

THE ROLE OF SCHOOL LEADERSHIP IN IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF TEACHING AND LEARNING: THE CASE STUDY OF THE GAMBIA'S BASIC AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

A Thesis

**Submitted to the Master's Study Program of Education at the Faculty of
Education in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of**

Master of Arts (M.A.)



**By:
Abdou Barrow
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**UNIVERSITAS ISLAM INTERNASIONAL INDONESIA
DEPOK
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ABSTRACT

Quality in education has been the central tenant in most educational policies in the globe, including the Gambia. Thus, leadership has been perceived as a critical agency for ushering in that quality through various means. As a result, scholars in education and related fields have extensively explored the parallel between the two, including this study. Hence this thesis investigates the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning, focusing on the Gambia's Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education as a case. Schools in the lower basic category under this ministry were selected as participants hoping to understand leadership at the elementary level.

The study aims to contribute to leadership discussion in the educational leadership discipline by providing Gambian context. Given that school leadership in connection to teaching and learning needs to be studied more in the Gambia, I hope to add to the existing literature on leadership through this thesis. I hope to provide a context for MoBSE on the nature of school leadership in elementary schools and how it relates to teaching and learning. In addition, I propose a framework that could help school leaders in their quest for school improvement. Furthermore, the study adopts a multidisciplinary approach using a sociological lens to explore the case. In doing so, I viewed schools as a social system encompassing agents and structures. As a result, I used the Realist social theory to guide the analysis process. This theory enables the researcher to explore the interplay between agency and structure (structure and culture).

In light of this, the study used a qualitative research approach based on a case study design in order to investigate and provide comprehensive information on the context and dynamics of school leadership in the chosen primary schools. A purposive sampling technic was used to carefully select the participating schools in this study in consultation with the Regional Education Directorate Five South. The directorates database was accessed to identify performing and underperforming schools in the region using NAT and BTA as a yardstick. Furthermore, various data collection method was used, including interview, focus group discussion, observation, and document review. These methods allow me to comprehensively explore school leaders' and teachers' experiences, perspectives, and practices in relation to teaching and learning in the selected schools. To analyze the data collected from the above sources, the study adopts thematic analysis to identify and interpret key themes connected to school leadership and its contribution to teaching and learning.

Based on the evidence gathered through different data sources, I came up with the following conclusion. First, school leadership contributes immensely to improving quality teaching and learning coupled with the involvement of relevant stakeholders like SMC, mothers' clubs, parents, and RED through cluster monitors. This suggests that, despite leadership having the potential to improve quality in the instructional process, they will be limited if they exclude the above mention partners in the process. Second, professional development is essential to equip teachers with more sophisticated and advanced pedagogies for improved instructional processes. Schools offering regular and required professional development opportunities have registered success in their instructional practices, eventually resulting in better performance. Third, organizational structures developed by the leadership were more helpful in addressing existing structural and cultural problems, while those inherited could not effect meaningful changes.

Finally, several factors informed the leadership orientations and decision-making process of leaders in the participating schools, including cultural, social, and religious. Given that the study includes only four schools using a qualitative approach as the investigative method, the study's findings are limited to the participating schools. Therefore, the study's findings cannot be generalized, which is considered one of the limitations of this study. As a result, I recommend that future researchers use more generalizable methods to provide a broader context to the subject. This could be done by choosing a more diverse sample; preferably, a quantitative approach would suffice. By adopting a quantitative approach, they could take samples across the board and examine leadership roles relating to teaching and learning. Yet still, if they wish to maintain a qualitative approach, I recommend adopting an ethnographic method. This will give them more time to directly observe the participants to gather in-depth information for more relatable conclusions.

Keywords: *School leadership, Teaching, and Learning, the Gambia, Capacity-building, Public Primary Schools, and School Improvement.*

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ABBREVIATION PAGE

QAF	Quality Assurance Framework
MoBSE	Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education
MoHERST	Ministry of Higher Education Research Science and Technology
LBS	Lower Basic School
BCS	Basic Cycle School
UBS	Upper Basic School
SSS	Senior Secondary School
GABECE	Gambia Basic Education Exam Certificate
WAEC	West African Examination Council
WASSCE	West African Senior School Certificate Examination
SIG	School Improvement Grant
RED	Regional Education Directorate
NAT	National Assessment Test
HT	Head Teacher
DHT	Deputy Head Teacher
SM	Senior Master
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
SMT	Senior Management Team
PTA	Parent Teachers' Association
SPMM	School Performance Monitoring Meeting
SMC	School Management Committee
MC	Mothers' Club
SLA	Service Level Agreement
TPD	Teacher Professional Development

