment to effective school and systemic improvement and effectiveness. It appeared that the relationship between the Ministry of Education officials and school principals was not cordial and needs to be explicitly developed. For example, the long delays in responding to the principals' requests by the Ministry of Education were not a positive sign of a cordial working relationship. Therefore the school principals must take the initiative to develop a warmer and more cordial relationship with Ministry of Education and other higher authorities (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Caldwell, 2006; Glanz, 2006a; Leithwood, 1992; Scapp, 2006; Schumaker & Sommers, 2001; Sergiovanni, 2000; Sigford, 2006; Tomlinson, 2004). Robertson (2005) points out that leadership is about relationships. She suggests that it is highly political and which occasionally bedevils the practice. School principals in the Solomon Islands schools need to be aware of this fluidity of leading. A warm and cordial relationship enhances quality learning and highly effective practices (Bass, 1985; Blackmore, 2002; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Calabrese & Zepeda, 1999; Cornwall, 2003; Court, 1994; Duignan, 1988; Glanz, 2006a; Hall, 2001; Hords, 2004; Jansen, 2005; Maxcy, 1991; Southworth, 2005). The relationship between the Solomon Islands' school principals and the Ministry of Education and

controlling authorities needs more attention from all the parties involved to seek a definite improvement.

In the same way, the participants noted that a committed school principal should spend time and energy in establishing good working relationships internally. By developing good working relationships, the principal encourages staff to work above their current capacity. This is consistent with the literature (Court, 1994; Fullen, 1992, 2002, 2003; Gibson, 2005; Glanz, 2006b; Hall, 2001; Handy & Aiten, 1986; Leithwood, 1992; Southworth, 2005). The building of good working relationships in school is a vital practice for all school principals.

However it was clear that a number of the school principals in Solomon Islands' schools were weak in this area, which resulted in their schools not functioning at an optimum level. The observation confirmed that the schools where the principals have established a good working relationship with their staff were more successful than schools where principals have paid less attention to good working relationships (Leithwood, Begley & Cousins, 1992; Parkes, 2004; Robertson, 1996a; Sergiovanni, 1990, 2000, 2001; Walter-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003).

The lack of pre-service leadership training may be one of the reasons why some school principals do not see the importance of building a supportive and generative culture that encourages learning and effective teaching. Glanz's (2006a) collaborative approach and Lambert's (2003) cumulative process can be seen as highly effective in a school when the principal establishes warm and cordial working relationships. It is essential that the Solomon Islands' school principals should focus on building warm and cordial working relationships with staff and students, while leading the learning process.

Participant# 4 commented that a committed school principal needed to be sensitive to the school's needs and make necessary adjustments to enhance smooth running of the school's programs. This view was also supported by Blackmore, 1999, 2002; Day & Harris, 2001; Giddens, 1979; Kedian, 1999; Leithwood, 1992; Purkey and Smith 1985; and Robertson, 1995. Any well-led school was administered by a committed and dedicated leader with his/her

committed staff. In the Solomon Islands there is observable evidence that the schools which run smoothly are usually schools led by highly committed and ethical school principals. The school system in the Solomon Islands still needs to develop a committed work ethic – a phenomenon that is still lacking in most schools in the country. It was observable that the church-run schools have a more clearly defined and explicit school culture and work ethic than the government-run or provincially-run schools.

Similarly, the participants noted that a committed principal was a caring person. They believe that the principal should care for the school and encourage the school community to establish a sense of ownership and stewardship (Bishop, 1997; Blackmore, 1999, 2002; Caldwell, 2006; Coleman, 2002; Convey, 1989; Danis, 2006; Fullan & Mascal, 2000; Gibbs, 2005; Hall, 2005; Robertson, 1995; Senge, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1990; Strike, 2007).

The Ministry of Education and the Education Authorities must work closely with the school principals to ensure that staff, students and parents show an ethos of caring, love, and respectfulness.

The participants believed that many of the changes needed in schools were, to an extent, the consequence of national changes, as the country was going through a series of rapid and substantial changes. Some of these changes were the rapid population growth (approx. 3.0%), increase in economic and social activities in the country, and the high demand for better qualified personnel needed by the Government. Furthermore there was a need at a national level, to have a greater awareness of globalization. The participants believed that they had a responsibility to prepare young Solomon Islands' citizens for a global world and a society that reflected global trends. One way of ensuring that the country does not lag behind is for the school system to ensure it produces a robust, well-educated society. The participants' perceptions and the current literature agree on this point. It was clear that most of the participants saw themselves in a position of servant leadership, that as school principals they were able to assist their communities.

Narokobi is persuasive on this point:

We need leaders who will begin the day early and end the day late and will sooner forgo a privilege than suffer the agony of seeing children being pushed out of schools. We need leaders who will say what they mean and mean what they say and do both. Inspired and dedicated leadership will inspire workers. More than anything else, we need leaders who recognize that leadership is precious opportunity, not to lord it over others, but to serve with integrity and uncompromising commitment to eternal values. (Narokobi, 1983; p.50).

The participants also conceded that to be committed and dedicated at all times was not an easy task. At times they noted that other nonprofessional issues impede their full commitment and dedication. Some of these impediments were cultural problems, financial problems and social problems.

### **5.3.2 Individual qualities of the leader**

The participants in the research all expressed the view that for school principals to be highly effective they must possess leadership qualities. This view was also shared by Narokobi (1983) and the notion on which traditional Melanesian “Big-Man” style of leadership hinges.

