Effective School Leadership:

An exploration of issues inhibiting the effectiveness of school leadership in Solomon Islands' secondary schools

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates issues impeding effective school leadership in Solomon Islands' secondary schools. In particular, it examines principals' perceptions of those issues that impede their effective leadership of their schools. There is an international literature focusing on this area that has contributed to the study. However, many of the research findings in western contexts are invalid in the context of a developing nation such as the Solomon Islands. Thus contextual specificity was an important underlying factor in the study.

The research data was gathered using qualitative methods. Specifically, interviews with five principals were conducted using semi-structured interviews and was analysed using a thematic analysis approach. The research fieldwork was carried out in the Solomon Islands in August 2006.

A sample of five participants was used. They were selected from five schools representing Community High Schools (CHS) and senior Provincial Secondary Schools (PSS) in two provinces and the Honiara City Council.

The key findings of the study identify a range of factors that inhibit effective school leadership. These included a lack of initial training and support for on-going professional learning, unfavourable conditions of service, poor quality of teachers' professional practice, poor school facilities and infrastructure, poor administrative infrastructure, lack of appropriate and adequate financial resources, lack of support personnel, policy and systemic issues, social and cultural issues, and issues pertaining to school-community partnerships.

Based on the findings identified in the study, recommendations were made on how to improve effective leadership of the schools throughout the Solomon Islands. Of particular importance is the establishment of professional development programmes for both newly appointed and servicing principals. Such programmes should enhance the leadership capacity of the principals in the schools and create a more conducive learning environment.

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CHAPTER ONE   INTRODUCTION

1.1   An overview of the study

A study usually evolves from thinking about a phenomenon that has been experienced. There is a concern, commonly expressed by parents and the general public in the Solomon Islands, regarding the lack of effectiveness and efficiency in the leadership and management of secondary schools throughout the country. In view of such concerns, I believe there is a need to explore with principals their perceptions of the prevailing issues inhibiting effective school leadership and management in their schools. In due course, this data could be used to develop more effective school leadership in the Solomon Islands

In this introductory chapter, the following sections will be discussed. Firstly a statement of the problem, development of my interest in educational leadership issues; the purpose of the study; the statement of the inquiry; the research questions; the significance of the study; a theoretical framework; underlying assumptions; limitations of the study; delimitations of the study; definition of terms, and a summary of the chapter which will also include an outline of the rest of the chapters of the thesis.

1.2   Statement of the problem

Leadership within the Solomon Islands traditional context is not a new concept. In fact leadership plays an important part (Kent, 1972; 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. Within a tribe or village community the 'big man' is the one who shows best evidence of great wealth, knowledge of tribal matters and traditional practices, and care for the welfare of community members (Narakobi, 1983). It is thus a position of power and status, but also includes pastoral care as a core component.

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

The lack of effective leadership in the school system has been a long-standing issue and has existed since the country gained political independence in 1978. The rapid establishment of the Community High Schools throughout the country since 1995 exacerbated the problem with many of these schools staffed by inadequately trained teachers and inexperienced principals (Ministry of Education, 2004). This has led to comments and criticisms from parents and senior members of the community about the deteriorating state of leadership and management in these secondary schools.

Although there is no research on school leadership in the Solomon Islands to substantiate the above claims, most would blame the shift in leadership approach and the lack of adequate preparation of principals for the leadership issues experienced in our schools today.

In view of the above, the study is underpinned by a very simple question:

> *In the opinion of principals, what issues inhibit effective leadership at school level in the Solomon Islands?*

1.3   The development of my interest in leadership studies.

My interest in leadership studies, in particular the leadership of schools and educational institutions has developed as I assumed responsibility within the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education. My interest in undertaking this study was further enhanced by the leadership program I have taken at the University of Waikato Education Leadership Centre. As I immersed myself in the vast amount of literature describing the leadership experiences and studies by researchers and in schools in many Western and developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand, I began to ask myself the following questions: How many of these experiences discussed in the literature relate to, and are true for, school leaders in the Solomon Islands school

context? Can these experiences of how principals lead and manage their schools be related to school leaders in different cultural and socio-economic backgrounds as in the case of the Solomon Islands? Can it be assumed that knowledge about how principals lead schools in a developed country is valid for their counterparts in developing countries such as the Solomon Islands? Can the knowledge about school leadership issues in the United States, United Kingdom, Europe and Australia or New Zealand be applied to school leaders in a developing country like Solomon Islands, with different socio-economic values and beliefs? As stated above, these questions arise in a context in which very little research has been done on Solomon Island school leadership, and an apparent assumption that studies located in the foreign cultures can be applied in the Solomon Islands in an uncritical manner.

Another reason for my interest in undertaking this study is the question of whether developing countries such as the Solomon Islands would have the resources to implement such knowledge effectively. According to Davis (1994) the economy and cultural constraints of developing countries, including Solomon Islands, can strongly affect how school principals approach their leadership tasks.

It is from this context that I wish to undertake my study.

1.4   Significance of the Study

The information gathered from this study has the potential to assist the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education in formulating systems and procedures for effective leadership and management of schools throughout the country. It will also enable the provincial education authorities, school boards and local communities to provide the much-needed support for their school principals in their leadership roles.

Furthermore, the study aims to highlight the possible influence of the traditional Solomon Islands cultural and social practices that can inhibit effective school leadership, and participation of women in school leadership positions throughout the country.

1.5   The context of the study

1.5.1   Geographical and Physical features

The Solomon Islands form an archipelago in the Southwest Pacific about 1,900 kilometres northeast of Australia. With terrain ranging from rugged mountainous islands to low-lying coral atolls, the country stretches in a 1,450-kilometre chain southeast from Papua New Guinea across the Coral Sea to Vanuatu. The 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.

1.5.2   Socio-cultural context

The Solomon Islands comprise diverse cultures, languages, and customs. With a total population of about 496,000 (National Census, 1998), 93.3% are Melanesian, 4% Polynesian, and 1.5% Micronesian. In addition, small numbers of Europeans and Chinese are registered. About 120 vernacular languages are spoken. Most people reside in small, widely dispersed settlements along the coasts. Sixty percent live in localities with fewer than 200 persons with their distinct socio-cultural settings, and only 10% live in urban areas. The capital city of Honiara, situated on Guadalcanal, the largest island, has over 30,000 inhabitants. The other principal towns are Gizo, Auki, and Kirakira. Most Solomon Islanders are Christian, with the Anglican, Roman Catholic, South Seas Evangelical, and Seventh-day Adventist faiths predominating. About 5% of the population maintains traditional beliefs. 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 fueled the 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.

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1.5.3 The Education system

The education system in Solomon Islands is administered under the Education Act of 1978 (Education Act, 1978, Solomon Islands). Although in dire need of a review to accommodate the changing needs of the national education system, 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 and the Honiara City Council. This was necessary because of the geographic isolation and cultural diversity of the country and by the associated issues of communication and transportation (Bray, 1991; Sikua, 2002). This has enabled most of the administrative problems to be dealt with at local level, and can make the schools more responsive to the needs of their immediate communities.

The present education system is responsible for ensuring the operation and development of schools and training institutions across Solomon Islands. It manages over 600 primary schools with a student enrolment of 85,000 and 140 secondary schools with a student enrolment of 29,000 (Ministry of Education, 2004) and a teaching establishment of over 4,000 principals and teachers.

The secondary school system in the Solomon Islands can be categorised into three main types:

The first 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 enroll students up to year 9, although some schools go up to year 12. The school leadership structure consists of principal, and two deputy principals, each representing the primary and secondary sectors.

The second type are 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 enroll students from year seven to year twelve, with the majority of the students taken from the host province.

The third type are the National Secondary Schools administered by 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 school leadership structure for both the Provincial and National secondary schools consists of the Principal, Deputy Principal and subject department heads and teachers.

This decentralization according to Bray (1991), has resulted in policy and resource issues which have led to confusion over the authority and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Provincial Education Authorities, and the breakdown in communication between these stakeholders. This has in turn impacted on the effective running of the system, including schools.

1.5.4   The ethnic conflict

The recent conflict has devastated the national economy, and traumatised many who were affected by it. The nation and people have thus been urged to look critically at the situation and plan for the future. While the underlying social structures and values may have contributed to the conflict, they have also enabled families and communities to cope with its impact.

Many people believe that the values and attitudes promoted through the westernisation of Solomon Islands society, and in particular by the education system, have been a root cause of the conflict (Ministry of Education, 2004). Although this is debatable, there is

general acceptance that the current education system has increased tensions within communities, especially between younger people and their more conservative and traditional elders, by its promotion of and focus on economic advancement. The education system is seen by many as being unconnected and antagonistic to the social and cultural values on which Solomon Island communities and society are based. Such views pose great challenges to educational leaders throughout the country, including the school principals.

The next chapter reviews the literature on leadership and in particular the relevant literatures 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

Studies of educational leadership have attracted the attention of large numbers of researchers. The amount of literature on leadership reflects a growing interest in the subject by various researchers and practitioners of leadership who are keen to investigate its different dimensions.

Effective leadership is an area that has been widely explored from various perspectives due to its close link with large profits in business organizations (Chemers, 1997). This has placed increasing demands upon educational organisations such as schools, to improve their effectiveness and efficiency (Abu-Duhou, 1999; Bennett et al, 2004; Horner, 2004) and has led to the notion that effective school leadership is the key to school success, sustainable education reforms and organisational improvement (Blasé & Blasé, 1998; Duignan, 2004; Earley & Weindling, 2004; Fullan, 2002; Harris, 2002; O'Sullivan & West-Burnham, 1998; Sanders, 2006; Stewart, 2000).

However, despite these studies and the vast amount of literature, much is yet to be explored about school leadership in developing countries in the South Pacific, especially in Melanesian countries like the Solomon Islands. Most of the research mentioned above is carried out in developed countries such as the United States, United Kingdom, Australia, New Zealand, and other European countries, and as observed by Dimmock & Walker (2002), it lacks contextual specificity and relevance as most of its findings are based mainly on Euro-centric or Anglo-American theories, values and beliefs. They argue that "although cross-fertilization of ideas and approaches is generally beneficial, there are dangers in failing to recognise that theory, practice and imported expertise may not readily apply across national and cultural boundaries……[and that] cross-cultural understanding may be usefully pursued through a comparative approach - one that allows administrative and leadership practices in different societies and cultures to be seen in relation to each other" (Dimmock & Walker, 2002, p.167).

There are also questions about whether principals and schools in developing countries such as the Solomon Islands would have the capacity and resources to implement the effective leadership practices identified in this research literature. This is because school leadership is very much a product of the socio-economic and political factors that are related to national and local context as well as the skills and attributes of individuals, and are very much influenced by the demands and expectations of the local school communities, most of which are changing over time (Davis, 1994; MacBeath and Riley, 2004). As further illustrated by Davis (1994), the economy and cultural constraints of developing countries can influence how principals approach their leadership roles and tasks in their schools.

However, despite the above arguments, there is also growing 'internationalisation' of education, reinforced by a belief that education models are transferable (MacBeath & Riley, 2004) regardless of the context. This, according to MacBeath & Riley, has shaped the thinking of policy-makers in both developed and developing countries, including the Solomon Islands. Therefore, in order to address it appropriately for my study I will provide a thematic description of the leadership issues and experiences in these developed countries and where possible relate them to the situations in the Solomon Islands. This appears to be the most effective way of categorising the development of leadership thinking in a Solomon Islands context.

This literature review forms an initial step in my study by reviewing relevant literature to guide the scope of my inquiry on the role of school leaders, within the context of what has been found about effective leadership. It begins with: (1) a brief sections on the notions of leadership, management and administration before offering (2) an overview of the theories of leadership and (3) the characteristics of effective school leadership, and concludes with the issues of effective school leadership in the Solomon Islands

2.2   Leadership, management and administration

Over the years there has been numerous discussions in the literature about the similarities and differences between the notions of leadership, management and administration, with differing meanings from different parts of the world. Although the concept of leadership has been historically defined in various ways (Bennett et al., 2004) and has been widely written about (Earley & Weindling, 2004), it appears that no particular definition has been agreed upon (Hodgkinson, 1991; Hoy & Miskel, 1991; Yuki, 1994; Leithwood et al., 1999). These difficulties, according to Hoy & Miskel (1991), are due to the different perceptions of leadership and how one determines these leadership characteristics.

Another problem according to Everard, Morris & Wilson (2004) is that Leadership and Management have always been regarded as "indispensable"(p. 22) and in practice, they are closely linked (Earley & Weindling, 2004; Glover & Law, 2000; Horner, 2004; Hunt, 1996; Nelton, 1991) and are both necessary for organisational success. Both according to Earley and Weindling (2004) are about motivating people and giving a sense of purpose to the organisations and their roles in achieving it. This is most evident in schools and other educational organisations as leaders are increasingly required to effectively utilize their available resources (both human and financial) to enhance output. Thus the distinctions between management and leadership roles and functions of these leaders are not clearly defined. Instead, there is increasing pressure on those charged with leading, managing and administering policy decisions to effectively integrate these roles with each of these functions - leadership, management or administration, with their different, but overlapping, skills, knowledge and abilities.

However, there are others (Bennis & Nanus, 1985; Bennis & Townsend, 1995; Day, Harris, Hadfield, Tolley & Beresford, 2000; Fullan, 1991; Kotter, 1989; Sergiovanni, 1991; West-Burnham, 1997) who prefer to differentiate between leadership and management in terms of their functions, although they do complement each other. They argue that while leadership is more concerned with innovations, vision, mission, direction, inspirations and strategic development, the routine day-to-day problem solving, implementation and operational issues of working effectively with people are clearly

management. In other words, management is more concerned with stability and maintaining order and consistency in organizations, while leadership is more concerned with improvement of an organization, and tends to be more formative and proactive (Earley & Weindling, 2004; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins, 2006).

Similarly, administration also has differing meanings and is mainly associated with more routine operational matters (Earley and Weindling, 2004). An understanding of these distinctions is essential to this leadership study as it is concerned with the analysis of what school principals perceive as impediments to their effectively performing their roles.

However, in spite of the absence of a set definition of leadership, there is a general understanding that any leadership theory, from Taylor's scientific management to the contemporary humanistic approaches, involves a person exerting influence over another, or others having influence over others (Yuki, 1994). It can be defined therefore, by the traits, qualities, and behaviours of an individual in a leadership position and can include the environment created by the leader and how the leader responds to the surroundings, as well as the particular skills and activities of the followers (Horner, 2004; Bennett, Crawford & Cartwright, 2004). This has led Love (2005) to describe leadership as "a dynamic process of relationship building between individuals and groups and the constant nourishing of individuals is at the core of effective leadership" (p.17).

The next section offers an overview of the development of some theories of leadership, and the main concepts associated with educational leadership, that I consider relevant to my study. These include the traits (or great man) theories of the early twentieth century through to the modern conceptions of leadership - transformational, transactional, distributed and learning - centred.