ECD	Early Childhood Development
VDC	Village Development Committee
CMM	Cluster Monitors' Manual
SIP	School Improvement Plan
CRR	Central River Region
URR	Upper River Region
LRR	Lower River Region
NBR	North Bank Region
WCR	West Coast Region
KMC	Kanifing Municipal Council
SMM	School Management Manual

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

In today's world, quality is central to most educational institutions and one of the agents to inform that quality is through effective school leadership. Thus, the role of that leadership is considered to be critical in guiding teachers' instruction and students' learning process which informs overall educational achievements. This thesis looks into the role of school leadership in the Gambian context, where I explore the dynamic relationship between school leadership and its potential of enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in basic and secondary education.

The Gambia officially called the Republic of the Gambia is a small yet vibrant West African nation, that is surrounded by Senegal from three sides. Despite its fragile education system, it has long recognized education to be central to the nation's socio-economic development. With that realization, the Gambia through the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (hereafter called as MoBSE) which is responsible for basic education has taken a critical role in achieving the united nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially SDG 4. This is evident in the education sector policy 2016-2030 which strive to attain three key areas namely; quality, access, and equity. This aligns with SDG 4 which aims to ensure inclusive and quality education for all. The education policy and other national instruments that are designed to promote quality did not overlook the pivotal role of school leaders in driving effective educational practices and fostering a conducive learning environment for teaching and learning.

This thesis seeks to contribute to the body of research on educational leadership by presenting a unique perspective on the challenges and opportunities faced by school leaders in The Gambia. To present such context, the thesis includes two categories of schools

(performing and underperforming), where their leadership practices are examined to identify how they inform quality in their respective schools.

I employed a sociological perspective through this study by viewing school as a social system when I anticipate social interaction between different social actors in this case teachers, students, parents, school leaders, and other relevant stakeholders. I further considered structural dimension in this system which is further divided into structure and culture in the school conforming to realist social theory of Archer, (1995). By adopting this approach, I gave me an avenue to analyze an interplay of school leaders' agency and structure in informing quality in teaching and learning for sustainable school improvement.

Henceforth, the thesis is presented in a five-chapter format where each of the chapters are given brief introductory commentary to give an idea to the readers. As of the first chapter provides an overview of the research background, problem statement, research questions, objectives, and significance of the study. It also presents an overview of the Gambia and its education system, tailoring it to the study context.

1.1. Background of the Study

The quality of teaching and learning in schools significantly impacts student achievement and success. In order to improve the quality of teaching and learning in schools, it is essential to examine the factors that contribute to it, including school leadership. School leadership refers to the actions of the head teachers, deputy head teachers, senior masters, and teacher mentors in setting the vision school's vision, mission, and goals and creating an environment conducive to learning (Day & Sammons, 2016; Mulford, 2003). Thus, the role of leadership in fostering long-term school reform has been emphasized in numerous scholarly works, including those on teaching, learning, assessment, and accountability (Breyer, 2014; Coleman & Glover, 2010; Day, 2017; Heck & Hallinger, 2014; Kasereka

Lutswamba, 2017; Sumintono, 2009). Contestation in school leadership proliferates, and scholars are extensively exploring the subject. Leadership is believed to be an instrumental agency that promotes teacher motivation, teacher capacity building, and teaching and learning for sustainable learning outcomes in schools (Breyer, 2014; Duze, 2012; Heck & Hallinger, 2014).

Since the position of school leaders is increasingly complicated, dynamic, and changing, it calls for sophisticated tactics to bring about positive change and guide the school toward long-term improvement (Heystek & Terhoven, 2015; Holmes et al., 2013). By adopting some of the key strategies, such as "setting direction, developing people, redesigning the school organization, and managing the instructional program," school leaders, in particular head teachers and principals, can effectively lead and meet the challenges that come with school leadership in this modern era (Leithwood et al., 2010; Mafora, 2013; Mbokazi, 2015).

Consequently, schools' complex nature posed leaders constantly struggle to execute their role in innovative and cooperative educational operations (Ellie, 2012; Wildy & Loudon, 2000). According to Wildy and Loudon, some find it challenging to be effective in their function because they are supposed to work with teachers while being democratic and participatory in their programs (Wildy & Loudon, 2000). Additionally, they have overall authority over, responsibility for, and decision-making regarding the educational standards of their institution as well as the creation of critical conditions for innovation (Ngwenya & Phuthi, 2022; Wildy & Loudon, 2000).