The “bigman” in Melanesian society was regarded as a “born” leader. This would fall within the ambit of trait theory as described by the literature. The talents and attributes these leaders possess set them apart from followers (Bass, 1998; Blasé, 1987; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Hoy & Miskkel, 1991; Keesing, 1989; Maxcy, 1991; Narokobi, 1983; Robertson, 2005; Yukl, 1994). Similar to Melanesian traditional leadership, the same qualities were valued and respected in the current Solomon Islands’ school system. The traditional Solomon Islands’ leader gains the respect of the society by working hard for it with spiritual, ethical and personal commitment and dedication. In the school system today, the school

community respects the school principal who displays the qualities of a “born” leader. Some of these qualities include quality decision-making, being ethical, humble, respectful, visionary and truthful (Bass, 1998; Blasé, 1987; Creighton, 2005; Gibson, 2005; Glanz, 2006; Hallinger & Heck, 1996b; Hargreaves, 1994; Hoy & Miskkel, 1991; Lambert, 2005; Morrison, 2006; Sergiovanni, 2000, 2001). Although the current literature leans more toward a shared, collaborative and constructivist leadership approach, there are some authors that believe this type of leadership is still essential (Bass, 1998; Blasé, 1987; Robertson, 1995). In the case of Solomon Islands, the participants’ perceptions indicated that the schools need more of this type of leadership style. As one participant perceived:

“I see a person must have some qualities. Because you cannot just depend on anybody else to be a principal, if he (or she) has no leadership qualities within him or her, not much progress will be made. It is therefore important that in my opinion somebody who is to be an effective principal needs those leadership qualities. If those qualities are not there he or she cannot become an effective principal.” (Participant #1)

The participant perceived that, like a “born leader”, the school principal should have the necessary skills to make right and fair decisions on a range of matters as well as resolve conflict in the school and the community. It was observed that the school principals who had inherited these leadership qualities were more effective in leading their school than principals who did not display the leadership qualities. While there is an indigenous explanation for this, as implied above, there is an equally compelling argument that these leadership capacities could be developed by requiring principals to engage in professional learning programmes for leadership development.

Like the traditional Solomon Islands leader, the school principal should render support to people appropriately. For instance the principal might encourage teachers who are working outside of the official instructional hours by providing incentives. Similarly the principal might support students who have learning disabilities by providing a specialised teacher to work with them, or positively reinforce the efforts of students who excel (Bass, 1998; Blasé, 1987; Campbell,

Dunette, Lawier & Weick, 1970; Hoy & Miskkel, 1991; Yukl, 1994).

Reinforcement is a powerful method that brings about desired behaviours. The schools in the Solomon Islands can adapt this method to enhance desired behaviour outcomes for the learners. Again a change of attitude by the principals will help this method to work well.

In addition, the principal should participate in appropriate school programs. As one of the participant points out, appropriate principal participation in school programs is, to him, a gauge for highly effective principalship (Bass, 1998; Blasé, 1987; Duignan, 1988; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1992; Hord, 1997; Hoy & Miskkel, 1991; Kedian, 1999; Yukl, 1994). By participating in school activities the principal will get to know the school community well, while modelling and encouraging other members of the school community to be involved. Similarly, the principal will be seen by the school community as someone who is interested in the school's development and progress, rather than someone who retreats behind a desk most of the time and doesn't show interest in the school programs.

A further aspect of leadership is courage. The participants see this manifesting itself as a willingness to experiment and take professional risks in the school. The school principals must not be afraid to take academic risks in altering school programs to enhance quality learning. The schools in the country need more school principals to be more participatory and academic risk-takers in order to develop and sustain excellence and develop a transformational ethic. In participating, the principal will influence and lead cultural changes in the school (Bennett, Wise & Woods, 2003; Hord, 1997; Lambert, 2005; Leithwood, 1992; Senge, 1990; Southworth, 1998; West-Burnham, 2004). It was observed that the principals who participated more in their school programs seemed to enjoy their work, established cordial relationships with their staff and students and seemed more progressive (Caldwell, 2006; Glanz, 2006b; Schumaker & Sommers, 2001; Sigford, 2006; Tomlinson, 2004).

In the same way a principal should show confidence in consultation skills, as one participant pointed out. Principals undertake more consultation in city schools than in the rural schools. This is due to locality and accessibility of the schools.

Therefore the principals not only deal with the staff, students and parents, but other interest groups as well. It was noted that schools which have principals who have appropriate communication skills and encourage consultation benefited more from donor agencies and other providers, than schools with principals who do not have or do not display consultation skills. This may appear a minor issue, but participants were quick to point out that it could make a substantial difference to the school.

In addition to the other elements mentioned above, the participants noted that the principal should have a sense of equity and be fair in decisions taken in order to include everyone. One of the participants stated: “To be highly effective, the principal must have a sense of equity, he/she must treat everyone equally, be fair when deciding and include everyone” (Participant #4). This is consistent with views encountered in the current literature (Bass, 1998; Blasé, 1987; Hoy & Miskkel, 1991; Yukl, 1994). However to treat everyone equally would be difficult to achieve in practice. For example, the school principals must be sensitive to different cultural backgrounds when making fair decisions in school communities. In most cases minority groups were usually left out or forgotten. Due to this, the school principal must be especially aware of, and take measures to avoid leaving any member out.

Similarly, the school leader should display a willingness to listen. As one of the participant notes, “the principal must be a willing person and must be willing to listen to others as well.” (Participant #4). For example, when teachers submit any grievances, the principal should find time to listen to them. He or she will be able to understand the situations and contexts and work towards an acceptable resolution with care and humility (Andrews, 1989; Bennett & Anderson, 2003; Blackmore, 2002; Calabrese & Zepeda, 1999; Mitchell & Tucker, 1992; Sergiovanni, 1992; Southworth, 1999; Stogdill, 1950; West-Burnham, 2001).

### **3.3.3 Effective Interpersonal skills**

To have highly effective interpersonal skills including being a good communicator was viewed by four of the participants as a vital element for highly effective principalship. One participant commented: “To enhance effectiveness in

school, the principal must have effective interpersonal skills including effective communication skills.” (Participant # 2) This view was supported by the current literature (Bennett, Wise & Woods, 2003; Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; Glanz, 2006d; Hall, 2005; Hord, 1997; Lambert, 2005; Senge, 1990; West-Burnham, 2004). However there is little evidence of these interpersonal skills when observing the principals in the participating schools. Some of the principals participating in this study displayed very low levels of interpersonal skill, and seemed not to understand what interpersonal skills were. The cultural, ethnic background and their up-bringing may have influenced the way they use these skills. Inadequate leadership training may also be a contributing factor.