2.3 Theories of Leadership

It is outside the scope of this study to offer a detailed historical perspective of leadership. However I need to build my study on some of the theories of leadership which have been developed over the years, to explain how leaders lead in their organisations such as schools. Such theories were aimed at isolating specific traits, qualities, behaviours and attributes that differentiated the characteristics of leaders from their followers. These early theories of leadership were developed from research and studies of leaders from the 1900s to the 1950s from a variety of perspectives (SEDL, 2005), usually by male researchers on men in leadership (Blackmore, 1989; Glover & Law, 2000). Recent theories of 1970s and 1980s on the other hand were aimed at distinguishing successful and effective leaders from non-effective leaders, by identifying which leadership behaviours were exemplified by effective leaders. The leadership theories are broadly categorised, chronologically, under the following headings;

2.3.1 Trait Theories

Trait theories (or 'great man' theories) according to Earley & Weindling(2004) were popular in the 1920s and were related to the attributes and characteristics of successful leaders. These early leadership theories were developed following early investigations of leadership that were aimed at isolating specific individual traits of leaders that constituted their abilities to lead others. These include studies conducted between 1904 and 1947 of individual traits such as intelligence, birth order, socio-economic status, and child-rearing practices (Horner, 2004; Robertson, 1995; SEDL, 2005). Initially proposed by Stogdill in 1948 (Robertson, 1995; SEDL, 2005), the trait theory perceived leaders to be born with certain leadership abilities that could distinguish them from non-leaders. This theory is consistent with the traditional leadership practices in most Solomon Islands indigenous communities. Commonly referred to as the 'big man' system in most Melanesian countries such as Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea (Narakobi, 1983) the selection of leadership (in most cases men) of a tribe or community is mainly based on the leader's socio-economic status, knowledge of tribal matters and his ability to address the needs of his tribe. Although the 'big man' system was also used by the British administrators

during the colonial period (Kent, 1972) it has not been used to select leaders of organisations such as schools.

Further studies by Stogdill (1974) identified six categories of personal factors associated with leadership: capacity, achievement, responsibility, participation, status and situation. Although traits such as intelligence, assertiveness, initiative and self-assurance and the ability to take risks were identified (at that time) to be common in most leaders and are traits apparently almost exclusively demonstrated by men (Inkson & Kolb, 2000) these studies were found to be inadequate in distinguishing leaders from their followers. Also, it was found that the application of these findings to leadership development was limited, due to the variable nature of personality within individuals over time. This has lead to the shift in focus from the trait theory to behavioural theories, that emphasized that leadership skill and behaviours can be learnt.

2.3.2 Style Theories

Style theories came into focus after trait theory and became popular from the 1930s onwards initially through the work of Lippitt and White (cited in Earley & Weindling, 2004). This approach according to Earley & Weindling (2004), led to the development of a number of studies to determine certain types of leaders. These include Blake and Mouton's managerial grid, and are commonly used to determine the extent to which a leader's style is either 'people' or 'task' oriented (Blake & Mouton, 1964 cited in Earley & Weindling, 2004). That is, there are two main dimensions linked to leadership: concern for production and concern for people, and it was the emphasis that leaders put on either concern that determined their leadership style.

Hersey and Blanchard (1977 cited in Earley & Weindling, 2004) also developed a complex model of four leadership styles. These according to Earley & Weindling (2004) include; "delegating, supporting, coaching, and directing - which depended on such factors as the level of support needed and the development level of team members" (p.10). For this model, the development level of individuals was said to depend on competence and commitment. It was based on the study of the situations in which the

leadership was exercised, and was based on two dimensions; task behaviour and relationship behaviour. The maturity of followers determines the leaders' behaviour, where maturity is defined as being able and willing to take responsibility. That is, immature followers require their leaders to tell them what to do, whereas mature followers would be delegated areas of responsibilities by the leader, and would be expected to operate on their own.

In addition, Horner (2004) cited further reviews of similar studies of leadership theories by Bernard (1926), Stogdill (1974), Bentz (1990), and the Michigan & Ohio States' leadership studies (Hemphill & Coons, 1952; Halpin & Winer, 1952) on the traits, qualities, behaviours and attributes of effective leadership. These reviews according to Horner (2004) led to the conclusion that leadership, in particular effective leadership style, was not an inborn trait, but could be learned. Also, these studies yielded information about the types of behaviours leaders exhibit to determine their effectiveness. The results of these investigations and their subsequent understanding have further categorized leadership behaviour into two common dimensions: concern for organisational tasks, and concern for individuals and interpersonal relations (Blasé, 1998; Horner, 2004). This means that while concern for organisational tasks (including activities such as planning, organizing, and defining the tasks and work of people) is about how work gets done in an organisation, concern for individuals and interpersonal relations on the other hand addresses the social and emotional needs of individuals. This includes, their recognition, work satisfaction, self-esteem, and their performance (SEDL, 2005). It was also noted that most theories describing the behaviour of leaders are in dichotomous form, one pertaining to human relations and the other to scientific management (Hoy & Miskel, 1991). Assessment of leaders' skills along these two dimensions has led to the perception that effective leaders are those who score highly on both dimensions and that the situation approach to leadership supported the contention that effective leaders are able to address both the tasks and human aspects of their organisations.

However it was later observed that the performance of leadership roles is largely contingent upon the circumstances and the situations they find themselves in (Southworth, 2005). This has led to the emergence of the leadership approach that is based on contingency thinking and the contingency theory.

2.3.3   Contingency Theory

By the late 1970s and the early 1980s, the context within which leaders perform their leadership roles began to receive greater attention by leadership researchers. This led to the development of contingency and situational theories, the advancement of Fielder's contingency theory and Blanchard and Hersey's notion of situational leadership (Earley & Weindling, 2004).

The contingency theory sees leadership as a product of the situation in which leadership is performed. It takes into account the power of the leader, the composition of the task to be performed and the relationship between the leader and the followers (Earley & Weindling, 2004; Robertson, 1995). The main focus of this theory was on the connection between personal traits, situational variables, and leader effectiveness. It was also based on the assumption that effective leaders respond according to these wide variations in the contexts in which they perform their leadership roles (Leithwood et al., 1999; Southworth, 2005).

There are researchers and authors in the field of school leadership who provide various interpretations of the context in which contingency theory can influence one's current thinking on school leadership. They include Hargreaves (2005), Spillance, Diamond, Sherer & Coldren (2005), Stoll & Bolam (2005), Crow (2005), Mulford & Silins (2005) who see the school settings as a context, while Stott & Sing Kong (2005), and Walker & Dimmock (2005) see the school culture as the context. What is evident from these different interpretations of context according to Southworth (2005) is the need to take into consideration the different needs and requirements of leaders under these different circumstances. He further argues that "these differences may be because of the different school contexts (primary, secondary, special schools, school size, school performance

levels - failing, high performing, etc.) or, …….by leaders' career stage (ie. emergent, established, entry to headship, experienced head). In short, differentiated leadership development becomes an obligation not an option"(p. 160).

A well-known contingency theory was by Fielder (1971, cited in Robertson, 1995). His theory supposes that in schools where the principal is well supported, a task - oriented approach is seen to be most effective. However in schools where the principal is not well supported, a relationship-oriented approach is more strongly associated with school effectiveness. This theory according to Earley & Weindling (2004) is also used to explore the situational variables, such as task, power, and attitudes of subordinates and their influence on the relationship between the leadership traits and performance. This gave rise to a situational approach that is based on specific properties or situational variables (Earley & Weindling, 2004; Robertson, 1995) and the distinctive characteristics of the setting to which the leader's successful behaviour and performances could be attributed (Hoy & Miskel, 1987). Such variables include organizational structure and climate, technology, and human factors such as characteristics of the subordinates and the role of the leader, which can then determine the appropriate leadership styles that are displayed by the leader.

However, as further observed in Robertson (1995), these theories do not allow for different personalities of leaders, and the notion that what might work for one person may not work for another person in a similar context. That is, although the situational leadership approach has revealed the complexity of leadership, it still proves to be insufficient because the theories can not predict which leadership skills would be more effective in certain situations. This has lead researchers to further develop the contingency theories, which take into account the traits, personality and situational factors that are considered important for leadership effectiveness.

2.3.4   Power and Influence Theory

Among the latest theories of leadership is power and influence theory. It sees leadership as a function of power and how it is exercised. The key questions often asked by such

theorists include who exerts influence, what are the sources of that influence and what are the purposes and outcomes of influence? This has led to the notion of power and influence by categorising leadership theories into a number of types; instructional, transactional, transformational, moral, participative, managerial, and contingent (Leithwood et al.,1999).

The transactional and transformational leadership concepts perceive leadership to be based on the relationship between the leader and his or her followers. In his review of the traditional leadership practices, Burns (1978) goes on to identify the key characteristics of transactional and the transformational approaches.

The transactional approach to leadership is based on an exchange of services between the leader and the followers. The lower order needs are addressed in this exchange where the leader gives to the followers what they lack, and they are expected to give back what the leader does not have. This approach to leadership can be found in most Solomon Islands schools where the principals and school boards use their power of position and influence to reward teachers and staff who show commitment to their work, or are recommended in reports of teachers' performance from their immediate supervisors. Such practices of complimenting staff and showing appreciation for their efforts are examples of what Sergiovanni (2001) regards as a form of trade-off or bargain.

However, as argued by McConnell, Robertson & Strachan (1994), "effective leadership is not only transacting through carrying out tasks, but transforming through relationships with others" (p: 231). They suggest that rather than having traditional hierarchical views that leadership begins at the top, a model based on collaboration, trust, sharing and empowering teachers to make decisions is to be adopted. That is, there is an emphasis on relationships and everyone in the school taking responsibility for the direction in which the school is going, and that it is important to create a culture whereby all teachers feel that they too are leaders and have a lot to offer towards the effective leadership of the school.

The transformational approach therefore is based to an extent on the motivation of the followers by attending to their higher-order needs (Maslow, 1970) and causing them to become united at the same level of pursuit as the leader in the mission (Honer, 2004; Glover & Law, 2000). The transformational leader's ultimate aim is to build the followers and at the same time to unite them in the aim to achieve a shared vision (Leithwood et al., 1999; Sergiovanni, 2001).

As the school or organisation becomes successful in its overall growth and expansion, the leader and the followers become more competent and skilful in their differing roles. Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris & Hopkins (2006) also confirm the positive effect of this approach on school effectiveness and student engagement. This leadership approach is also commonly known as distributed or shared leadership (Harris & Chapman, 2003) and emphasises the notion of leadership practice as spread over leaders and followers (Spillance et al., 2005). The distributed approach to leadership is not a new concept and according to Southworth (2005) has been around for quite a while as either delegated or shared leadership and involves the sharing out and spreading of the leadership functions amongst staff and colleagues.

Such leadership styles can promote the ability of leaders to encourage and empower leadership in others, including teachers and students. This in my view reinforces Duignan's (2004) definition of effective leadership as an influencing process that encourages what Love (2005) refers to as the constant nourishment of the leadership abilities of colleagues. The above further reinforces the findings of recent studies of distributed leadership practices (Harris, 2000) that since it is primarily concerned with empowering others to lead, it is closely associated with successful schools and effective leadership practices.

Within the Solomon Islands schools context, there is a need to shift the focus of leadership from a traditional, hierarchical model to a more distributive one that is focused on collaboration, trust, sharing, and empowering of staff and teachers in decision making, thus maximising the capacity of staff and colleagues in the schools. This is consistent

with the view of McConnell, Robertson and Strachan (1994) that: "a leader of leaders is more likely to gain superior results than a leader of followers" (p. 230) and that it is essential that principals regard themselves as leaders of leaders.

However according to Southworth (2005), there are three traditionally held beliefs that can prevent effective implementation of distributed leadership in the schools.

The first is the belief that leadership is not a function but is closely associated with an individual: the school principal. This belief in the sole power of the 'leader' not only restricts the capacity of most school leaders themselves but can also prevent other staff and colleagues from participating in the leadership of their schools.

The second is the belief of "leaders as occupying organizational roles - the headteacher, deputy head, head of department and so on" (Southworth, 2005 p.161). This has made leadership a role, instead of a function that can be shared by many leaders across and throughout the school.

The third barrier is whether those in senior leadership positions are willing to share some of their leadership functions with staff and colleagues. Those school leaders who are not willing to share responsibilities with staff and colleagues according to Southworth (2005) have denied their staff and colleagues a chance to lead.

Furthermore, he further cautions that there are a number of issues that need to be considered in distributing leadership. These include;

(i)   the need to ensure that these different leaders work towards shared goals and follow the same direction in their shared leadership roles.

(ii)   the need to address the collective influence and impact of these many leaders on the school in helping the school to serve its students and the wider communities.

(iii)   the form leadership takes when it is distributed so that it enhances the quality of learning and teaching throughout the school.

Therefore, when we talk about sharing leadership, it should also mean distributing learning-centred leadership (Southworth, 2004a cited in Southworth 2005) that is aimed at creating leaders who are capable of influencing and improving the quality of learning and teaching in their schools.

Such lines of thinking are also endorsed by Timperly (2005) when she describes distributed leadership in terms of "activities and interactions that are distributed across multiple people and situations and involves a network pattern of control"(p.6). The focus she says is on interactions with others, rather than formal delegation and structures. The key question is how does the work get done around the school and who leads it, rather than who holds the formal leadership positions? She supports her argument by citing her New Zealand study in which she identifies how different approaches to distributing leadership in schools impacts on student learning. Some significant findings from her study were that effective leaders used evidence of impact of teaching on students to support their own and their colleagues' teaching and learning approaches to improve their students' outcomes. However, like Southworth, she also warns of the danger of seeing distributing leadership as the means of making leadership more effective. She argues that it is not greater distribution that matters. Rather, it is the way in which it is distributed.

With greater emphasis now placed on the notions of competence and capability of leaders, most leadership literature of the 1970s and 1980s is said to have revisited the earlier traits theories as determinants of effective leadership abilities (SEDL, 2005; Earley & Weindling, 2004). As a result, more recent notions of leadership styles and effective performances have placed great importance on the qualities of the leaders and the skills they posses. This has led to greater understanding of the impact of personal characteristics and individual behaviours of these effective leaders and their roles in making their organisations successful. The next section explores the characteristics of effective school leadership as identified with these leadership models.

2.4   Characteristics of effective school leadership

Recent studies of school effectiveness (MacBeath & Riley, 2003; Walker & Dimmock, 2002) found that there is no one particular model or package for effective school leadership that can be applied to all schools in different socio-economic contexts. Furthermore, there is no definitive list of qualities of an effective leader.

However, what is evident from these studies is the role played by the character and personal qualities of the principals in determining how the schools achieve their aims (Earley and Weindling, 1987, 2004). The extent to which they perform their leadership roles is considered important as it could impact on how people feel and are motivated to perform at higher levels. This evidence and other research (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Blasé & Blasé, 1989; SEDL, 2005) points to some common key qualities and characteristics that can be identified with effective school leaders. These include:

2.4.1   Having a clearly defined vision

Effective leaders according to Davis (2006) communicate a rational, appealing vision of the future and show the way through their strategic leadership approach. Vision is defined as "the force which moulds meaning for the people of an organisation" (Manasse, 1986 p.150 cited in SEDL, 2005). It is a force that provides meaning and purpose to the work of an organisation and is well beyond merely maintaining the status quo (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986). Having a clearly defined vision or purpose is central to successful and effective leadership (Bush & Glover, 2003; Creighton, 1999; Hoppe, 2003; Keys et al, 2003; Kotter, 1998; Miller, 2003) and suggests that all leaders, including school principals have the capacity to create a compelling vision that can take their schools forward.

This aspect of leadership, according to Manasse (1986) is visionary leadership and can be categorised into organisation, future, personal, and strategic. Organisational vision involves having a complete picture of what makes up a system or organization, and an understanding of how the systems relate to each other. Future vision consists of a comprehensive picture of what an organisation will be like at some point in the future, including how it will be positioned in its environment and how it will function internally.

Personal vision includes the leader's personal aspirations for the organisation and acts as the impetus for the leader's actions that will link organisational and future vision. Strategic vision involves connecting the reality of the present (organisational vision) to the possibilities of the future (future vision) in a unique way (personal vision) that is appropriate for the organisation and its leaders and staff. A leader with a clear vision of what he or she wants the school to become can enable a school and the entire staff to have a sense of purpose and can achieve growth and development.

However, having these visions alone is not sufficient for an effective leader of an organisation such as school. A leader's vision needs to be shared and agreed to by the followers; those who will be involved in the implementation of the vision, regardless of whether the vision is developed collaboratively or initiated by the leader (Leithwood et al., 1999). However as advised by Harris (2003), the shared values and vision must be collaboratively constructed by leaders, lived, and their practice must be consistent. According to her, commitment to a shared vision is a crucial ingredient for the sustenance of an organisation's distributed or shared leadership practice and is one of the qualities of effective leadership.

In the case of schools in the Solomon Islands, the principals need to share their futures thinking with staff and colleagues, board members, students, parents and the school communities, Local Education Authority and the Ministry of Education in order for that vision to be turned into reality. The overall vision for the school should be a unifying concept, but to make it an ethical or moral vision it needs to be based on a set of values and beliefs (Davies, 2006). Part of this would involve including stakeholders in the initial vision building phase in order to develop the "shared" aspect of the vision. Davies (2006) further emphasised that " the strategy process is not seen just as a functional means of moving the school from one stage in its development to the next…..[but] needs to be based on a series of values and beliefs that aim to improve the lives of children and those who work in the schools." (p.27).

2.4.2   Holding clear beliefs and values

Values according to Deal and Peterson (1999) are the conscious expressions of what an organisation stands for and represents a deeper sense of what is considered important. Beliefs represent how we comprehend and deal with the world around us. Effective leaders promote a set of values and beliefs that are perceived to be acting within a moral framework.

Therefore, in establishing a set of values and beliefs, an effective school leader not only has to demonstrate, establish and espouse the values themselves, but also to communicate these to staff and students as well. Parts of the responsibilities of such leaders are to ensure that the changes put in place are sustained. Thus a primary characteristic of effective leadership appears to be commitment to shared values and beliefs. That is, as suggested by Harris and Chapman (2002), these shared values and visions must be collaboratively constructed by leaders, and must underpin and guide the way in which they perform their leadership roles.

Duignan (2004) also supports this by arguing that the formation of authentic leaders starts with a leader's own transformation, leading to a deeper understanding of personal values and passionate belief in their ability to make a difference in the lives of all who are connected with the school. He further highlights that the formation of leaders is essentially an educative process, which involves not only the mere acquisition of knowledge, transmission of facts, or the development of skills or competencies, but also the creation of ethical and moral bases. This has led Love (2005) to conclude, "being an effective leader can happen only when both head and heart are engaged in examining daily practice" (p.18).

2.4.3   Valuing and using human resources

In any organisation such as schools, staff and colleagues are the greatest resources (Barker, 2001; Day, 2000; Kotter, 1998; Harris & Chapman, 2002) and one of the key characteristics of effective leaders is that they value these human resources (Love, 2005;

SEDL, 2005). Love (2005) further believes that the nourishing of individuals is central to effective leadership, and that leaders need to nurture and utilise the resources of their staff and colleagues to their full potential in order to allow them to assume greater levels of competence. This should also provide an environment that promotes the contributions of each individual member to the organisation's work and to the fulfillment of the shared vision (SEDL, 2006).

This leadership approach is in line with the distributed leadership model mentioned earlier in the chapter (Harris, 2002; Earley & Weindling, 2004, Spillance, Diamond, Sherer & Coldren, 2005) in which leadership is the responsibility of all members of the school community. This model of leadership however, does not remove the role of someone in a formal leadership position that is ultimately responsible for the overall performance of the organisation. Such leadership roles according to Harris (2002) are essential as they hold "the pieces of the organisation together in a productive relationship and can create a common culture of expectations around the use of individual skills and abilities"(p. 4).

Relating this to the Solomon Islands school context, most schools have yet to embrace the notion of distributed leadership. Most schools still maintain the notion of leadership that is closely associated with the belief that leadership power is solely vested in the person at the very top of the hierarchy in the schools. It is therefore the most prevalent conception of educational leadership among staff, students and the wider community.

Therefore, to develop and sustain this model of distributed leadership in our schools, I believe leaders must first be committed to the development of the capacities of their staff, colleagues and the school communities.

2.4.4 A strong motivator of staff and students

For any leader to be effective much of what can be achieved hinges on the support and commitment he or she gathers from followers (Miller, 2002; Harris & Chapman, 2002). This means the leader must have the capacity and the will to nurture, motivate, inspire

and challenge staff and colleagues (Love, 2005), and is expected to be a nurturer, coach, and mentor who works with followers to ensure the organisation's success (Robertson, 2005). This includes being an effective communicator and being able to maintain positive personal relationships within the whole school community.

The leadership research and the theories reviewed above depend heavily on the study of motivation. This therefore suggests that all leaders must be in a position to create an environment in which people are motivated to produce and move in the direction of their shared vision. By creating the right environment, one in which staff and students want to be involved and committed to their work, a school leader is able to influence and direct the activities of others.

In view of the above arguments, and as leaders understand what people value, they can impact on peoples' actions by defining what behaviours will produce desired outcomes. Motivation must not be seen as the only element involved in eliciting certain behaviours from followers or employees but personal knowledge and abilities certainly play a role as well. Therefore, motivating staff and colleagues in making the vision become reality and by encompassing the whole school community through site-based decision making is one of the key characteristics of an effective leader.

A detailed analysis of various theories of motivation is outside the scope of my study. However, a review of some aspects of motivation could help to provide a better understanding of how a leader might create such an environment in his or her organisation. A well-known motivation theory cited in Horner (2004) is the one developed by Herzberg in 1964. Through his research, Herzberg differentiated between elements in the work place that led to employee satisfaction and dissatisfaction. He found that those elements that cause satisfaction can be thought of as motivators, because employees are motivated to achieve them. This theory, according to Horner, relates to the process of leadership, because leaders may be interested in reducing dissatisfaction and increasing satisfaction to develop an environment more conducive to employee satisfaction, and perhaps enhanced performance.

Motivation theories could be seen to add to the body of leadership work in that the emphasis is on the followers themselves and what causes them to act, instead of focussing on the leaders and their traits, behaviour, or situations.

2.4.5   Being creative in solving problems and complex issues.

Since leadership is constantly challenging, little or nothing can be achieved without a resolve to face and overcome these challenges (Starratt, 2005; Barker, 2001; Day, 2000; Harris & Chapman, 2002; Creighton, 1999). Arguably, effective leaders are those that are aware of the emotional and intellectual needs necessary to empower people to take action, to solve problems, and to voice their ideas (Love, 2005).

In my experience as a former teacher and now a senior official in the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education, the importance of creativity cannot be overlooked as an integral component of effective leadership. That is, beyond the skills of management and operation, or what Martin & Robertson (2003) describe as the nuts and bolts of principalship, there is a fundamental need to be an effective problem solver.

Coupled with the need for leaders to be creative is the need to balance an apparently increasing level of demand from students, staff, parents and communities, the interests of professional teacher unions, and the requirements of government that have the tendency to demand more and more accountability (Goertz, 2000; Boris-Schacter, 2006). These complex issues and demands require leadership with high levels of creativity.

2.4.6   Being proactive and being able to foresee and deal effectively with change

One of the common characteristics of effective leadership in contexts where change is considered, includes leaders being selective in their leadership approach at certain phases of the change process. Collaboration, capacity building and distribution of leadership power through empowering others to be leaders are other effective leadership characteristics in changed contexts (Harris, Day, Hopkins, Hadfield, Hargreaves & Chapman, 2003; Harris & Chapman, 2003).

It is therefore crucial to note that effective leadership in contexts where change is considered difficult cannot be accomplished by one heroic person, but rather through distributed leadership as emphasised by Harris and Chapman (2002). This is because traditional leadership styles no longer lend themselves to the changing needs of schools and because traditionally hierarchical school structures also fail to serve the needs of schools as increasingly complex organizations.

There is wide agreement in the literature that schools are not static organizations but are subject to constant changes from many directions including calls for change and reforms in school management, curriculum and pedagogy, and parental participation in schooling, and at political levels. However as Fullan (2002) argues "to carry the weight of the kinds of reforms that will create the schools that we need for the future calls for leaders who can create a fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools and of the teaching profession itself" (p.17). He believes that having a change in what happens in classrooms is a step on the way to embedding change in teachers' practice. He maintains that if teachers see that their classroom changes actually result in changes in learning outcomes for students then there is a greater chance of getting a real change in their attitudes and beliefs.

One of the key characteristics of effective leaders is their ability to adapt to change, as the environment of their organisation shifts and develops. That is, effective leaders responded positively to change in the culture of an organisation (Baron, 1995; Horner, 2004) and the management of an organisational culture is the key to successful innovation and effective leadership (Marshall, 1993).

2.4.7 Maintaining the right culture

As leadership research has grown and expanded, an even broader look at leadership has emerged with a focus on organisational culture (Schein, 1985; 1992). This is due to accumulating evidence that the culture of an organisation plays an important role in its success (Deal & Peterson, 1999). Culture, according to Fullan & Hargreaves (1991), is

"the way we do things and relate to each other around here" (p.37). It can also be regarded as "a system of values and beliefs that codifies the behaviour, processes and products of the organization and the people in it" (Kedian,1991) and can be described as the normative glue that holds a particular school together (Sergiovanni, 2004). Deal & Peterson (1999) describe the school culture as a:

powerful, pervasive, and notoriously elusive force….and unwritten rules and traditions, norms, and expectations that seem to permeate everything: the way people act, how they dress, what they talk about or avoid talking about, whether they seek out colleagues for help or don't, and how teachers feel about their work and their students (pp.2-3).

Therefore an effective leader needs to develop the ability to know and understand what the organizational culture is and be able to shape it to meet the needs of the organization as it progresses. For leaders to be effective, according to this view, issues related to culture must be clearly identified and maintained.

Relating this to the school context, Blumberg and Greenfield (1986) explain that in carrying out their job, school principals are constantly negotiating and managing the cultures of their schools to reflect the changing environment. Furthermore, Fullan & Hargreaves (1991) provide a description of the two cultures that are common in the schools - individualistic and collaborative, with their own different ways of dealing with change and improvement. Also because schools are complex organizations with increasingly varied challenges, a key role of the principal is to promote unity and cohesion within the school community by identifying a core set of beliefs and practices that support the direction in which the school should be developing (Stewart, 2000). Thus, the importance of maintaining the right school culture, and paying attention to how parents, teachers and students define and experience meaning are two widely accepted requirements for effective school leadership (Sergiovanni, 2004).

To be successful at culture building and maintenance, school leaders should pay attention to the informal, subtle, and symbolic aspects of school life. This includes promoting a culture of learning that focuses on student achievement.

Having looked at the above qualities and characteristics of school leadership, the next section explores some of the issues that can inhibit effective school leadership in Solomon Islands secondary schools.

2.5   Issues inhibiting effective leadership in the Solomon Islands' schools system

There is a dearth of literature that focuses on the issues in the Solomon Islands that impede or inhibit effective school leadership. Therefore in this section, I review the limited literature and offer some comments and opinions that reflect current thinking on the issues that are considered more pertinent.

2.5.1   Leadership capacity and competencies

Recent reports of studies conducted in 2004 (Ministry of Education, 2005) attributed personal qualities, administrative competencies, and the leadership styles of school principals to the overall decline in the effectiveness of school-based leadership and management in Solomon Islands schools.

The recent establishment of the Community High Schools throughout the country since 1995 compounds this issue. Although this initiative has the noble intention of addressing major issues such as improving access and equity, reducing costs and encouraging community participation in secondary education (Sikua, 2002), it has also created further immediate leadership and quality issues in terms of the provision of leadership teachers, curriculum, resources and facilities. Also, it has been reported (Ministry of Education, 2004) that the establishment of some of these schools did not meet the Ministry of Education's guidelines for the establishment of Community High Schools as they were established by politicians with political agendas in mind. As a result, they ended up with a lack of proper teaching and learning resources and facilities, and in most cases lack of qualified and experienced teachers and principals.

Although most of these principals would have completed initial teacher training at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE), the University of the South Pacific (USP) and other regional universities and institutions with diplomas and first degrees, very few would have Postgraduate qualifications in educational leadership. This lack of initial preparation for principals is common in most developing countries. Most teachers in these countries were picked to become principals because of their teaching ability (Davis & Harber, 1997) or ability as heads of subject departments. In the Solomon Islands, the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Education Authorities do not have programmes in place for other new or serving principals in the schools.

This concern about the lack of training for school principals was also highlighted by Puamau (1998) and Kelep-Malpo (2003) in their studies of school principals in Fiji and Papua New Guinea respectively. In the United Kingdom, recent surveys (Paterson & West-Burnham, 2005) found that only 17 percent of new head teachers thought they were prepared for their job and that most of them learned from experience. The issues highlighted above point to the need for school principals in the Solomon Islands to receive some form of initial leadership training to equip them professionally before they take up their leadership positions. This is all the more important if they have never held any responsible position at a school and have very limited experience of leading and managing a school.

The need for initial training and support for newly appointed school principals was emphasised by Paterson and West-Burnham (2005) who suggest that these principals can feel isolated and overwhelmed by the demands of their new role. Also as argued by Boris-Schacter, 2005, "the new principal is confronted with the challenge of converting this apparent either-or choice into a fusion of the best from both options, changing internal and external pressures into sources of inspiration, reservoirs of fresh ideas." (p. 44). Such initial professional development experiences should equip new principals with resources to develop their maturity to face up to the challenges that lies ahead.

Therefore for a newly appointed principal who is selected straight from the classroom, such initial experiences are crucial and according to Boris-Schacter (2005), are at the heart of a principal's professional development. Furthermore, this initial training opportunity should provide an avenue for both serving and newly appointed principals to establish professional dialogue and networks with fellow principals as the basis for meaning making and problem solving - an approach that clearly helps reduce these newly appointed principals' sense of isolation and can ensure the support and advice of more experienced colleague principals.

What is clear from my review of these issues is that school leaders in the Solomon Islands need ongoing support from the Ministry of Education, Provincial Education Authorities, school boards and communities to maintain, support and enhance their leadership roles, especially in today's climate of change and ever-increasing demands. Given their diverse responsibilities, it is naive to think that both newly appointed and current principals could be effective in today's schools without ongoing professional learning and support. This includes the continued support and encouragement of immediate family members and members of the school community (Sanders, 2006).

2.5.2   Policy and systemic issues

The education system in the Solomon Islands is administered under the Education Act of 1978 (Solomon Islands). The Act provides the legal basis on which the education system is managed and administered. It defines the roles and responsibilities of the Minister, Education Authorities, school committees, school boards and school principals.