According to participant #2, principals required high levels of interpersonal skills in order to convert their ideas, visions and aspirations into a clear, orderly, practicable and achievable message to the school community. Similar views are expressed in the current literature (Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; Fullan, 2003; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Kotter, 1998). However, in order to develop these skills in the principals’ leadership behaviours would not be an easy task. Cultural influences, community attitudes and fear of making mistakes made some current school principals hesitant to expose their thinking and logic to the community.

#### **5.3.4 Deep understanding and building good relationships**

In order for school principals in the Solomon Islands to build good relationships with their school communities, they need to develop a deeper understanding of the education system as well as human behaviours. They need the capacity to be a resource as well as an advisor and leader. This was the perception that most of the research participants held. As one of the participant stated:

“[It is important to ...] have a fair knowledge of the education system, the policies, procedures and structures, understand its governance, and be adjustable to different environments and situations in the school. On the same note, an effective principal needs to understand the people in his or her school community as well as those in the line structure of the education system of the country. Having a deeper understanding on human

side of the system will help a principal to be more effective.” (Participant #3)

Researchers have found that successful schools hinge on a peaceful, warm, accepting, supportive, caring and trouble-free environment – a high trust model. The participants held the view that the principal was the primary architect of such a learning environment. This is supported by Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Schon, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1991; Thomas, 2006; Southworth, 2005; and West-Burnham, 2004. Cotton (2003) also agreed by stating that the principal’s establishment and maintenance of a safe, orderly school environment has been identified as the most fundamental element of effectiveness. The building of good relationships by the school principal both internally and externally is the best way of ensuring the school develops a learning environment such as this. The principals, therefore, must develop the capacity to build good relationships and supportive environments.

In addition, the participants perceived that one of the school principals’ roles is to communicate to students that the principals have the best interests of the learners at heart and genuinely care about their lives and success. This can be accomplished by the principals showing genuine interest and allowing the student voice to be heard, and getting to know the school community. The literature agrees on this and further states that getting to know the school community is central to the development of a successful learning community. The participants agreed further with the literature that building a school community required them to invest, in a genuine way, their time, energy, self and professional expertise (Blackmore, 2002; Caldwell, 2006; Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; Cotton, 2003; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Hargreaves, 1997; Robertson, 1995; Soder, 1990). The current literature goes on to emphasise that school principals must create a culture of educational change by building a more collaborative approach (Court, 1994; Fullan, 1992, 2003; Handy & Aiten, 1986; Leithwood & Jantzi, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1993). They must build a culture of trust, openness, risk-taking and commitment (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Hord, 1997; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Walter-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003; West-Burnham, 2004). When such an environment is established, a positive learning culture is likely to develop. This is

the utopian condition that school principals in the Solomon Islands schools should all be working towards.

It is important to reiterate the point mentioned earlier, that Solomon Islands' school principals need to take "academic risk" in their approach to leading (Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Goldberg, 2001; Hord, 1997; Kedian 2006; Senge, 1990; Southworth, 1999; West-Burnham, 2004). They should be prepared to swim against the flow (Goldberg, 2001) at certain times for the school's positive growth. Observation showed that the participating principals all seemed to be reluctant to take well-calculated leadership and pedagogical risks to develop a more enriching school program. They were afraid of being labelled as a failure and were not confident enough to stand up and explain their intentions to the teachers and the rest of the school community, especially the parents, the reasons for introducing their innovations.

### **5.3.5 Managing, leading and becoming knowledgeable**

One participant stated: "Highly effective principals are people who see their roles as managers and leaders that help them to effectively administer and lead their teachers in their schools. The two elements that I can give you are; they must know that they are managers and they are leaders" (Participant #4). Most of the participants seemed not to understand that managing and leading do not necessarily mean the same thing. The available consulted literature seems to hold the opposing view to that perceived by most of the research participants; there is a clear distinct between them. Management is the routine tasks and leadership is the actual taking the lead from point A to point B (Duignan, 1988; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Sergiovanni, 1991). The lack of access to literature on current educational leadership theories may have resulted in most of the participants not having any knowledge of the distinctions between management, administration and leadership. It is important that current educational theories be made available to all school principals.

"Being knowledgeable" was perceived by three of the participants as one of the elements of highly effective principalship. They perceived that any principal,

whether newly appointed or currently in the system, should complete leadership training, graduate with sound academic knowledge, and should continue to update themselves with current and new information on different approaches to school leadership (Court, 1994; Giddens, 1993; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Robertson, 2005; Soder, 1990). Having all the necessary academic knowledge mentioned above, the principals will be equipped with the necessary knowledge to confidently make wise and prudent decisions which will help schools to be more successful. Bainbridge & Thomas (2006) seem to hold the opposing view; they noted that leadership is so complex that leaders do not need to be highly academically qualified. This brings out the point that leadership can never be pointed to as a *'this'* or *'that'*; it is fluid and may always be a fluid role for all to continue to explore and investigate its multi-faceted nature.

In addition, the current literature emphasises that being knowledgeable should include reflectivity. This means that the Solomon Islands school principals need to reflect critically on what they have accomplished for the schools, check where they are at and where they want to take the schools (Robertson, 1995). The principals must always find the time to assess their performance. This is the time for the leaders to stop, look back, and check their performance so far. By doing they will be able to see their successes and shortfalls, find out the reasons why there were shortfalls, and should be able to set a new bearing for the next part of the school's journey. Critical reflection is an essential part of leadership practices, which most Solomon Islands school principals need to incorporate as part of their leadership practices (Court, 1994; Duignan, 1988; Kedian, 2006; Giddens, 1993; Purkey & Smith, 1985, Robertson, 1996a; Sigford, 2003).