The current organization and management structure is a result of a reshuffling of government ministry responsibilities (Bray 1991, Ministry of Education, 2004) and as a result of the Provincial Government Act of 1981 (Solomon Islands) in which much administration of the country's education system was decentralized to the education boards of the nine provincial governments and the Honiara City Council. This decentralized system was made necessary by the geographic requirements and the cultural diversity of the country and by the problems of communication and

transportation. The decentralisation has enabled most of the administrative issues to be dealt with at local and school levels. This arrangement was not only for administrative convenience but intended also to make the schools more responsive to the needs of their immediate communities. However, this form of decentralization according to Bray (1991) has the potential to result in policy and resource issues, especially in terms of financial resources and the recruitment of teachers and personnel, and can led the system to operate inefficiently. Furthermore, the national and provincial governments may disagree on policies and priorities, which can result in confusion over the authority and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Provincial Education Authorities. Any breakdown in communication between these primary stakeholders can impact negatively on the effective running of the national education system and schools.

Although the administration and management of schools is devolved to the Education Authorities, the Ministry of Education, through its Teaching Service Commission still retains responsibility for the appointment and payment of the teachers' salaries and the provision of recurrent grants to the schools. This has resulted in a number of management and administrative issues, one of which is the legal and professional ….. of the employer of teachers in the schools. Is it the nine Provincial and City Education Authorities who administer and manage the schools or the National Government who pays the teachers' salaries and the schools recurrent grants?

This administrative dilemma has raised a number of issues, one of which is the question of whether teachers are accountable to the Ministry of Education or to their respective Education Authorities and School Boards. This is because despite the High Court ruling of 2000, that teachers are employees of their respective Education Authorities (High Court of Solomon Islands Civil Case no. 225 of 2000), teachers still think they are employees of the national government who pays their salaries. This view by teachers and the Solomon Islands National Teachers Association (SINTA) can affect the management of teachers by the Provincial Education Authorities, principals and the school boards.

Coupled with these concerns is the on-going issue of the condition of service of principals and teachers in the Solomon Islands. The 'poor' condition of employment for teachers in the teaching service has greatly affected morale of teachers especially those teachers in boarding schools. There have been reports (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005) of principals spending disproportionate amounts of time dealing with teachers and union grievances that detract from their leadership activities in the schools. This issue is not only relevant to the Solomon Islands but is also a concern expressed by principals in other developed countries such as the UK (Everard, 1986) and the United States (Boris-Schacter, 2006). They also attributed the low level of salaries in the teaching profession as an obstacle to effective leadership and teaching in the schools.

The current teachers' salary and reward system in the Solomon Islands are problematic and an obstacle to effective schools leadership and improvement because they do not reward principals and teachers according to their roles and level of responsibilities, but rather on a standard scheme of service that is set by the national teaching service commission for all teachers, regardless of which type of school they are in.

The above issue of unfavourable conditions of service, accommodation and working conditions of teachers in the schools can also discourage the recruitment of more qualified and experienced principals and teachers, especially in rural schools with limited facilities and a less attractive work environment. This can have an effect on the quality of teaching and leadership at these schools.

2.5.3   National verses Provincial control

While the decentralized education system is considered necessary due to the geographic isolation and the socio-cultural diversity of the various communities throughout the country, it can also result in policy and communication issues that can lead to an ineffective and inefficient school system (Bray, 1991) and duplication of meagre resources. This is especially so if the national and provincial governments disagree on certain policies and priorities, which can result in confusion over the authority and responsibilities of the Ministry of Education and Provincial Education Authorities. Such

conflicting policies not only result in leadership and management issues for the schools concerned but in the overall accountability of the education system.

2.5.4   Resources and facilities issues

Apart from the decline in the capacity of the Ministry of Education and Provincial Education Authorities to provide adequate resources to manage the school system (Ministry of Education, 2004) the key issues also identified are the capacity to maintain and develop a quality school infrastructure in most schools to accommodate a rapidly increasing expansion in the school-age population (Ministry of Education, 2006). Many existing school buildings and facilities in various parts of the country are in poor condition and in need of urgent repairs. It was also found that schools, especially the Community High Schools, lack proper storage and specialist rooms (science laboratories etc). This can lead to overcrowding and safety issues in most of these schools. Consequently, principals are distracted from their core leadership functions by the need to focus on lower order but crucial administrative activities.

Also the lack of financial resources has resulted in most schools having to do without non-teaching office staff, furniture and equipment. There have been reports of teachers' houses and students' dormitories not being maintained and being left to deteriorate (Ministry of Education, 2005; Sikua, 2002). Most of the schools lack radio, telephone and internet connections. This severe limitation of administrative capacity is a further distraction.

Although the above issues may be regarded as superficial they can be impediments to school principals in the Solomon Islands effectively performing their leadership roles.

2.5.5   Geographical isolation

The issue of geographical isolation is more of a concern to schools in the rural part of the country than the schools in the urban centres. Because of the geographic and socio-cultural environment of schools - and their isolation - many of the challenges confronting

each school principal, although similar, can be unique to each school context. Being located in isolated and rural areas according to Peca (2003) presents specific set of issues that can affect the principalship in such settings. These include; recruitment issues, community relations, relations with the local school board, with teachers, parents, the impact of reform on rural schools, and professional isolation experienced by both the principals and staff. These are all relevant issues which challenge a principal who is already part of the rural community, but even more so for the principal who is new to the community.

This geographical isolation can also result in instability of leadership at both the schools and the Provincial Education levels (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005) as a result of the frequent turnover of principals and deputy principals, especially in the Provincial Secondary Schools and Community High Schools. This unplanned principal succession was one of the most common causes of schools in the rural communities failing to progress. Frequent changes in principals is a common occurrence in many rural schools in the Solomon Islands and this is having a negative impact on effective school-based leadership and is an impediment to initiatives intended to increase pupil achievement (Ministry of Education, 2006; Sikua, 2002).

This form of instability at the school level is often due to a failure by management at the Provincial Education Authority levels to monitor these changes, due to geographical isolation of these schools and this can have a negative impact on the leadership and management of these schools.

2.5.6   School-Community issues

The limited impact of many parents and community members on their children's education and their limited capacity to contribute results in further stresses for the principals, and further depreciates their limited time for leadership (Martin & Robertson, 2003; Mills, 1994; Sanders, 2006; Southworth, 2005). Consequently, the principals frequently devote more time to developing a fairly ideal community that welcomes and values parent involvement. While this type of community is desirable, the required effort further detracts from the principals' limited time for leadership (Martin & Robertson,

2003; Southworth, 2005). Getting parents and members of the school community to be involved in their school is a constant challenge for most school principals, especially in the Solomon Islands (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005). Although parents are encouraged to take part in their children's schools, there are often factors (e.g. lack of time, lack of language skills, lack of education), which may make them reluctant to participate (Mills, 1994).

One of the biggest barriers principals have encountered in encouraging parent involvement in the operation of a school is the often pervasive attitude in communities that the school knows best what needs to be done to educate children. This perspective can either eliminate or demean parents' interest in the running of the school (Mills, 1994).

The challenge now is for a more philosophical shift in the attitudes of principals and teachers (Fullan, 2001; Hargreaves, 1997) in inviting and welcoming meaningful parental involvement without making parents feel pressured and causing further problems.

The next chapter explores the methodology of my research study.

CHAPTER THREE   RESEARCH METHOD

3.1   Introduction

This chapter examines the research approach I will take for my study following an exploration of various research paradigms and methodological options. It begins by providing a brief account of research and the way it is informed by paradigms that shape our understanding of the social world around us. This will be followed by an examination of the quantitative, qualitative and post-modern paradigms and how they influenced my choice of methodological approach for my study.

I shall then provide justification for my selection of a qualitative-oriented approach of the semi-structured interview as the data collection method I will employ in my study of the issues inhibiting effective leadership in the Solomon Islands' provincial secondary schools. This will be followed by a brief description of the procedures used in the study to recruit the participants in the study, and any possible ethical considerations, and a description of the data transcription and analysis.

3.2   The Research Paradigms

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 had 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.

Developments in research since the 1960s have led to changes in logical thinking, values, methods and procedures of research, including the social values that underlie inquiry and the historical position of the academic and intellectual communities (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al, 2000; Hopkins, 1976; Popkewitz, 1984). These developments have seen the emergence of three intellectual traditions or views that competes in the social and

educational sciences and have influenced the definition, structure and the practice of research (Popkewitz, 1984). These traditions, can be viewed as paradigms that contain different assumptions about the social world and can be commonly referred to as positivist scientific, naturalist interpretive and critical post-structuralist; each with distinct ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions (Popkewitz, 1984; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003).

The emergence of these particular ways of thinking and reasoning over the last half century have also seen the emergence of three intellectual traditions or views in which research enquiry is undertaken. These views have influenced the definition, structure and practice of research and have led to the changes in logical thinking and values, methods and procedures of research, and the social values that underlie inquiry and the historical position of the academic and intellectual community (Popkewitz, 1984). Each of these traditions can be viewed within the three broad paradigms referred to above.

Maykut and Morehouse (1994) define a paradigm as "a set of overarching and interconnected assumptions about the nature of social reality that provides the basis on which we build our verifiable knowledge" (p.4). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) define a paradigm as "a basic set of beliefs that guide action. They deal with first principles or ultimates. They define the worldview of the researcher as interpretive *bricoleur*" (p. 245). Denzin and Lincoln (2003) further suggest that these assumptions referred to by Maykut and Morehouse (1994) are human constructions and that their associated beliefs can never be established in terms of their ultimate truthfulness. An understanding of each paradigm can result in greater awareness of the kinds of variables to be investigated, and their relationships.

Therefore, the choice of paradigm and method for any research study should be appropriate to what the researcher is trying to find out (Punch, 1998) and should be a practical rather than an ideological one (Silverman, 2005). In view of the above statement, and in order to facilitate a clear understanding of the nature of the research method I shall adopt in my study, it is necessary firstly to examine the

distinction between the three commonly used research paradigms. This is because each research paradigm provides a separate interpretation of the social issue each of them is confronted with and can in turn guide the researcher in deciding which one to choose to utilize for their research.

3.3   The quantitative paradigm

A study that is consistent with the quantitative paradigm is an inquiry into a social or human problem that is mainly composed of empirical variables that can be measured using statistical procedures, in order to determine whether the predictive generalization of the theory holds true (Creswell, 1994, 2005). It is also based on testing a theory to demonstrate the validity and reliability of its claims (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000). The main assumptions of the positivist, scientific research are thus quantitative and are associated with "objectivity, measurability, predictability, controllability, patterning, the construction of laws and rules of behaviour, and the ascription of causality" (Cohen et al., 2000, p. 28). Creswell (2003) identified methods of inquiry that are commonly associated with the quantitative paradigm. They include most scientific experiments, surveys, cross-sectional and longitudinal studies using questionnaires or structured interviews.

However, researchers such as Crossley and Vulliamy (1984 cited in Sikua, 2002) have identified two main shortcomings of the quantitative approach. They observed that the quantitative methodology is outcome-oriented and does not take into account the contributions of the participants and the context in which the study is conducted. These shortcomings have led researchers, especially those in human sciences, to search for alternatives to the scientific approach, which is the basis for quantitative methodology. Based on the above, the quantitative research approach is considered inappropriate for my research project. In my study, I wish to allow my research participants to express freely in their own words their perceptions of the issues inhibiting effective leadership in their schools.

3.4   The qualitative paradigm

A qualitative study on the other hand is designed to be consistent with the assumptions of a qualitative paradigm. It is described as an inquiry process that is seen as a subjective rather than an objective understanding of a social or human problem (Burns, 2000; Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000; Creswell, 2003). It is aimed at uncovering a complex and holistic picture of events as they evolve in their natural setting (Schram, 2006; Sherman and Webb, 1988).

Commonly referred to as antipositivist, this research approach refutes the notion that there is only one form in which reality and truth can be explained. It instead embraces a nominalist ontological position that allows multiple constructions of reality. The main criticism about the positivist scientific approach is that of its mechanistic and reductionist nature. This has led to the emergence of the naturalist interpretive paradigm that focuses on human interaction and the description of patterns of conduct and meaning. Researchers operating within this paradigm favour a qualitative approach which depends upon conversation to describe "multi-faceted images of human behaviour as varied as the situations and contexts supporting them" (Cohen et al., 2000, p.23).

In spite of these distinctions, it can be argued that both paradigms have their roots in 20th century philosophical thinking (Creswell, 1994; 2003). The assumption that they represent two distinct and opposed approaches to the study of the social world (Cohen et al., 2000; Burns, 2000; Creswell, 2003, 2005) does not mean that one approach is intrinsically better than the other. However, in their further analysis of the two traditional approaches to research, Lincoln and Guba (2003) found that these two traditional paradigms were unable to address the issue surrounding "voice, empowerment, and praxis" (p. 246). They highlighted the failure of these two paradigms to address satisfactorily the theory and value–laden nature of facts, the interactive nature of inquiry, and the fact that the same sets of "facts" can support more than one theory. This led to the emergence of the postmodern paradigms; postmodernist critical theory and constructivism.

3.5   Postmodern paradigms

The 1980s have seen the emergence of various paradigms that competed for recognition by intellectual communities (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). These according to Guba & Lincoln (2003) "were in contention with the received positivist and post positivist paradigms for legitimacy, and with one another for intellectual legitimacy" (p. 253). These include early critical theory (Habermas, 1972) and the critical post-structural theory such as ethnic and cultural discourse (Bishop, 1997; Bishop & Glynn, 1999; Durie, 1997) and feminism (Blackmore, 1999; Lather, 1991; Reinharz, 1992).

These developments according to Denzin & Lincoln (2003) have also resulted in more complex and theoretically diverse strands of the postmodern paradigms that have their genesis in the world view of the oppressed rather than that of the dominant culture. They argue that "this complexity problematised the researcher-participant relationship….. [and] has destabilised the insider-outsider model of inquiry" (p.248). This according to Bishop (1995) has raised the issues of initiation, benefits, representation, legitimation and accountability to critical importance.

In the next section, I will provide justifications for the process that allows me to pose guiding questions but nevertheless allows the participants to offer responses to my questions that go beyond the superficial. I am fully conscious therefore of the need to be able to pose subsidiary and probing questions to further extend their responses.

3.6   The appropriateness of the Qualitative approach in Education Leadership Research.

The qualitative research paradigm allows a researcher to conduct studies in the natural setting, using multiple methods that are interactive and humanistic (Creswell, 2003).

Also, according to Creswell (2005) qualitative research methods can enable the researcher to explore the issues and problems about which little is known and where a detailed understanding of the core issues is required. This approach is associated with the naturalistic perspective and interpretive understanding of human experience (Denzin &

Lincoln, 1994) and its ability to employ narrative inquiry and open-ended questions (Creswell, 2003, 2005; Burns, 2000). Also, the data obtained from this approach can provide a deeper understanding of the social phenomena than would be obtained from purely quantitative data (Silverman, 2005). Another advantage of the qualitative research approach is that it is not restricted to one particular method but according to Punch (1998) covers a wide range of data collection procedures, one of which is interviewing.

As stated in the previous chapter, very little research has been carried out on school leadership in the Solomon Islands and so there is a general lack of knowledge of the research process. In addition, most communities in the Solomon Islands still have a very strong oral tradition where the most common and most powerful mode of communication is by word of mouth. Even most traditional customs and beliefs are not written down or recorded but are mostly handed down from one generation to the next through an oral tradition. Therefore, it is important that any research carried out in the Solomon Islands be conducted within the participants' socio-cultural context. This is to ensure maximum participation and response from the research participants. Furthermore, use of a method congruent with the oral tradition is likely to reduce substantially any feelings of threat felt by the participants.

Based on the above, the qualitative research paradigm is considered most appropriate for my research project. In this project, I wish to allow my research participants to express freely, in their own words, their perceptions of the issues inhibiting effective leadership in their schools. Such a research approach is also more appropriate to the Solomon Islands complex socio-cultural context, and its predominantly oral tradition, and the participants' limited awareness of the mainly euro-centric cultural context in which most quantitative research paradigms are based.

The quality of the data collected is likely to be enhanced by the use of a socio-culturally appropriate collection method. As Silverman (1997) notes "the primary issue for researchers in the interactionists' tradition is to generate data which give authentic insights into people's experiences"(p. 100). In order to gain a deeper understanding of the school principals' personal experiences of their leadership roles and of the issues

affecting effective leadership in the schools, the most appropriate approach will be through a qualitatively orientated semi-structured interview.

I have therefore, decided to use the qualitative-orientation approach of the semi-structured interview as my primary data collection method in my study.

3.7 The Semi-structured interview as a Qualitative Research Method

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, not only as a data collection instrument, but as a means of social and interpersonal encounter (Burns, 2000; Cohen et al., 2000). This is because of its ability to allow the research participants greater flexibility than the closed-ended interview to express themselves further in a more relaxed atmosphere.

Although I will be guiding the interview sessions with core questions, I want to capture the principals' perceptions (thoughts, feelings, values, beliefs and attitudes) of the issues influencing effective leadership in their schools and their views and perceptions of the possible ramifications of this influence. In other words, it affords participants the opportunity to reflect at length, in their own words and preferred order, on aspects of their leadership. This more open-ended technique will provide the researcher with a vehicle for establishing rapport, scaffolding responses and probing their professional practice. This according to Burns (2000) can create an avenue that can lead to the discovery of deeper levels of meaning that involve what Bishop (1997) refers to as "engaging in similar reflections and questioning of assumptions" (p.30). It enhances communication between researcher and respondent, enabling the interview to remain relatively conversational and situational. Open-ended questions provide the vehicle for skilful interviewers to probe responses and investigate motives. Respondents are encouraged to seek clarification, to elaborate and to explain subtleties and complexities. This is consistent with the qualitative approach as it promotes the use of a variety of techniques to stimulate descriptive responses from the participants. Furthermore, due to

the small number of participants selected for my study, the semi-structured interview will allow me to collect relevant data for my study, using open-ended and probing questions to explore specific aspects of my research question, where appropriate.

3.8 Limitations of the semi-structured interview

Despite the advantages and appropriateness of the semi-structured interview, there are limitations of the method which I need to be aware of in carrying out my study. The mere presence of the interviewer may deter participants from freely expressing their views. Those for whom anonymity is of paramount importance may feel threatened or intimidated. This view is supported by Fontana and Frey (2003) who feel that the routine, pervasive nature of interviewing causes some researchers to overlook the impact of the social dynamic of the interview on the nature of the knowledge generated. This includes the researcher's gender, race and status and can have an effect on the participant's response and thus the interview data (Fontana & Frey, 1994). This is considered crucial in my study as my position as the Under Secretary for Education in the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education could influence my participants' freedom to express themselves during the interview sessions.

So, unless the researcher is prepared to invest his or her own personal identity in the relationship with the participants, any possible power difference between the researcher and the participants can never be completely eliminated. For my study, I have attempted to address and eliminate the power and gender issues as far as possible. This is further addressed in the cultural and social aspects of the section on ethical considerations and procedures for my study.

Cohen et al (2000) in their description of the semi-structured interview method identify two potential pitfalls during the interview itself. They argue that while the use of an interview schedule increases the comprehensiveness of the data and the systematic nature of its collection, flexibility in sequencing can produce substantially different responses and result in the inadvertent omission of salient questions. Furthermore the data extracted from semi-structured interviews can be relatively unstructured, costly and time

consuming to analyse. In most cases, the sample of interview participants is normally small compared to the questionnaire methods and can lead to issues of statistical interpretation.

Despite the above limitations, the more dialogic nature of the interview permissible in a semi-structured approach is appropriate in a Solomon Islands context as it contributes to the elimination of power relationships mentioned above. The semi-structured interview is culturally appropriate and suitable for the dominant oral tradition and allows the researcher and participants to explore appropriately their views on the research question and the issues surrounding it and can also help in establishing rapport during the interview process. Therefore in the context of this study, I believe that the semi-structured interview is a socially, culturally and methodologically appropriate data-gathering strategy and according to Bell (1999) is capable of yielding rich data for my study

The next section describes the research design that guides the conduct of my research project.

3.9   Research Design

This section illustrates the design of my research study. It relates the research problem (Creswell 1994, 2003, 2005; Schram, 2003; Silverman, 2005) or issue I wish to investigate to the theoretical and operational requirements of sound research processes. This is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.9.1 Research Design

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                            Focus of study                             │
│  To investigate principals' perceptions of the issues inhibiting      │
│  effective leadership in the Solomon Islands provincial secondary     │
│                              schools                                   │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                                   │
                                   ▼
                      ┌──────────────────────────┐
                      │   A theoretical framework │
                      └──────────────────────────┘
                                   │
   ┌────────────┬──────────────┬───┴────────────┬──────────────┬──────────────┐
   │            │              │                │              │              │
┌──────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌──────────────┐ ┌────────────┐ ┌────────────┐
│Leadership│ │Community & │ │ Systemic &   │ │ Resourcing │ │   Policy   │
│          │ │ Cultural   │ │Organisational│ │            │ │            │
└──────────┘ └────────────┘ └──────────────┘ └────────────┘ └────────────┘
                                   │
                                   ▼
                      ┌──────────────────────────┐
                      │       Data sources        │
                      │  International literature │
                      │  Solomon Island literature│
                      │  Interviews with principals│
                      │  Education legislation and │
                      │  policy documents          │
                      └──────────────────────────┘
                                   │
                                   ▼
                      ┌──────────────────────────┐
                      │       Data Analysis       │
                      │     Thematic analysis     │
                      └──────────────────────────┘
                                   │
                                   ▼
                      ┌──────────────────────────┐
                      │         Findings          │
                      └──────────────────────────┘
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3.10   Procedure for the selection of participants

Although the intention of my research is not comparative, I wish to include a wide range of participants in my study for breadth of perspective. Specifically, I wish to ensure selection based on level of qualification, experience, province, gender, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds of the five participants selected in my study. Keeping these in mind, I have selected the five principals to participate in my study from schools in two provinces and the Honiara City Council. The schools range from Junior Community High School (CHS) with years 7 to 9 to the senior Provincial Secondary Schools (PSS) with years 7 to 13. The sample includes boarding school. The highest level or grade a school offers determines the size of the school. The higher the level of secondary education offered, the higher the number of students and teachers, and the greater the level of responsibilities for the school principal. There were both male and female participants. Two were in their first and second year as principals while three had over 10 years of practice.

3.11   Ethical Procedures adopted for the study

Since there is no strong tradition of academic research in the Solomon Islands, it is considered necessary, as part of this study, to be explicit about various ethical considerations. This is to establish and maintain the goodwill and co-operation of the community and the research participants. As a researcher carrying out my study in these communities and organisations, I need to observe the accepted traditional protocols for gaining access to the institutions or communities where the research project is to be conducted. For this, I need to be clear about the type and coverage of my study. This includes the aims of the research project, its practical applications, the design, and methods and procedures to be used. Most importantly, I must show in the research proposal procedures on how I shall guarantee privacy and confidentiality with respect to data collection, data interpretation, feedback and how findings will be disseminated. The above information will demonstrate to the participants that I am competent, and carrying out the research in good faith.

In view of these considerations, the following procedures were taken to ensure the appropriate ethical level of my study.

3.11.1 Access to participants

Provincial Secondary schools (including Community High Schools) in the study are administered by their respective Provincial Education Authorities. Therefore Provincial Education Authorities concerned will be requested to allow the access to their schools, and for permission to interview their principals.

3.11.2 Informed consent and voluntary Participation in the research

Participants for my research will be fully informed about the purpose and how the research is to be conducted and disseminated and they will be fully aware of any possible implications for participating in the study (Cohen et al., 2000; DePoy & Gitlin,1998; Punch,1998; Fontana & Frey, 1998). An informed consent form (DePoy & Gitlin, 1998; Burns 2000, Cohen et al., 2000) informing the research participants of the purpose and scope of the study has been developed. I ensured that the participants are fully aware of their rights to withdraw from the research without prejudice (Mutch, 2005). However, for the smooth running of my research project, participants were advised that they could withdraw up to seven days after confirming the accuracy of their interview transcripts.

3.11.3 Confidentiality of data, anonymity, privacy and safety of participants

Participants were assured that any information they provided during the course of the research would remain confidential and would not be disclosed other than for the academic purposes of this study, without their consent. The participants were assured that information they shared would be kept confidential at all times (DePoy and Gitlin,1998; Cohen et al., 2000). This was in order to respect the cultural sensitivity of some of the data that could be collected in my study and, as is the case with many indigenous communities (Bishop, 1997, Smith, 1998), certain culturally sensitive information and practices in the Solomon Islands that are not normally disclosed for wider public audience. It is incumbent upon me to ensure that all the data gathered is used appropriately, and that the socio-cultural requirements regarding the sensitivity of some data are respected. If at any time I came across any controversial or culturally sensitive

issue, I would carefully plan how such information would be stored and appropriately incorporated in the study.

I would also ensure that the identities of the participants would not be revealed and that the information reported in the research project did not identify participants. At all times during the interview process, I ensured that the questions I asked were focused on my research question and that the participants were not made to feel that their privacy was being invaded or their time improperly used. As far as possible, every measure was taken to ensure that the research participants understood the implications of participation in this research and that they would not in any be way subjected to physical, psychological, emotional, cultural, or professional harm. I further ensured that they were aware of their right to withdraw from the study should they have concerns regarding the manner in which the research was conducted.

3.11.4 Social and cultural considerations

A country like Solomon Islands with more than eighty different languages and diverse ethnic groupings is a major challenge for any researcher. I needed to take this into consideration and to carefully plan my research methods and approaches, being aware of possible socio-cultural issues that might arise during the research in order to avoid possible conflicts. These include respect for the indigenous culture, traditions, values and beliefs of the research participants. Bishop (1997) speaks of the influence of researchers with preconceived euro-centric views, on the indigenous cultures, values, traditions and beliefs of the Maori people in the early sixties. In such situations, the researcher not the participant has the power and control over the research process, which can result in possible cultural biases in the study. As a Solomon islander, I may justifiably claim to be working from a position within the broader socio-cultural context.

Respect for the concept of ownership of indigenous knowledge in a research project is another issue of concern in the Solomon Islands, where there is no individual ownership of knowledge which is commonly shared within the family or tribe. Also, certain practices and indigenous knowledge are considered sacred (tabu). That is, only certain

individuals in the tribe may have access to or are allowed to use it. Thus, there is a certain degree of confidentiality involved in which most indigenous knowledge and traditional practices are only shared by members of the same tribe and can only be handed down from one generation to the next through oral tradition and so are not to be written down. Also, most indigenous communities in the Solomon Islands would rather pass on their skills and knowledge to someone from their own tribe instead of to a stranger, like myself. Therefore, establishing rapport and trust was critical.

These issues can be a challenge in my study, especially if I am carrying out my leadership research in rural schools with predominantly indigenous communities. This means I have to navigate or re-negotiate my freedom of inquiry within the socio-cultural requirements of these indigenous communities in order to command their full support and co-operation for my study.

Another issue that is commonly overlooked by outside researchers in the Solomon Islands is the diversity of cultures, values and beliefs amongst the indigenous communities. A common mistake or oversight by most researchers in the Solomon Islands is the issue of generalisation of cultures and the assumption of national homogeneity. For my study, I need to take this into account as I carry out my research with the five different school communities in my study.

In view of the above issues, it is crucial at the planning stage of a research project for the researcher to carefully consider each stage of the research process (Aubrey & Carol, 2000) in order to eliminate as far as possible any ethical or cultural oversight and insensitivity which may occur.

3.12 Data collection and analysis

3.12.1 Conducting the semi-structured interview

The interview process involved one face-to-face conversation with each participant that lasted approximately an hour. Questions for the interview were based on my core research question: *'What issues inhibit effective leadership of schools in the Solomon Islands?'*

All five interviews were conducted using a semi-structured format in pijin (the *lingua franca* of Solomon Islands) and a Solomon Islands vernacular (if the participant speaks the same language as I) and will be tape-recorded. The use of tape-recording is considered appropriate for my research project, as the raw data remains for later reference. The recording of interviews was referred to in the initial letter of invitation sent out to prospective participants as a condition of participation. However I confirmed this with each participant before the interview began. Also it enabled me to naturally take part in the conversation with the participants during the interview. However, I also took interview notes as a useful supplement to record non-verbal expressions of the participants and as a source of back-up notes (Mutch, 2005; Bell, 1999; Burns, 2000). Also since a tape recording is not an infallible device, it is seen as prudent to have some back-up notes in case the technology fails or breaks down.

While the interview process is meant to be as natural and as flexible as possible, I ensured that the focus of the conversations and discussions remained relevant to the research question. This was to avoid unnecessary and lengthy 'off-topic' digressions.
To establish rapport with the research participants during the interview process, I used the funneling approach (Fontana & Frey, 1998, Creswell, 2003) to invite the participants to gradually guide the direction of the interview. This is to minimise my possible dominance of the interview process.

3.12.2 Data transcription

After the interviews, the interview data will then be transcribed and translated into English . Each interview transcript will be returned to the participants to confirm their 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.

3.12.3 Data analysis strategies

In order to generate findings that transform raw data into new knowledge, a researcher must be able to engage in the analysis of the data collected during the research process (Burns, 2000; Bryne, 2001; Creswell, 2005; Strachan, 2005). Although there are many qualitative data analysis programmes and approaches available to researchers today, none is adequately capable of the intellectual and conceptualising processes required to transform verbal interview data into meaningful findings (Thorn, 2000). Therefore, the thematic approach is still commonly used (Mutch, 2005) by researchers for analysing qualitative data. In particular the thematic approach is most suitable for analysing and reporting personal qualitative interview data (Mutch, 2005) as it can assist in identifying emerging patterns and recurring themes from the interview data (Aronson, 1994; Bryne, 2001; Strachan, 2005; Thorn, 2000).

In view of this, I have decided to carry out the analysis of the principals' interview transcripts using the thematic approach. The results of the data analysis are provided in the next chapter.

CHAPTER FOUR   THE FINDINGS

4.1   Introduction

The interviews served as the main component of my research project fieldwork. The objective of the semi-structured interview was to allow the school principals in the study to express in their own words their perceptions of the issues inhibiting effective leadership in their schools. In particular, I wished to gain some insight into the issues these principals encountered that prevented them from effectively leading and managing their schools.

From the analysis of the interview transcripts, the following recurring themes emerged as common issues impeding effective leadership, which can at times compete for these principals' limited time and attention:

(a)   lack of pre-principal preparation;

(b)   lack of support for on-going professional learning;

(c)   unfavourable conditions of service;

(d)   poor quality of teachers;

(e)   poor facilities and infrastructure;

(f)   lack of communication and office equipment;

(g)   lack of financial resources;

(h)   lack of logistics and support personnel;

(i)   policy and systemic issues;

(j)   socio-cultural and community obligations.