### **5.3.6 Leading with christian values**

The participants perceived that leading with Christian values enhanced the effectiveness of their school leadership. They perceived that a principal who usually displayed Christian values, morals and behaved spiritually was highly respected and highly regarded by the school community. The literature agreed that appropriate spiritual behaviour can be seen an important element of highly effective principalship (Andrews, 1989; Bennis, 1986; Creighton, 1999; Davis, 1990; Fullan, 2003; Gibbs, 2005; Gibson, 2005; Glanz, 2006e; Hall, 2001;

Sigford, 2003; Starratt, 2005; Strike, 2007). One of the participants defined this idea in this way: “Christian values and principles are based on true love for the school, honesty, prayerfulness, compassion, kindness and respect for all in the school.” (Participant #4) The literature suggests that moral or Christian leadership can improve the quality and breadth of learning in schools and is an integral part of learners’ up-bringing. Gibbs (2005) suggests that meaningful Christian rituals and ceremonies practised in schools become the essence of long-lasting impressions and memories which shape how individuals perceive themselves and deal with their futures. Therefore the maintaining of Christian practices in schools will help the learner to be able to understand life in its totality and be able to move forward. Christian leadership instituted strong and positive personal discipline for teachers and students alike. This may be an indication from the participants, of their belief that the country still needs “Christian leadership” approaches in the schools.

### **5.3.7 Leading by modelling high interest and passion**

All the participants perceived ‘role-modelling’ as the most highly effective way of leading the schools. They said that actions speak louder than words. The literature agrees on this view (Bennett, Wise & Woods, 2003; Blackmore, 2002; Blasé & Blasé, 2004; Gibson, 2005; Lambert, 2005; Hord, 1997; Southworth, 1998; Strike, 2007; West-Burnham, 2004). For example the best way to emphasize dressing neatly is for the principal to model the requirement by always dressing neatly for school. One of the participants stated his view in this way: “I look at role-modelling as a very, very important practice, the principal or the head of the school should be able to model to his/her teachers in all aspects of work and I think that should be included in effective principalship.” (Participant #2) The participants noted that the principals must “*lulua pata go sinego*” (“*walk the talk*”) which is consistent with to the current literature (Gibson, 2005; Lambert, 2005; Hord, 1997; West-Burnham, 2004). Importantly however, but not mentioned by the principals, is the notion of modelling learning. Arguably, the modelling needs to progress beyond the superficial to the more professional aspects of teaching and learning.

However two participants noted that all the practising principals do not always '*walk the talk*'. Some have encountered problems which prevented them from doing so. Some of these problems were financial problems, social pressures and personal weaknesses. They did not give specific details so I remain uncertain of the specifics of their statements. It is noteworthy however, as it may indicate a particular view of modelling.

On the points of passion and high interest for the job, one of the participants believed that being highly interested and passionate about the job enhances highly effective principalship. He said: "When one has the passion for the job, interest grows and modelling comes automatically" (Participant #2). This means that those who show a lot of interest in the leading of schools will certainly display positive role modelling. Participant number two reiterated that in the Solomon Islands' schools there was a real need for principals and teachers to show more passion for their vocation and not to take teaching as a money-making vocation. This is a curious sentiment, especially when compared with their earlier statements regarding the problems arising from poor salary levels and poor conditions of service. It begs the question of the quality of school leavers recruited for the teaching profession. Poor salaries and this attitude of vocationalism rather than professionalism may result in recruitment of second best, academically. The candidates with high academic attainment would usually apply for jobs which have attractive conditions of service.

### **5.3.8 Visionary**

The participants perceived that in order for any principal to be highly effective, the principal must be a visionary leader. They perceived that leading a school is like taking a journey from one point to another. The principal must be visionary and is expected to lead the school with foresight and creativity. This view is supported by Hargreaves, 1997; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1996a; Walther-Thomas & DiPaola, 2003. The same analogy of a ship travelling from one place to another can be used when establishing visions and goals for any school. The school principal must present the vision, goals and mission in a clear, logical and attainable manner for the rest of the school community to understand and follow (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan; Bennett & Anderson, 2003; Blasé, 1987; Bolman &

Deal, 1991; Caldwell, 2006; Cheng, 1996; Convey, 1989; Day & Harris, 2001; DuFour, 2004; Glanz, 2006; Goleman, 2000; Hall, 2005; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Sergiovanni, 1984). It is also encouraging to note that since 2003, when the European Union took over the funding of all secondary schools in the Solomon Islands, they insisted that all schools must submit a school developmental plan, which must include the vision and mission statement of the schools. This practice has enabled (forced?) all school principals in the country to use vision and mission statement(s) to lead their schools. One of the research participants emphasized the need to be visionary in this way: “one, is that you must be able to have vision(s) for the school, and in making vision, I am talking about envisioning, and trans-visioning,” (Participant #4).

### **5.3.9 Other elements of effectiveness**

Participants made reference to a number of other components of what it might mean to be a highly effective principal. At a general level these are arguably of a lower order and more superficial than other elements I have discussed above. However, taken collectively, they all contribute to the notion of leadership effectiveness and effective school culture.

#### **a. Punctuality, Attendance and Participation: (PAP)**

One of the principals in this research project used the following analogy to gauge his effectiveness in leading the school:

“...In judging my effectiveness in my own tasks, I look at three areas which I give the acronym ‘PAP’. I look at my own punctuality in making decision, in my own physical punctuality in the school. I look at my attendance at school activities, my attendance at extra-curricula activities, and of course attendance alone to me is insufficient. I must be able to participate, even in little programs like sports. I see those as the social relationships that you build with your teachers and then you have the professional relationship and of course the teaching and learning relationship that must be created. So I use ‘PAP’ as my criteria to judge relative importance.”(Participant #4)

This view is similar to what the literature describes as: the everywhere, every-time, every-thing, every-body principal (Beare, Caldwell & Millikan, 1992; Bennett & Anderson, 2003; Coleman, 2002; Gardner, 1986; Glanz, 2006; Hargreaves & Hopkins, 1991; Hord, 1997; Sergiovanni, 1987; Sigford, 2003; West-Burnham, 2004). Although the post of school principal is very demanding and calls for a superhuman effort, the refreshing thing is that the participants believed the task was eminently achievable. Past principals have succeeded and today there are a number of highly effective principals still succeeding. Therefore tomorrow's principals can still perform in the Solomon Islands' schools with the certainty of being successful. The principals need to work over and above their strengths in order to lead the school to achieve great learning successes (Hayes, 2004; Gardner, 1986; Kedian, 2006; Robertson, 1995; Sigford, 2003; Soder, 1990; Teddlie, Stringfield & Reynolds, 2000; Yukl, 2002).