4.2   Lack of pre-principal preparation and support for on-going professional learning

A common issue raised by all participants was the inadequate preparation they received for their leadership roles. Most claimed they were appointed to their current position

without any initial leadership and management training. Furthermore, only two of the five principals in the study held deputy Principle's posts prior to being promoted. This is not a coincidental shortcoming of the sampling process. It would be common for many principals to be promoted from the classroom directly to a principalship. The rest claimed they were promoted to principalship directly from their classrooms. As one of them recalled:

> *When I was initially appointed as principal at the school, I had never been a deputy so I had only limited experience of leadership and management at the school. Also I was not adequately prepared, let alone given some basic initial training for this crucial and demanding job by my Education Authority and the Ministry of Education. Therefore, apart from the routine day to day administration of the school, I am still coming to terms with what it means to be an effective leader.*

When asked how he was promoted as school principal directly from the classroom, he replied:

> *I was promoted because of my excellent inspection report as a class teacher and for my leadership potential. I can vividly remember being handed my appointment letter and was asked to take up the position immediately. I guess this was the same case with most of my colleague principals throughout the country.*

In addition to his good teaching reports, he believes his appointment to the principal's position was also through support from his former principal, and the school board. When asked how he managed to cope without initial leadership preparation, he explained:

I attributed my survival to the support of my staff and colleagues at the school, the School Board, and the Provincial Education Board. Also I was fortunate to have the continued support and encouragement of my family and members of the surrounding community. Otherwise I would find it very difficult to cope with this very demanding job from the start. Apart from that, it is due to my own resilience and commitment to assist my students and learning from experience on-the-job, as I go along.

Another principal who had been a deputy principal before being promoted also believed in the importance of adequate preparation for school principals. He admitted that his lack of initial preparation has been a great disadvantage and has been a setback to his leadership roles at the school, and in developing a vision to guide the efforts of the staff and students. He further explained:

I am a great believer in the involvement of my staff and the collaboration among staff and students in the running of the school. However, without such initial preparation, I am completely at a loss as to how I am going to go about this. In particular how to develop and inform my teachers and students about our school vision that will inspire them to become more committed to work as a team.

Another principal in the study believes that the lack of initial leadership training is the main obstacle to most principals in identifying and utilizing the individual potential of their staff and teachers:

> *I believe in building a person and I encourage my staff and teachers by showing them I have confidence in their abilities. However, I just do not know how I am going to motivate and build up their individual capacity. At least I try to develop the potential in my young teachers by delegating them areas of responsibility according to their areas of expertise. I think there is more to this and there is no one to tell me whether I am doing the right thing or not.*

These above accounts of their lack of initial preparation for their leadership roles at their schools could be one of the issues inhibiting effective leadership in most secondary schools in the Solomon Islands. The participants gave numerous other examples of how they saw their work and progress being inhibited by a lack of training. Many of these were characterised by deep personal entity and disappointment – almost helplessness.

Apart from a lack of initial leadership training, all the five principals interviewed spoke of the current lack of support from the Ministry of Education and their respective Provincial Education Authorities for their on-going professional learning. As one of the newly appointed principals argued:

> *I am not sure about the others but for me, the lack of on-going professional learning for school principals throughout the country limits those of us who are new to the position to update ourselves with the latest issues and developments in school leadership and management practices. Also it limits collegial interaction and sharing of information and best*

leadership practices to assist us to reflect and improve on our current practices and leadership roles at our schools.

Even the experienced principals supported the need to take time out to reflect on their own leadership at their schools. Most expressed the wish to be given some time out for self-reflection and discussion with staff, colleagues, parents, and communities, as a professional learning tool. As one principal stated:

It would be nice to have the time to discuss my leadership with staff and colleagues. However, most of the time I was bogged down with routine administration work at the school and at the end of the day I am too tired to do anything else. Yes there is a need to stop and reflect on my own leadership styles and to spend more time in meaningful professional discussions with other colleague principals, staff, students and their parents and the school community. Also this should be the time principals can use to develop a vision and plan for their schools with staff and colleagues. Not only that but there is also a need for principals like myself to take time out away from our school environment to refresh ourselves and to rejuvenate our ideas and practices. The current circumstances are not conducive to these interactions.

According to another principal:

This lack of on-going professional support for school principals has also left most of us, especially in isolated rural schools in a state of neglect. Also, lack of on-going support from the Ministry of Education and the Education Authority has left most of us with limited capacity for appraisal of our own leadership performances and those of our staff, and colleagues. This is very much so with the absence of an established appraisal system in place to assist staff and students improve their performances in our schools.

While there were some in-service learning opportunities, they were not always helpful because of their administrative or managerial focus. When asked whether they benefited from recent Principals' workshops and conferences organised by the Ministry of Education, one principal responded:

> *Yes these Principals' workshops and conferences are very helpful but they are mainly for Financial Management. There is a need for more training that focuses on school leadership. Also, such training programmes should be at the start of a principal's career not midway as in my case.*

4.3 Unfavourable conditions of Service

Most principals interviewed spoke of the importance of staff and colleagues' support in effective leadership of their schools. However, as one participant admitted:

> *There is general attitude developing among my staff and colleagues who claimed why they should work harder with extra responsibilities if they receive the same level of remuneration as teachers who do not have the same level of duties and responsibilities. As a result my teachers are currently not giving me their full support because they are currently not happy with their present conditions of service. The general lack of motivation of staff and colleagues had affected me in effectively running the school programmes and activities despite my efforts.*

He further expressed concern at the lack of support and incentives from the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Education Board in addressing the issue:

> *This issue was brought to the attention of the school board and the Provincial Education Authority, but there was nothing they can do about it. It is an issue with the condition of service of teachers, and is a national responsibility of the Central Ministry of Education and the Teaching Service Commission.*

The principals interviewed also attributed this and other issues to the overall conditions of employment and service of principals and teachers throughout the country. They argued that unless this issue is addressed soon, the low morale amongst staff, especially in boarding schools, would continue to influence the effective running of these schools. As one of the principals in a rural school argued:

> *The poor accommodation and working conditions of staff is one of the main factors affecting the work morale of my staff at the school. These include the poor status of staff accommodation and proper office facilities for teachers to prepare their lessons. Even the principal does not have an office space to work in. How can one expect a school principal and his teachers to perform their duties effectively under such appalling conditions?*

The above issue regarding the poor conditions of service for teachers in most schools also led to the issues regarding the quality of teachers to manage and implement the school curriculum. This is discussed in the next section.

4.4 Poor quality of teachers

Most principals interviewed expressed major concerns about the quality of the teachers recently recruited to teach in their schools. In particular, they were concerned about the employment of young and inexperienced teachers, especially at senior secondary levels and as heads of some subject departments. This is of grave concern especially in rural and remote schools as one of the principals explained:

> *Some of our teachers are young and inexperienced at teaching in secondary schools. Therefore they lack the competency to teach and implement the school curriculum especially at senior forms. Although some might be teaching for years at the school, they need further upgrading or in-service training to enable them to teach the school curriculum especially at senior levels.*

When asked what teaching qualifications his teachers have, he replied:

> *For most, their highest level of qualification is a Diploma in Teaching from the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) so they do have problems with teaching the school curriculum, especially at senior forms. This is very much so in Science and Mathematics. Although some have first degrees from USP and UPNG but since they do not have teaching qualifications they are regarded as untrained teachers so require further in-service training.*

Another factor contributing to the lack of capacity of most teachers at the school is the absence of school-based in-service training programmes to assist such teachers. This is because as further explained by one of the principals:

> *There seems to be no staff at the school who is competent and has the time to run these in-service training sessions for such teachers at our school. Even if there were staff at the school who may be competent to run such training programmes, the absence of incentives provided to staff, meant these teachers are not that motivated to carry out extra activities, apart from their normal teaching duties. Besides the school does not have a provision for school-based INSET or SDP activities. Therefore in such a situation, I had to juggle between my day-to-day administration duties in order to assist these teachers.*

This level of teacher professional ability required principals to spend a substantial proportion of their time assisting with teacher development in a remedial process rather than engaging in leadership activities.

4.5   Poor facilities and infrastructure

There was a marked contrast between the conditions of the physical infrastructure of the secondary schools in the study. The schools in the urban centres were generally well maintained and better managed in terms of their facilities and building infrastructures. In contrast, the buildings and facilities of the schools in the remote and rural areas were in a poor condition not conducive to school pride or student learning. The dire situation of the schools was explained by one of the participants:

> *As you can see, the students' dormitory facilities were not up to requirements of a boarding school. Also, the classrooms and staff room facilities are not conducive to a working and learning environment. The school's generator has broken down but due to lack of funds has not been fixed. Since it is the only source of electricity for the school, it is a major inconvenience and a security concern especially for staff and students at night. Although the school has adequate water supply, there are no proper toilet and sanitation facilities for students who are forced to use the nearby mangrove swamps and beachfront as toilets. This is not only a health hazard but environmental concerns as well which responsible authorities are fully aware of.*

When asked whether the Provincial Education Authority was aware of the state of the school, he replied:

> *The Education Authority is fully aware of the poor state of the school. As the schools' administrative authority, it should always be available to address the issues that are confronting the schools and to offer advice and assistance. However, their usual excuse is lack of funding, as most Education Authorities also rely on the central Ministry of Education for funding. Therefore such a crucial capital expenditure is normally left to the school's annual fundraising bazaars or to the mercy of a generous aid donor.*

At the time of my visit to the school, staff and students were busy preparing for the school's annual fundraising activities which they hoped to use to raise funds for building maintenance and further improvements of the school's facilities. However as claimed by the principal:

> *These activities take up most of the teaching and learning time and resources of the school. Even the funds raised during past annual fundraising activities were not sufficient to carry out these much-needed repairs and maintenance. So we are just going around in circles without much improvement.*

However, despite these main differences, what was common amongst the schools in the study is the general lack of budgetary provisions for repairs and maintenance of buildings and facilities, which in most cases contributed to the poor state of the schools facilities. As one of the urban principals admitted:

> *We do not allocate funds in our school budget for repairs and maintenance of buildings and facilities. This is normally left for the PTA to raise funds. Otherwise we would request funding from local embassies and High Commissions. Our school is so fortunate to have a very active PTA that is always there to assist us.*

The strain that these maintenance and fundraising issues placed on the principals' time and energy was obvious. It was clear that it had a major impact on their time and impeded their leadership activities.

4.6   Lack of communication and office equipment

Most of the schools in the study lacked basic communication and office equipment, such as computer, photocopy machine, fax machine, and telephone. All except one lacked telephone and internet connections. They were thus missing out on vital communication and information from the Ministry of Education and other organisations. This can be a

major issue especially for the schools that are located far from the Ministry of Education offices. As one rural principal tried to explain:

> *Being far away from the centre is a major setback for my school. Since the school does not have telephone, fax or email connection, we are missing out on a number of important information and notices from the Ministry of Education regarding changes in education policy, job opportunities, in-service training and scholarship opportunities etc. Even if we eventually receive them, they are usually one to two months old. There are certain advantages though in being isolated and one of them is that it can encourage us to be more innovative and not to always rely on others.*

In such situations, the principals said they relied on their respective Provincial Education Offices to convey such vital information from the Ministry of Education and other organisations. However, this also depended on the capacity of their respective Provincial Education Authorities to handle information and how effective and efficient they were at relaying this to the schools.

Another issue expressed by the principals to have affected effective leadership of their schools was the absence of basic office equipment such as computers and photocopy and duplicating machines. They claimed that the absence of this basic equipment had affected effective delivery of some of the components of the school curriculum which rely on the photocopying and printing of the teaching and learning resources. As one of the principals remarked:

> *My teachers complained to me that they had to skip some core components of their subject because they were not able to reproduce the students' worksheet. They told me they needed to photocopy the worksheets so that the students can use them. Also they need to print out some of their notes which they saved in CDs and Disks. I had to arrange for these to be done at the Provincial Education Office that is an hour boat ride away.*

If the schools had this basic equipment, there would be no need for the teachers' and principals' time to be diverted from their teaching and leadership roles to deal with lower order administrative matters. This is, however, perhaps indicative of a broader issue regarding the manner in which leadership roles are being interpreted by the Ministry.

4.7 Lack of financial resources

All the principals interviewed spoke of the importance of the annual grants their schools received from the Ministry of Education and (in some schools) their Provincial Governments for the running of their schools. However, most admitted that these funds were not sufficient, especially to run boarding schools effectively. They had to rely on the school fees charged for each student attending their schools to supplement their annual grants. As one of the principals explained:

> *Even the school fees are not sufficient to effectively run the schools with its mounting financial commitments. Most of the funds received were used up in running expenses of the school and there was none left for development purposes or for maintenance of the school facilities. I had to also rely on the school fees charged on parents, which at times were not forthcoming due to the effect of the recent crisis on the national economy, which in turn has severely affected most parents' ability to pay.*

Also, as expressed by another principal, they do not have easy access to their school fee funds:

> *Since the Education Board has decided to centralize the collection and disbursement of school fees for the schools under its control, we do not have easy access to our school fee funds for our school's immediate needs. We have to requisition to the Education Authority's Finance Division for every purchase that we make. Even this can take days before payment is released, which is another waste of time and extra administration costs.*

Although this can be regarded as a simple administrative issue with little relevance to leading schools, it is a good example of local and Provincial Education Board officials' lack of understanding of the needs of their schools that can result in unnecessary problems for the school principals. This reflects a broader malaise. Commonly, principals deal with Education Board officials who, in most cases, have never visited the schools and have little idea of the effects of their decisions. Thus the principals, in effect, become intermediaries in unnecessary administrative problems caused by ignorance at the meso-management level.

4.8   *Lack of logistics and support personnel*

Apart from the teaching staff, most principals interviewed expressed the need to employ support staff to assist them in effectively carrying out their leadership roles at their schools. Four out of the five principals in my study stated that due to lack of support staff and personnel at the school, most of their time was spent doing lower order administrative work and the routine day to day running of the school. The statement of one of the principals exemplifies this:

> *My Provincial Education Authority informed me that due to the current freeze on staff recruitment, I was not allowed to fill the vacancy for the school bursar and the Typist/Administrative Assistant. This has led to both myself and my teachers devoting a disproportionate amount of our time doing financial and administrative tasks such as bookkeeping and photocopying etc. Thus at the end of the day there was no time left for me to engage in meaningful leadership and management tasks, such as planning and initiating [our school] vision and long term goals for the school and spending more time with staff and colleagues at the school. The same can be said for the teachers' time as well.*

The need to employ non-teaching staff to assist with administrative tasks at the school was more evident especially in the boarding secondary schools. Without support staff, most of the principal's time was spent dealing with the daily routine of boarding and

logistical matters, and very little time was devoted to instructional leadership of the school.