#### **b. Virtues**

The participants believed that virtues aided principals to administer their schools effectively. They perceived that virtues should be emphasized, because the virtues enhance social togetherness, building of trust and confidence in each other and making sure that the younger generation can learn the positive way(s) of living in harmony. This was the view expressed by Participant #4. The participants mentioned twelve virtues that effective principals should display. These are: competency, commitment, dedication, honesty, kindness, listening, participation, patient, persistency, punctuality, reliability and trustworthiness. Noonan, (2003), referred to these virtues as qualities of leaders. These qualities “do have some influence on the process and the level of participation of others, particularly when these qualities inspire deep commitment to the overall achievement of the school's development mission and goals” (Noonan, 2003; p.18). When the school principal displays these positive virtues the school community will trust and have confidence in the school leadership (Anderson, 1998; Barker, 1993; Beare, Caldwell & Millikan; Bennett, Wise & Woods, 2003; Caldwell, 2006; Convey, 1989; Duignan, 1989; Fullan, 2003; Glanz, 2006e; Hord, 2004; Noonan, 2003; Schon, 1984; Senge, 2000; Sergiovanni, 1990; Sigford, 2006). It was observed that not all the principals practice these virtues. The need to pay more

attention to these virtues as educational leaders, as this is essential for the positive development of principalship in the Solomon Islands schools. This research project feels that if all school principals concentrate on improving and trying to practise these virtues, it would make a lot of difference in Solomon Islands schools.

### **c. Professional ethics and ethical values**

The research participants perceived that abiding by the professional code of conduct and following ethical values enhanced effective principalship.

The professional code of conduct for teachers in chapter ten of the Solomon Islands teaching service handbook, highlights the key commitments, professional responsibilities and the ethical principles which all school principals and teachers are expected to abide by (Teaching Service Handbook, 2007). The participants felt it was vital for school principals to display ethical leadership, because it would motivate staff to perform over and above their normal duties. An ethical approach would ensure that principals and teachers serve the welfare of the school and transform learning for students. The literature consulted, held similar views (Andrews, 1989; Bishop, 1996; Creighton, 1999; Davies, 1990; Fullan, 1992, 2003,2005; Fullan & Mascal, 2000; Gibbs, 2005; Glanz, 2006e; Hall, 2001; Leithwood, 1992; Punch, 1998; Purkey & Smith, 1985; Robertson, 1995; Schon, 1984; Sergiovanni, 1992; Sigford, 2003; Soder, 1990, 1996; Starratt, 2005; Strike, 2007).

Importantly, one of the participants pointed out that the Professional Code of Conduct was extremely brief and potentially somewhat ambiguous. With no other training or education, educators may adopt a rather literal view of the code, resulting in the principal and teachers taking advantage of this unclear document and possibly getting away with crime(s).

Explicit understanding and interpretation of ethical conduct and appropriate work ethic seemed not to be evident in all the schools visited. This lack of work ethic can also be noticed at both the Education Authorities and the Solomon Islands'

Ministry of Education. Participants agreed that, if the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education re-emphasized the notion of work ethic in the education system of the country, it would be a great leap in the right direction.

#### **d: Solomon Islands' traditional leadership style**

The research participants agreed that the traditional leadership of Solomon Islands was congruent with much of the western literature on principalship. Some areas of agreement included the fact that leadership was a relational activity that required direction, vision, change, courage and explicit action. Furthermore, the systems had similar values, norms and ethical standards. One of the participants viewed it this way:

“Well I would say here that any leadership whether it be in a traditional Solomon Island society or western, it's almost the same. They go hand in hand, because you are dealing with the same species: human beings. Whether you are in a school or in a modern school or a society back in our homes, the kind of approaches, the kind of leadership qualities that leaders demonstrate are the same. The difference here is only the procedures and maybe the form of protocols that you need to apply, that differs in some sense. Whilst in the traditional society, I could say that all approaches are done verbally in an informal way, in modern type of leadership, such as principals most things need to be done, there are done in a formal way, that is; say formally to others or if you need to respond to something, you need to formally get that in writing.” (Participant #1)

However the differences lay in the process and what could be achieved. In traditional leadership the emphasis is on equal distribution, equal participation and a sense of egalitarianism (Keesing, 1989; Narokobi, 1983), whereas in modern school leadership encouragement extends to allow individual excellence. Those who can achieve higher are given the opportunity to do so and there is a feeling of individualism. The competitiveness in the school can breed uncertainty for the weaker students and can create divisions which can lead to hopelessness. This is an area where the school principal must be sensitive and pay attention in order to

minimise the risks involved. The principal needs to understand such individual students' backgrounds and establish platforms for individuals who show the tendencies mentioned above.

#### **5.4 Issues that impede highly effective principalship**

The participants perceived that the impediments discussed below might affect the effectiveness of the school principal, if they were not resolved or minimised. They perceived that these issues must be discussed broadly and properly in order to find the best solution(s). These include: the lack of support from the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education towards the schools; professional training and inspections; appointments; unfavourable conditions of services and lack of resources, and social problems.

##### **5.4.1 Lack of principal training or support for ongoing professional training**

The participants all agreed that the lack of initial principal training has posed enormous challenges in the past and remains the biggest barrier to effective principalship. Newly appointed principals were appointed into their schools without any induction or briefing on what their new roles and responsibilities would entail. In the past, this had resulted in a number of the appointees leaving the service when confronted by situations beyond their capability to understand and resolve. It has been identified in Ministry of Education reports that inadequate preparation of newly appointed principals has led to poor and unsuccessful leadership and management of schools in the past (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005). The participants were concerned at the government's slowness in reversing this situation. One of the participants noted:

“I believe even if the system and structure is there, but as you would recall from our previous discussions on principals, most principals in our schools have never taken administration courses to prepare them to become administrators in schools. I think at this point, I wish to acknowledge the efforts taken by principals themselves, as individuals, to develop what they think is suitable. So I think this was one of the biggest problems. The

system does not identify people and did not put them on training to become administrators. In the same way as teachers are trained to teach; intending principals should be trained to administer and lead the schools.”  
(Participant #3)

The other concern shared by the participants was that when a person is appointed to the principal’s post: “...he or she is quickly and completely forgotten by the Ministry of Education and the Education Authorities” (Participant #4). No visits, no appraisals, no further professional training and no attention are given to the newly appointed principal. The principal is expected to deliver well. When the principal fails to perform to the Authority’s expectation she or he will be demoted or removed at once. One participant offered these anecdotes:

“In 2005, I had witnessed one of my colleagues (the most qualified and experienced school principal) being removed from his school. His remuneration was immediately ceased, no prior warning and no alternative was given to him and as a result he and his immediate family members suffered severely by this type of unprofessional dismissal. In another case [of principal dismissal] which occurred in 2004, the matter was taken up to court and the Government was asked to reinstate the principal, give him all his dues and pay a handsome amount for compensation. In both cases, neither the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education nor the Education Authority concerned ever did a follow up inspection to prove or disprove the allegation made against them. These two cases were the classic examples of what usually happened throughout the country. Principals were not given enough attention and professional assistance, and would be dismissed promptly at the Authority’s discretion without proper investigation made.”

The participants suggested that they would like to see the controlling Authorities and the Ministry of Education give the school principals the necessary attention they need, provide the necessary support services, and be proactive in addressing the schools’ needs and assist principals in leading their schools to success. The Solomon Islands’ Ministry of Education is fully aware of this issue (Ministry of Education, 2005) and the initiatives proposed in the Ministry’s Education

Strategic Plan 2004-2006 and the Education Corporate Plan 2006-2008 are aimed at solving this. However, it appears that little has changed at a practical level.

There are other factors that have prevented the Ministry of Education implementing this vital support. Some of these weaknesses are that the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education does not have the capacity to draw up, assess and implement leadership programs in the Solomon Islands. It is interesting that although there is a government established Institute of Public Administration and Management Centre (IPAM), it is only used for the training of civil servants, and is obviously under-utilised. It is sad to note that after years of independence the country still does not have a leadership training centre or a leadership training package in place. The Solomon Islands government should be thinking very seriously about setting up a leadership centre to train all school principals.

This concern expressed by the participants accurately describes the current status of school principalships in Solomon Islands' Community High schools throughout the country (Ministry of Education, 2005) and can hold for other Pacific Islands Countries as well.

The majority of school principals would have completed initial training at the country's only teacher training institution – the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) – with a diploma as the highest qualification. A few professional educators receive training from the University of the South Pacific (USP) and other regional universities with first degree qualifications and a very small number receive second or third degree qualifications in educational leadership.

#### **5.4.2 Lack of positive and timely response from the Ministry of Education and Education Authorities**

The participant principals have shared many examples of their experiences when timely responses were not forthcoming from the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education and various Education Authorities. The required responses ranged from higher order policy matters to lower order, but equally important, administrative

matters. For example, during the time of this study's fieldwork in Honiara, (June, July 2007) there were 220 newly appointed teachers who had yet to receive their first salary, even though they have been teaching for more than six months. This slowness by the Ministry of Education and Education Authorities has hampered the work of the principals and affected more so, the classroom teachers. The participants noted that in most cases of delays of this nature, the school principal is usually blamed for the delay. The Education Authorities or the Ministry of Education usually resort to bureaucratic bluster. Regrettably, however, the reality remains that principals end up devoting disproportionately large amounts of time to resolving sometimes trivial administrative blunders and inefficiencies.

Although the views expressed here were made by urban (Honiara) principals, they were just next door to the Ministry of Education and the Education Authority. For rural schools the problem of delays in responding to the schools' needs would be far more substantial than that of urban schools. This can certainly cause a lot of unnecessary frustrations and stresses for school principals and teachers.

#### **5.4.3 Unfavourable conditions of service for the teaching profession**

"The condition of service for teachers was the lowest in the country compared to other professionals bodies" noted one of the participants. For the last twenty years teachers have been paid far less than their counterparts with the same qualification in other government ministries and private sectors. For example, there were no non-cash benefits or holiday pay which all other public officers have received. For some years teachers have been negotiating for better conditions of services with little or no success. This culminated in a June 2007, two week teachers association strike based on the argument that the Government appeared not to be listening to their requests and that there had been no observable improvement in the conditions of service.

#### **5.4.4 Insufficient financial and other resources**

Insufficient financial assistance from the Government and Education Authorities has inhibited the effectiveness of principals. According to the participants, the educational grants to schools were insufficient, and there were unnecessary delays

in receiving the grants. This meant that schools would not be able to pay for all the school resources needed. However, this project observed that schools which could raise funds in addition to the school grants were very successful, and seemed not to have financial problems. It was observed in the past that parents and school community showed willingness and enthusiasm in raising school funds when the principal displayed openness, transparency and accountability (Bennett, Wise & Woods, 2003; Bennis, 1986; Blasé & Blasé, 1998, 2004; Bryk & Schneider, 2002; Cerra & Jacoby, 2004; Court, 2003; Day & Harris, 2001; Sergiovanni, 1990; Soder, 1996; Starratt, 2004). This may be the route for all Solomon Islands schools to follow, even though it appears to absolve the Ministry from its responsibility to fund schools appropriately.

#### **5.4.5 Lack of inspectorate, evaluation/appraisals from Ministry of Education and Education Authorities**

This is similar to the point mentioned earlier regarding negligence by the Ministry of Education and the various controlling Education Authorities. According to the participants, the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education and various Education Authority officials have failed to undertake school visits for the purposes of conducting inspections and appraisals of teachers' performances for confirmations of appointment and promotions. The participants raised concerns that the Ministry of Education and Education Authorities usually fail to follow up complaints made by the public and seem to show little interest in what individual principals are doing in their schools. This attitude was best illustrated by one of the participants who commented by saying:

“...I think the other area is of course inspection. I have not seen any inspection at all since my principalship. No one has inspected what I have done, no one seems to be interested in the things that I am doing, no one is here to tell me; ‘you are doing the right thing;’ ‘yes this is good’ or ‘you should be doing it this way’. There seem to be no interest from the ministry of education regarding the leadership in the schools” (Participant #4)

The Ministry of Education and the controlling Education Authorities may have genuine reason for failing in this area. For example at the time of the fieldwork for this study, there were only two officers in the Inspectorate Division, both of whom had the minimum inspectorate qualifications and were less qualified than most urban school principals.