4.9   Policy and systemic issues

The principals interviewed spoke of the current organization and management of the national schools system that could result in accountability and responsibility issues. One of the issues is the recruitment and management of teachers in the schools. As one principal succinctly put it:

> *This issue is further complicated by the fact that legally, teachers are employees of their respective Education Authorities that administered and managed their schools. However, since the conditions of service of teachers and principals are determined and funded by the central Ministry of Education, through its Teaching Service Division, most teachers, especially those in the secondary schools feel that they are more accountable to the Ministry of Education Teaching Service Unit than their school boards or their Provincial Education Authorities.*

Such issues can also lead to leadership issues at the schools as principals spend more of their time dealing with union and employment matters, and relatively less time on the leadership of learning in their schools. This matter also calls into question the accountability pathways of teachers and principals. Consequently, principals spend an inappropriate amount of time on employment issues that, in a centralised education system, should be dealt with at the meso and macro levels.

4.10   Socio-cultural and community obligations

The participants also spoke of the influence the Melanesian 'wantok system' and the associated social and cultural obligations that can inhibit them from effectively leading and managing their schools. This is a significant challenge not only for these school

principals but for all leaders especially in the Solomon Islands. As one principal admitted:

> *I was approached by a close relative of mine, to enroll one of his kids whose grades are below the cut-off mark for my school. It has taken me almost a week to make what to me is a very tough decision; not to accept the child. This does not fit in well with our cultural obligations to assist our relatives and members of our immediate families but I had to do it.*

Another principal also admitted:

> *The day I took over from the previous principal, a wealthy businessman whose child had been expelled from the school approached me. He promised me large sums of money if I accepted him back into the school. Although the large sums of money were very tempting, I refused to take his money and I told him that I would not accept their child. At first the man thought I was mad for refusing to take such large sums of money. Before he left, he took a last look at me and said, "You know, if the previous principal was here my son would be accepted back into the school." He shook his head and then left the room.*

These accounts from two principals demonstrate how external factors can be a hindrance to someone who is trying to effectively carry out his or her duties. If the principals are not strong it can compromise their integrity and positions of responsibilities. In addition, the challenges faced by female principals in a male-dominated Solomon Islands schools system can be a hindrance to their leadership at the school. A woman principal describes her difficulties as follows:

> *To be a principal in a male dominated society like the Solomon Islands is not easy. It has taken me more than 10 years to become a principal. Compared to my male colleagues it has taken them between 2 to 5 years. I am sure there are other women out there in the schools throughout the provinces who are just as capable as their male counterparts. However, the cultural beliefs of men*

*dominating the Ministry of Education and Provincial Education offices that
are influencing them to ignore the potential of women as leaders.*

The account of the participant's experiences has portrayed an influence of the traditional societal beliefs on the decisions of both the National and Provincial Education officers. It is an account of what Southworth (1995) referred to as "the social conditioning which has tended to sustain male seniority, if not dominance" (p: 148).

Also all the five principals interviewed spoke of the importance of maintaining school-community partnership as a means to generate resources that are essential for effective schooling. In particular, they view the involvement of parents as crucial to their students' learning and their schools' success. However, they were aware of the issues relating to the involvement of parents and members of the school community that can affect their leadership of the school. These include some members using their involvement with the school for their personal gains as explained by one of the principals:

*There are some individuals and communities who are using their involvement
in the school for their own political and economic gains. This is not really
benefiting my school at all. Instead, it discourages other parents and members
of the community who are genuine in helping the school from taking part. It is
quite difficult for me to deal with such situation, as some of them are very
influential in the community. In the end, it is the school that is feeling the brunt
of this.*

The Melanesian influence of the 'big man' and 'wantok' systems (Kent, 1972; Narakobi, 1983; Sikua; 2002) that is common in most Solomon Islands indigenous communities compounds the issue. This can have an impact on the level of community support the principals, especially in the Community High Schools, very much relied upon (Sikua, 2002).

The principals in the study also talked about the struggle they faced in trying to divide their time between addressing the needs of the school and the demands of their own family, parents of students and their school communities. As one of the principals explained:

The challenge for me as principal is to try and balance the tension between the needs of the school, including the students and teachers and the demands and expectations of parents and members of the community. Also a parent of young children, I also need to allow time with my family. These competing areas of responsibility challenged me professionally and physically and can be a strain on my leadership role at the school.

When asked what role their school boards play in promoting school-community partnership at the school, most principals in the study claimed these boards had not been performing their roles and functions as specified in the Education Act of 1978, and as one principal argued:

The only times they are visible at the school are during Board meetings. They are only good at making resolutions to be carried out, but they never got themselves involved in assisting the principal in the leadership and management of the school. The problem is that most of them are not aware of their duties as members of the school board. They needed to be reminded of the board's functions as specified in the Education Act.

This lack of active involvement by the school boards has forced most of the principals to rely solely on the involvement of parents and the members of their immediate communities in the leadership and management of their schools. This was evident in most schools in the study where the school's PTA has virtually taken over the functions of the school boards, despite the PTA having no statutory function or legitimacy.

The next chapter will further discuss these findings of the study and their implications on school leadership in the Solomon Islands.

CHAPTER FIVE   DISCUSSIONS OF THE FINDINGS

5.1   Introduction

This chapter begins with an overview of the findings, then goes on to discuss the issues perceived by the participants and their implications to effective leadership in their schools.

5.2   An overview of the findings

The focus of my study was directed by my research question: *what issues inhibit effective leadership of schools in the Solomon Islands?* It provides a framework that guided the interview schedule in my data collection and analysis.

Although there were common themes in the responses by the five participants on the issues inhibiting effective leadership of their schools, there were some differences in how some of them perceived their performance of their leadership roles. The interview discussions showed that the principals, regardless of whether male or female have attained their leadership positions through the same procedures. That is they were appointed as principals of their schools due to excellent reports either as deputy principals, or as department heads or classroom teachers. Most also expressed support from their predecessor, Provincial Education Authorities, school boards and members of their family in taking up the principals' post.

There was a difference however in how long it takes a female teacher to be promoted to principalship compared to male colleagues. Although there were differences in how the principals perceive their leadership roles in their schools, most preferred a more task-oriented approach that is closely associated with Fielder's (1971) contingency theories. With regards to their leadership practices, most perceived a transformational leadership approach that is characterised by collaboration, collegiality, empowerment and shared decision - making (Burns, 1978; Sergiovanni, 1991; Leithwood et al., 2000) with the staff and colleagues. Also, principals, especially those in the predominantly traditional rural communities believe that their leadership roles at their schools were being influenced by

the cultural and religious beliefs of the school communities, which is mostly governed by the Melanesian 'big man' system (Narakobi, 1983).

The following section further discusses the issues perceived by principals in my study as inhibiting them from effectively performing their leadership roles in their schools.

5.3   Discussions of the issues

During the interview sessions with each principal, discussion were centred on their perceptions of the issues affecting them from effectively performing their leadership roles in their schools. These include; their leadership experience and background, staffing and employment issues, curriculum issues, resources and facilities, policy and systemic issues, social and cultural issues. The issues identified by the participants during the interview sessions are discussed below and include:

5.3.1   Lack of initial preparation and support for on–going professional learning.

The lack of initial preparation for school principals could pose an enormous challenge to the growth and development of the leadership capacity of the principals, teachers, and students as well as the whole school system in the Solomon Islands. It has been identified as one of the inhibiting factors not only by school principals in the study but by the parents and members of the school communities (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005.). Lack of initial preparations for the principals could limit their ability in critical engagement and understanding of how to effectively lead and manage their schools. This is reflected in the superficial nature of the participants' responses that lacked indepth analysis of the research questions. As stated earlier, most of them were promoted to a principalship position straight from their classrooms and without initial leadership and management training. Also, only two of the five principals in the study held deputy principle's posts prior to being promoted. The Solomon Islands national 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 addressing this. However, these initiatives are

merely addressing the planning, financing and management of the schools and very little is aimed at improving the leadership capacities of the principals.

The situation described above is reflective of the current status of school leadership, at secondary level throughout the Solomon Islands (Ministry of Education, 2005) and other Pacific Island Countries (Puamau, 1998; Kelep-Malpo, 2003). As stated earlier, most school principals would have completed initial teacher training at the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE), the University of the South Pacific (USP) and other regional universities and institutions with diplomas and first degrees. Very few have Masters or Postgraduate qualifications in educational leadership.

Also as stated in Chapter 2, this lack of appropriate training for principals although a prevalent issue in most developing countries (Davis & Harber, 1997) is also an issue that can be found in other developed countries such as the United Kingdom (Paterson & West-Burnham, 2005) where 17 percent of new head teachers thought they were prepared for their job and that most of them learned from on-the-job experience. The issues highlighted emphasise the need for school principals in the Solomon Islands to receive both initial leadership preparation and ongoing support to equip them academically and professionally in their leadership positions at the school. This is even more important if they have never been a deputy before and have very limited experience of leading and managing a school. Without such initial training to equip them for their demanding leadership roles, most of these newly appointed school principals (and experienced ones) could be overwhelmed by the demands of their new roles, from students, parents, communities, and the national government, and according to Paterson and West-Burnham (2005) could began to feel pressured and isolated. This was evident in most principals in the study. Interestingly, the literature makes numerous references to the need for on-going professional learning, but is largely silent on the matter of developing resilience, even though this appears to be an emerging feature of current studies of highly effective principals.

Although most of the principals have the skills of routine operation and management of their schools, there is a great need for most principals to be effective problem solvers as well. A lot of the issues alluded to by them during the interviews could have been avoided or resolved had they been more creative in addressing them. Problem-solving skills according to Goertz (2000) require creativity and investigative skills, and are an integral component of effective leadership.

Unless they are given initial and on-going professional learning opportunities in leadership, most newly appointed and serving principals will find it very difficult to cope with the demands of the role. Such initial training will not only provide opportunity for the newly appointed principal to dedicate time for analysis and reflection, but can also allow the newly appointed principal to establish open dialogue with fellow principals. This according to Goertz (2000) is the basis for meaning making and problem solving - an approach that clearly helps reduces the principals' sense of isolation. This reduction in isolation is also likely to contribute to an increase in resilience.

In addition to initial leadership preparation, the support of staff and colleagues, the school Board, and the Provincial Education Board is also essential for effective leadership of schools. This includes the continued support and encouragement of immediate family and members of the school community. Such on-going support from staff and colleagues, school boards and the provincial education authorities should provide an avenue for school principals to develop and share their visions of the school (Harris, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1999).

Most principals in the study expressed their concern at the lack of support for on-going professional learning by the Ministry of Education and their respective Provincial Education Authorities. This in my view should go beyond the current European Union supported financial management training programme (Ministry of Education, 2006) and the annual secondary school principals' conference. Instead, there should be formal professional development programmes for principals to update their leadership practices. These on-going professional development programmes should provide an avenue for both

serving and newly appointed principals to engage in professional and collegial interaction and sharing of information to assist them to reflect and improve on their current practices (West-Burnham, 2005). This should also provide an opportunity for the newly appointed principals to keep abreast of the latest issues and developments in school leadership and management practices from their more experienced colleagues (Boris-Schacter, 2005). Also, as mentioned previously, the loneliness and isolation associated with principalship necessitate the need for a forum in which principals can share their experiences with their colleagues and others (Earley & Weindling, 2004). This may be in the form of support networks linking new and experienced principals, ex-principals and advisers. Such collegial and professional development activities will not only benefit the newly appointed principals but those who have been serving for years as well. It should be a time for them to reflect with other colleagues on their own leadership styles and practices and to escape the routine administrative work to spend more time in meaningful professional dialogue with other principal colleagues (Boris-Schacter, 2005; West-Burnham, 2005).

Furthermore, such on-going professional support could also assist principals in the appraisal of their own leadership performances and those of their staff and colleagues (Love, 2005). The absence of an established mechanism in place to assist the principals in the Solomon Islands to reflect on their performances with staff and fellow principals has placed them at a disadvantage compared to their counterparts in other Pacific Islands countries (Kelep-Malpo, 2003; Puamau, 1998), and other developed countries that have established support networks for principals (Boris-Schacter, 2005; West-Burnham, 2005).

Therefore, unless they are given some form of initial leadership training, most principals would find it extremely difficult to cope with the complex demands of the job, let alone develop their leadership capacity and fulfil the strategic requirements of leadership. It is therefore incumbent upon the Ministry of Education and the Provincial Education Authorities to play a leading role in making financial and logistical provision for such on-going support for the professional development of all school principals throughout the

Solomon Islands. The decision regarding the nature and providers of these developmental activities, whether they be through mentoring, workshops, on-line courses from the Ministry of Education or a University (or some combination of these), should probably be left to individual principals. (Sanders, 2006).

5.3.2   Conditions of Service

In the Solomon Islands, where the salary levels of teachers are very low compared to other professions in the country, school principals are often faced with on-going industrial action by teachers' unions relating to the condition of service of their teachers.

These issues are clearly of great importance to the teachers, yet divert the attention of most school principals from their core leadership roles. This can lead to low morale and general lack of motivation of teachers especially in boarding schools (Ministry of Education, 2004) and can be an obstacle to effective leadership and improvement in the schools (Everard, 1986).

This is because the current teachers' salary and reward system in the Solomon Islands is unrealistic and is regarded by the principals in the study as an obstacle to effective leadership and improvement in their schools. It does not reward principals and teachers according to their contribution, and all five principals in the study expressed their frustrations at their inability to give tangible recognition to staff and teachers' outstanding performances. This is because schools and Education Authorities, unlike their counterparts in business and industry, do not have the freedom to decide on the appropriate salary and remuneration package for their principals and teachers. This is the function of the Teaching Service Commission of the Ministry of Education.

The above issue of unfavourable conditions of service and accommodation and working conditions of staff can be an obstacle in attracting more qualified and experienced teachers, especially to the schools in the rural parts of the country and can have an effect on the effective leadership of these schools. This is because staff and teachers are also

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important resources for effective leadership and management in organisations such as schools (Barker, 2001; Day, 2000; Kotter, 1998; Harris & Chapman, 2002) and one of the key characteristics of effective leaders is that they value these human resources (Love, 2005; SEDL, 2005.

5.3.3 Quality of teachers

As stated in the above section, teachers are important resources for effective leadership and management in the schools. The concerns by the principals in the study on the quality of the teachers recently recruited to teach in their schools is a legitimate one. In particular, the employment of young and inexperienced teachers, especially at senior secondary levels and as heads of some subject departments. As discussed in chapter 2, the highest level of qualification for most teachers in the Solomon Islands secondary schools is a Diploma in Teaching from the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE). Their principals suggest that the teachers have insufficient experience and content knowledge of teaching especially at senior secondary school level. This is of grave concern especially to principals in rural secondary schools as it can create gaps between the middle and senior leadership teams of the schools. Also, it can lead to the principals spending disproportionately large amounts of time on curriculum and instructional issues and very little time on the leadership issues in the schools.

5.3.4 Poor facilities and infrastructure

As stated in the findings of the study, there is a marked contrast between the conditions of the physical infrastructure of the secondary schools in the study. That is, the schools in the urban centres were generally well maintained and better managed in terms of their facilities and building infrastructures. In contrast, the buildings and facilities of the schools in the remote and rural areas were not well kept and in a state of disrepair. Such differences exist due to the following reasons;

(a) Principals leadership and management capacity. Schools with principals who are strategic thinkers (Davies & Davies, 2005; Davies, 2006) and with managerial ability tend to have better facilities than schools with principals with less strategic and

managerial skill. This is arguably another consequence of poor, or lack of, initial preparation and on-going professional development programmes.

(b) Proximity to the Ministry of Education and Provincial Education offices. Schools that are located close to the Ministry of Education and Provincial Education Offices have easy access to Ministry officials and funding agencies, compared to the schools in the remote parts of the country. This offers them far greater and easier access to expert and professional advice and support, compared to the schools that are located in the remote parts of the country and receive very little visits and attention from officials.

(c) Socio-economic status of the parents and the school communities. In most cases, parents and communities in the urban centres have a higher economic capacity and level of education than the parents in the predominantly subsistence and traditional rural communities. Such differences in the socio-economic and educational status of parents and school communities can have greater implications for the extent of the community support to the schools and their principals (Ministry of Education, 2004; Sikua, 2002).

(d) Level of support of the boards and provincial Education Authorities.

Although considered a superficial issue, it has been found that the state of the facilities and infrastructure of an organisation can significantly affect the morale of those that work in it. Schools are no exceptions. As observed in various reports of the Solomon Islands Education system (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005, 2006; Sikua, 2002) the lack of proper buildings and facilities is one of the biggest issues most schools face, and is one of the factors contributing to the difficulties in attracting well-qualified staff. Such poor facilities in the schools can also result in lack of effective delivery of teaching and learning to the students and the general leadership and management of the schools.

5.3.5 Lack of communication and office equipment

Schools depend on communication with the Ministry of Education for updates on policy issues and for professional advice. However, all five schools in the study lacked basic communication and office equipment such as computer, photocopier, fax machine and telephone. All except one lacked telephone and internet connections, and were missing

out on vital communication and information from the Ministry of Education and other organisations. This was clearly a major issue, especially for the schools located far from the Ministry of Education offices. They lacked vital information and notices from the Ministry of Education regarding changes in education policy, job opportunities, in-service training and scholarships opportunities (Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005, 2006; Sikua, 2002).

Most schools in the study had to rely on their respective Provincial Education Offices to convey such vital information from the Ministry of Education and other organisations. However, this also depends on the capacity of their respective Provincial education Authorities to handle such information and how effectively they relay such vital information to the schools. All participants were able to give numerous examples of failure of this communication chain.

Another concern expressed by the principals was the effect a lack of basic office equipment such as computers and photocopy and duplicating machines in their schools had on their leadership activities. Although it can be argued that schools can survive without computers, the fact that some curriculum resources are stored on CDs has made computers essential for all schools. They claimed that the absence of this basic equipment had affected effective delivery of some of the components of the school curriculum which rely on the photocopy and printing of the teaching and learning resources. This can be a challenge to these principals' leadership abilities and effectiveness.

5.3.6   Lack of financial resources

All the principals in the study spoke of the importance of the annual grants their schools receive from the Ministry of Education and (in some schools) their Provincial governments and the support staff to the running of their schools. Although this can be regarded as an administrative and management matter, the availability of financial resources can have a significant impact on the leadership activities. Again, this issue is indicative of a general lack of capacity and effectiveness at macro and meso levels of educational management in the Ministry and the Provincial Offices. The inevitable consequence of this is the principals spending alarming amounts of time attempting to

access funding to which they are entitled in the first place. From a community perspective the effectiveness of the principals is often judged by the amount of money they are able to raise. As all principals need to meet certain community expectations regarding appropriate performance levels, this places principals in a dilemma that further reduces their capacity to focus on leadership and learning in their schools.

5.3.7 Lack of logistics and support personnel

Apart from teaching staff, most principals interviewed expressed the need to employ support staff at the school so they can devote more time on their leadership roles. Four out of the five principals in my study stated that due to lack of support staff at the school, most of their time was spent doing administration work and the routine day to day running of the school. Thus at the end of the day there was no time left for the principals to engage in meaningful leadership and management tasks, of a more strategic nature and developing long term goals for the school, and spending more time with staff and colleagues at the school. The need to employ non-teaching staff to assist with administrative tasks at the school is more evident in the boarding secondary schools. This non-teaching administrative staffs are to take care of administrative and financial management matters and the daily routine of boarding and logistical matters, thus freeing the principals to concentrate more on leadership issues affecting the schools.

5.3.8 Policy and systemic issues

The current organization and management of the Solomon Islands education system can result in issues of accountability and responsibility that impact substantially on the leadership of schools (Bray, 1991; Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005, 2006; Sikua, 2002). In particular, if there is a clash between National and Provincial policies this can distract the principals' attention from their main duties of leading and managing their schools and can affect them from effectively leading their schools. This is also creating a dilemma for the principals on which policy they should follow and can distract them from time where they should be concentrating on their leadership roles at the school. This confusion also created further distractions of professional and legal ambiguities.

This issue according to Bray (1991) is partly the result of the current decentralised education system (Education Act, 1978, Solomon Islands; Provincial Government Act, 1981, Solomon Islands). The system can also have the potential to result in issues relating to the distribution of financial resources and the recruitment of teachers and personnel and can led the school system to operate inefficiently.

5.3.9   Socio - cultural and community issues

The influence of the Melanesian 'wantok system' and the associated social and cultural obligations on leadership can potentially inhibit most school principals from effectively leading their schools. This is a substantial challenge not only for the school principals but for all leaders in the Solomon Islands. Also as stated in chapters one and two, the influence of the traditional Solomon Islands cultures and social practices can inhibit effective school leadership in the country and can contribute to the low participation of women in school leadership positions. This portrayed an influence of the traditional societal beliefs on the decisions of both the National and Provincial Education officers. It is an account of what Southworth (1995) referred to as "the social conditioning which has tended to sustain male seniority, if not dominance in some schools" (p: 148). As explained the Solomon Islands is a country known to have strong cultural beliefs about gender roles, and therefore any study into the leadership performance of principals can not ignore the societal and cultural context in which the organisation or institution is situated. This can influence the thought and behaviour patterns of their leaders, due to the situational factors that leadership studies cannot be conducted without considering the societal values of the culture in which the leadership is situated (Chemers, 1997; Dimmock & Walker, 2002, 2005; Sergiovanni, 1991; Wong, 1998).

All the five principals interviewed spoke of the importance of maintaining school-community partnerships as a means of generating resources that are essential for effective schooling. In particular, they view the involvement of parents as crucial to their students' learning and their schools' success. However, as advised, they need to be alerted to the issues relating to involvement of parents and members of the school

community that can affect their leadership of the school. These include the tendency of some members of the community to use their involvement with the school for personal political and financial gains, with the resultant implications for the principal's activities in ensuring that these negative influences do not impact significantly on the school.

Another important aspect is the principals' need to create a balance between addressing the needs of the school and the demands of their own family, parents and their school communities. If they do not strike a balance, these competing areas of responsibility challenged them professionally and physically and will be a strain on their leadership roles at the school (Boris-Schacter, 2005).

The data from the interviews offers interesting insights into the problems and dilemmas faced by the principals. Their absolute honesty and genuineness during the interviews gives an indication of the depth of passion and commitment they offer their schools.

However, based on the literature review, it seems that there are obvious omissions and silences. It appears that much of the data they offer concerns administrative and managerial aspects of their work. While I acknowledge that the majority of a principal's time is likely to be taken up by this type of work (Southworth, 2005), it seems that the participants have not dwelt at any length on the more strongly leadership-orientated aspects of their work. For example, there is little mention of the issues regarding their vision of what they want their school to become (Davis, 2006) and whether these visions are clearly defined and shared with their staff and colleagues at the school (Bush & Glover, 2003; Creighton, 1999; Hoppe, 2003; Keys et al, 2003; Kotter, 1998; Miller, 2003). Also, there is no evidence that these principals had any knowledge or depth of understanding of what they perceived to be their schools' culture (Blumberg & Greenfield, 1986; Deal & Peterson, 1999; Fullan & Hargreaves, 1991; Stewart, 2000), as well other crucial strategic and sustainability matters such as developing shared strategic

capacity, change, and change of leadership, developing learning as the core focus of the school's purpose, developing leadership capacity, and others (Davies, 2006).

It seems to me that a major silence in the data I have gathered from the principals concerns their focus on leadership – as opposed to managership. It seems that a major issue inherent in the data is that principals in the Solomon Islands have not moved from a managerial discourse to a leadership discourse. They appear to be firmly located in a managerial paradigm to the exclusion of much of the leadership discourse. Consequently, they lacked an in-depth, critical understanding of many of the issues affecting their leadership roles in their schools. I could offer further comment on this, but it would be purely speculative, as the principals did not engage in the leadership discourse with me. I can only infer from this that any leadership development in the Solomon Islands should be two pronged while focussing on ameliorating or eliminating the influence of poor central administration, and assisting the principals to engage at a far more conceptual/theoretical as well as practical level with leadership.

The next chapter summarises my findings including recommendations for further research and improvement in the study and the issues identified herein.

CHAPTER SIX   CONCLUSION

6.1   Introduction

In this study of secondary schools in the Solomon Islands, several issues have been identified as inhibiting effective school leadership. These included a lack of initial training and support for on-going professional learning, unfavourable conditions of service, poor quality of teachers' professional practice, poor school facilities and infrastructure, poor administrative infrastructure, lack of appropriate and adequate financial resources, lack of support personnel, policy and systemic issues, social and cultural issues, and issues pertaining to school-community partnerships. Other additional, but equally influential issues inhibiting effective leadership are geographical, socio-cultural and political factors. These latter issues are not within the control of educational leaders, but impact significantly. All of these issues need to be seriously considered by policy-makers and educational leaders and administrators at the national, provincial, community and school levels as they have the potential to impede effective educational leadership in the Solomon Islands if not adequately addressed.

By way of summarising my study, the following sections consider its conceptual significance, and theoretical and practical implications.

6.2   Implications of the study

As stated earlier, the findings of the study showed several issues that inhibit effective school leadership in the Solomon Islands. It further highlights that the issues inhibiting effective school leadership in the Solomon Islands could be best understood within the prevailing political, economical, and socio-cultural contexts (Dimmock & Walker, Davis, 1994) that exist in the Solomon Islands. The study further contributes to an understanding of the issues and the possible influences of recent global trends (MacBeath & Riley, 2004) that can assist in further reforms of the leadership of schools and address as the dearth of literature on school leadership in the Solomon Islands.

From a leadership perspective, the findings of the study support in a limited way recent reports of studies conducted in 2004 (Ministry of Education, 2005) that attributed the

decline in the effectiveness of school-based leadership and management in the Solomon Islands schools to the lack of personal leadership qualities of principals, administrative competencies, and leadership styles of school principals. As highlighted earlier, the general lack of initial training and on-going support for professional learning of principals is a key leadership issue in the Solomon Islands that could limit the principals' capacity for critical engagement and understanding of how to lead their schools effectively.

The findings also highlighted systemic issues such as unfavourable conditions of service and lack of appropriate and adequate financial resourcing that could lead to low morale. Furthermore, the lack of systemic clarity - and apparently competing elements of the current organization of the Solomon Islands education system as a result of the current decentralised education system (Provincial Government Act, 1981, Solomon Islands; Education Act, 1978, Solomon Islands) - has resulted in problems related to financial resourcing and personnel management that appear to result in the inefficient operation of schools (Bray, 1991). This has further resulted in accountability and responsibility issues (Bray, 1991; Ministry of Education, 2004, 2005, 2006; Sikua, 2002) and has distracted the principals' attention from their main duties of effectively leading their schools

Another finding of the study shows that the issue of geographical isolation is a great concern for schools in the isolated and rural parts of the country. The geographical location of schools – and their isolation – create individual and contextually specific challenges for principals.

The study also supported claims (Martin & Robertson, 2003; Mills, 1994; Sanders, 2006; Southworth, 2005) that the limited capacity of many parents and community members to impact significantly on their children's education and their limited capacity to contribute resulted in further stresses for the principals and further detracted from their limited time for leadership.

The principal narratives give clear evidence of the influence of the Melanesian 'wantok system' and that the associated social and cultural obligations can potentially inhibit most school principals from leading their schools effectively. Furthermore, the Solomon Islands is a country known to have strong cultural beliefs about gender roles that can inhibit the participation of women in the leadership of schools

The study also confirms the importance of principals maintaining school-community partnerships and a balance between addressing the needs of the school and the demands of their own family, parents and their school communities (Boris-Schacter, 2005).

However, despite the above findings, it seems to me that a major silence in the data I have gathered from the principals concerns their focus on leadership – as opposed to managership. It seems that a major issue inherent in the data is that principals in the Solomon Islands have not moved from a managerial discourse to a leadership discourse. They appear to be firmly located in a managerial paradigm to the exclusion of much of the leadership discourse. Consequently, they lacked an in-depth, critical understanding of many of the issues affecting their leadership roles in their schools.

6.3   Recommendations

Based on my study, I offer the following recommendations as strategies to improve the effectiveness of school leadership in the Solomon Islands:

6.3.1   Support for principals' initial training and on-going professional development

There is a need to establish programmes to provide professional development and on-going support for both newly appointed and experienced principals in all schools throughout the country. The Ministry of Education and the Provincial Education Authorities should play a leading role in making financial and logistical provision.

6.3.2 Review the current conditions of service of teachers

As argued by some participants in the study, the current teachers' salary and reward system in the Solomon Islands is unrealistic and is regarded as an obstacle to effective leadership and improvement in their schools. It needs to be reviewed so that it rewards principals and teachers according to their contribution performances.

6.3.3 Improvement of school facilities and infrastructures

There is a need to increase financial assistance to schools for the improvement and maintenance of their facilities. This is to assist with the motivation of staff and students, and enhance student learning by creating a conducive physical environment.

6.3.4 Review of current policy and systems

There is a need to review the current organization and management of the Solomon Islands education system to eliminate any ambiguity in the accountability and responsibility structures that may arise from confusion of the roles of the National and Provincial offices. The Education Act should be reviewed in order to reflect the changing face of the society.

6.4 Limitations of the study

The following are the limitations of the study:

1. The scope and extent of the study was limited. The sample of five principals used in the study is small, considering that there are approximately 140 secondary schools (Ministry of Education, 2005) throughout the country. Furthermore, the sample was taken from two provinces and the Honiara City Council. Therefore, the results of such a small-scale study, while helpful in contributing to a broader understanding, do not allow extrapolation to national levels.

2. The study is based on the leadership perceptions of secondary school principals and therefore cannot be extrapolated to other school sectors.

3. Every effort has been made to represent as fairly as possible the opinions of the participants. However, the sample does not adequately represent the Solomon Island gender or ethnic population proportionality.

4. The nature of the study limited participation to principals' and sought to obtain their personal responses to the core research question. Therefore, the data does not include the perceptions of other organisational leaders, teachers, students, school boards, PTAs and community members.

6.5   Further research

Participants in the study gave a clear indication of the need to address various issues inhibiting effective leadership of schools. It is recommended that the Solomon Islands Ministry of Education initiate a larger scale study that could validate this small-scale study on a national level. If the results were similar, they would offer a clear indication of the professional learning needs of serving principals, and systemic impediments to effective leadership of schools.

The importance of the issue should not be underestimated. The research gave a clear indication that Solomon Islands' principals appear to be located in a managerial rather than a leadership paradigm, and that the "daily-ness" of their activities was a primary impediment to their development and the effective leadership of their schools. If our schools are to progress in meeting twenty first century needs of Solomon Island learners, the principals need to be supported in their attempts to develop a more strategic perspective of their roles.

> "*So the urgent drives out the important, and the future goes largely unexplored; and the capacity to act, rather than the capacity to think and imagine, becomes the sole measure for leadership*." (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990, p. 89)

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