The lack of school visits by the government and the Controlling Education Authorities is a very serious concern which requires a joint solution. There are a number of options available for the Government to improve the inspection of the schools. The option taken must be workable and should improve the current impasse in the Inspectorate Division.

Incidental information received during this study indicated that the Solomon Islands' Ministry of Education had never conducted teacher or principal appraisals throughout the country. Consequently, formal data regarding the effectiveness and performance levels of most teachers and all principals does not exist.

## **5.5. Silences and omissions**

The data gathered from the participants has given a deep insight into the views of serving principals regarding effective principalship. As in any research project using more qualitative data-gathering strategies, the silences or gaps in the data are perhaps speak equally loudly. Based on the literature review, it seems that there are obvious omissions and silences in areas where I would have anticipated information and opinions offered by the principals.

### **5.5.1 Lack of networking**

It was observed that most school principals were working in isolation. There was no established mechanism for principals to have the opportunity to share their successes and concerns. A network system should be in place for principals in certain geographical locations to establish an avenue where they can have the opportunity to discuss their professional activities and develop critical learning groups and form critical friendships.

### **5.5.2. Lack of in-depth understanding of leadership**

During the period of the study, especially the interviews, it appeared that the participants focused more on administration and managerial tasks than leading. This seemed to be one of the major silences. The participants' understanding of leadership is located firmly in the administration paradigm. Consequently, they lack an in-depth understanding of the leadership paradigms. It is obvious that the principals would benefit from developing a broader understanding of leadership and leading.

### **5.5.3. Schools as vehicles for social/economic development**

It was noted that the participants seemed to overlook the important roles and functions of schools in relation to the social and economic development of the Solomon Islands. In a small country, schools play an important part in preparing the prospective workforce. It could be argued that that the principals saw their work in isolation and did not address the larger picture by addressing the development needs of the country. School principals should be at the forefront in leading schools for the future and in doing so, should develop a future focus in order to educate and produce learners who would be capable of contributing to the development of the country. Similarly, there would be benefit in schools developing learners who can be empowered to assume broader roles in the social and economic development of the country.

### **5.5.4 Taking academic risks**

It was clear from their responses that the participants were reluctant to take academic risks in their decision making. The 'swimming against the current' (Goldberg, 2001) notion was not evident in the schools visited.

Exploration into new ideas and ventures into setting up new models for leading schools were also not evident from the schools visited. There was little evidence of any attempt at leading transformation, or any renewal in the leadership strategies employed by the principals. The participants were silent on this issue as well.

### **5.5.5 Literature on leadership theories**

The non-availability of, and lack of engagement with, recent literature on leadership theory creates a number of problems. In the first instance, those who have not read the material feel somewhat inadequate. Secondly, however, there are many principals who “don’t know what they don’t know”! Consequently, they are unaware of the extent of their ignorance of modern leadership practices. Both of these are unhelpful situations.

### **5.5.6. The concept of learning-centred leadership**

The participants were also silent on the concept of a learning-centred leadership. Though a brief mention was made by one of the participants, it was clear that the participating principals did not understand the concept of personalising learning. West-Burnham (2004) stated that, learning-centred leadership is leading others for continuous and personalized learning. Personalization of learning has to be the direct expression of a school re-focusing itself on the learning of the individual learner to enhance better learning outcomes. The Solomon Islands’ school principals need to be made aware of possible strategies such as monitoring, dialoguing and mentoring for developing learning-centred leadership. Some of the benefits of being a learning-centred organisation are: Schools would be structured in a way that is highly focused on learning rather than teaching; there would be an increase in the number of leaders who are concerned with personalized learning for themselves and for the students; learning would become student-centred rather than teacher-centred and inclusiveness and partnerships would be created in the classroom between the teachers and the students. Current evidence is that this would bring a gradual increase in students’ achievements which would in turn elevate the school’s performance rating.

### **5.5.7 Work ethic**

It was apparent from information gathered during the interviews that the work ethic of many educators involved in the education system in the Solomon Islands is of questionable quality. It requires a change in attitude for many. There seems to be a degree of laxity on the part of the Ministry of Education and the controlling Education Authorities to see that the principals and teachers work to

the best of their abilities in a manner likely to promote and sustain high quality student and staff learning. The interviews suggested that, while the participants complained about the work ethic of some colleagues and staff, they appeared to be unaware of it as an explicit concept that could be addressed directly.

While the primary focus of this discussion has been on the data gathered from the interviews, I consider the silences to be equally important as they give an indication of possible areas of ignorance that are not addressed because they are remote from the participants' experiences. However, based on the literature surveyed for this study, these remain critical areas of effective leadership.

## **CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION**

### **6.1 Introduction**

This study suggests that there is a real need for the Ministry of Education in the Solomon Islands to publish a definitive work on “official” notions of leadership in schools. Attempts must be made to describe and establish an educational leadership philosophy that would both be accepted nationally and incorporate deep understanding of the current leadership literature. By establishing the leadership philosophy, educational leaders can venture into ways of improving the success rate of the school system in the Solomon Islands.

Similarly, attention must be given to the notion of “highly effective principalship” and the issues that inhibit effectiveness, in the Solomon Islands schools. This study also notes that there were a number of issues which could contribute to the development of effective school principalship and some impediments that need the urgent attention of the various stakeholders of the education system, most notably the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education and various other educational authorities.

### **6.2 Brief summary of the project and possible benefits**

Although there were some hindrances, the overall process of the research project was successful and the project tasks were completed in accordance with the suggested schedule. The project set out to explore, expose and attempt to describe the participating principals’ views of highly effective principalship and identify the impediments. As it was one of the first research projects to investigate the perceptions of some school principals on the elements of highly effective principalship, the results collected can be seen as unique to the Solomon Islands’ school context. It was also noted that there were some correlations with the current literature on school leadership.

The Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, various educational authorities and school principals could potentially benefit from this study. The information will be freely available for principals to use to support their leadership journey. The literature review considers theories of leadership and comments on leadership effectiveness. In addition it indicates possible effective school leadership strategies. This study has relevance in assisting serving principals to develop a

broader perspective of the notion of “effective principalship” and contextually specific strategies for leading their schools effectively. In addition, this study may contribute to developing their understanding of current educational leadership theories and assist them to form a firm, theoretically sound base for their leadership practices. This work could be used by the Solomon Islands’ Ministry of Education as a contribution to the development of a strategic leadership training program for the country.

### **6.3 Limitations of the study**

The research project had a number of limitations which were:

#### **6.3.1 Research participants**

A small number of participants were consulted. The summary of the findings and the analysis may be somewhat narrow and may not represent the views of the majority of principals in Solomon Islands schools. However, the negative effect of a small number of participants has been partially offset by the level of experience of the participating principals. Furthermore it may be gender biased, as there was only one female participant and five male principals. This may have impacted on the research data.

#### **6.3.2 Unstable environment**

The national context in which this research took place was one of unrest and social upheaval. There was substantial ethnic tension (1998 to 2003) preceding the study, followed by the April 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> 2006 unrest and June 2007 teachers’ union strike. Consequently a large scale research project was unrealistic and not possible. I acknowledge that the time and place in which the study occurred could have influenced the opinions and attitudes of the participants. Despite this, and at an anecdotal level, the results appear to reflect a more general perspective.

#### **6.3.3 Teachers’ union strike**

The national teacher’s strike, reflecting general dissatisfaction amongst professional educators, may well have coloured the thinking of the participating principals and influenced their responses to the research questions.

## **6.4 Impediments to effective on-going development of principalship**

There were a number of impediments appearing to prevent highly effective principalship practices in the Solomon Islands Schools.

### **6.4.1 Conditions of services**

The conditions of service for teachers, which include school principals, are the worst in the country's workforce and the lowest in the South Pacific region.

The most recent strike action taken by the Solomon Islands' National Teachers' Union at the time of this research was a manifestation of teachers' dissatisfaction with their employment conditions of service.

### **6.4.2 Work ethic**

It has been noted over the years that successive Solomon Islands' governments have not done enough to improve the work ethic of public officers to a level acceptable for enhancing higher productivity. Parents and other stakeholders complain about the non-attendance of principals and teachers in schools throughout the country. The research participants also expressed a grievous concern about the lack of availability of education officials to attend to the schools' needs and concerns. However despite the negative tenor of many of the research findings in this report, it is nevertheless encouraging to see a growing sense of commitment among educators to students' learning. The country needs to make sure that all teachers and educational leaders work diligently and consistently for the children of the Solomon Islands. This would be the mission for all educators to follow: that we all work diligently and consistently for the future of the Solomon Islands children.

## **6.5 Recommendations**

The following recommendations may improve the level of effectiveness in the Solomon Islands schools:

### **6.5.1. Broader research to verify these findings**

It is recommended that in order to verify these findings, a broader research project be undertaken. This broad-based research project needs to incorporate both a qualitative and quantitative investigation of principal effectiveness. This follow-up study should cover a wide cross-section of school principals in the country.

### **6.5.2 Leadership centre**

There is a need to establish a leadership training centre in the Solomon Islands. The existing Institute of Public Administration and Management (IPAM) which the Government uses to train public officers, could be expanded to include the training of all leaders especially the training of school principals, and could be called “the Solomon Islands’ Leadership Centre”. As the number of schools in the country increases yearly, it is crucial that the Solomon Islands’ government sets up the Leadership Centre.

Furthermore, there is an urgent need to develop pre-appointment leadership development programmes for aspirant principals. The Ministry of Education could develop a programme for “aspirant and potential” principals. This could have institutionally nominated participants as well as some who may be self-nominated. This would allow an expanded pool of potential principals with the subsequent benefit for the Ministry of being able to select the best from a broader pool.

Secondly, there is an equally urgent need to develop in-service programmes for continued professional learning for serving principals. An outcome of this research is a clear indication that current principals are not familiar with current educational leadership theory of practice as outlined in international books and journals. There is a grave danger that, without such a programme, the quality of school leadership may diminish to the detriment of individual schools and students, as well as the national economy.

### **6.5.3 Research Focus**

This project recommends that the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education take the lead in making sure school principals and teachers are encouraged to engage in focused research as part of their teaching commitment. The Teachers' Union and the Principals' Association can seek outside funding to establish a research unit within their various union organizations in order to encourage teachers to carry out research work. There is a need for all school principals to undertake school-based research as part of their leadership undertaking so that their knowledge and skills develop with the current world educational practices, and contribute to high accomplishment in schools.

### **6.5.4 Reflective practice**

It is also recommended that educational leaders, especially school principals, have opportunities to develop as reflective practitioners. It is clear from the research that most of the participants are located in a "here and now" paradigm and spend little time reflecting on their professional practice or the future of teaching and learning processes in the Solomon Islands. By critically reflecting on leadership and learning activities the principal will be able to identify the successes and weakness of the school programmes. The available literature indicates that principals who become reflective practitioners and use reflective processes to develop their professional leadership capabilities are more likely to become highly effective leaders.

## **6.6 Conclusion**

The development of a definitive work on educational leadership philosophy, focusing on effective educational leadership/principalship in the Solomon Islands is critical to the on-going national strategy and well-being of the citizens. Those in decision-making positions in the Solomon Islands need to think seriously about establishing a national educational leadership strategy, including effective leadership/principalship training strategies for the benefit of the children of the Solomon Islands. The children's high performance depends on how successfully the schools run their programs. The available literature suggests that successful schools develop highly motivated and enthusiastic teachers who, in turn, are led

by highly effective principals. Therefore it is considered crucial for the Solomon Islands' government to spend time, money and energy to ensure the development of highly effective educational leaders in schools.

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