The above points redirect the discussion into a structural facet in schools that might sometimes constrain or support school leaders in discharging their functions. Archer's (1995) realist social theory underscored that in any social setting, there are three crucial factors that are constantly at play which are; structure, culture, and agency (Archer, 1995;

Shava & Heystek, 2019). The structural dimensions explored in this work are “roles, organizations, institutional structures, systems, policies, committees, substructures, and positional levels within the organization” (Shava & Heystek, 2019, p. 4). The Cultural component emphasizes a group's behavior, beliefs, values, rituals, connections, and particular symbols that make up their way of life (Case, 2015; Shava & Heystek, 2019). The capacity to act intentionally, societal duties, and people's emotional and psychological development are how Archer sums up agency according to Shava & Heystek, (2019). Further details on Archer's work are featured in the theoretical framework section.

Moving on, the school leaders 'capacity to navigate the structures within the school system to produce a positive culture for teaching and learning is central to the current work. This curiosity was inspired by the work of Shava and Heystek's, (2019). They explored the agency of six school principals in South Africa who had allegedly transformed some underperforming schools into better performing ones.

Furthermore, discussion on school leadership from global, regional, and national levels has placed a strong emphasis on school leadership as a crucial agency in promoting quality educational outcomes (Duze, 2012; Frisk et al., 2021; Hallinger, 2021; Imhangbe et al., 2019; Kasereka Lutswamba, 2017; Shava & Heystek, 2019). This poses the question, could leadership be overrated concept in educational leadership discuss? This is attempted to be clarified through this study.

Notwithstanding, this strong belief on the subject has placed it at the forefront of conversations among African and Gambian educators (Ugwu et al., 2022; Cornelissen & Smith, 2022; Duze, 2012; Kasereka Lutswamba, 2017; Mafora, 2013; Tintoré et al., 2022). For instance, Ugwu, et al., (2022) recently looked into the "post-colonial school leadership method" in fostering African values in students. The author provided some fresh ideas for the African school leadership system, which strives to teach children African leadership

values (Ugwu, et al., 2022).The authors claim that “humanism, collectivism, and moral values were characteristics of traditional African leadership” (Ugwu et al., 2022, p. 302). Hence, leaders are supposed to aid their followers in achieving their objectives for the advancement and uprightness of the communities. The study emphasizes the necessity to balance Eurocentrism and Africanism in the continent's current school leadership systems (Ugwu, et al., 2022). Also, Cornelissen and Smith (2022) argued that the best principal leadership framework would be integrated leadership because it would foster a sense of community among teachers and students and improve academic results (Cornelissen & Smith, 2022).

Taking a cue from the regional educational context, the Gambia through the ministry of education, equally places similar significance on school leadership in ensuring quality education. As a result, the Gambia government has dedicated a significant amount of human and financial resources to promoting quality in schools, particularly in primary schools (MoBSE, 2004, 2016).This could be done through teaching and learning under the directives of the school leadership team (MoBSE, 2011).Such commitment is evident in the Ministry’s Quality Assurance Framework (QAF) which gives prominence to leadership in promoting teaching and learning. In other words, Gambia’s Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) is aware of the importance of school leadership in stimulating teachers’ and students’ potential, motivation, and desire to engage in effective teaching and learning to achieve quality output (MoBSE, 2011). This reflects the culture of teaching and learning in this study.

The part two of the “Quality Assurance Framework of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education” stressed that school leadership is essential to the efficient running of schools. Therefore, leadership must function as a role model for both teachers and students, as well as exhibit an unobstructed vision objective that can be achieved over time. “The

headteacher should keep close ties to the community and be aware of regional and national initiatives. Essentially, the school leader's job is to make sure that the school has high-quality teaching and learning opportunities” (MoBSE, 2011, p.12, Level 2).

Overall, teaching and learning in primary schools in the Gambia are hindered by a combination of inadequate teacher training, poor teaching methods, inadequate infrastructure, and a lack of resources. These factors contribute to low student achievement and high dropout rates, negatively impacting the overall quality of primary education in the Gambia. Therefore, before elaborating on the problems which will feature the problem statement of the study, it is important to give readers an overview and education system of the Gambia.

1.1.1. Overview of the Gambia

The Gambia is a small West African country located on the Atlantic coast. It is the smallest country in mainland Africa, surrounded by Senegal on three sides, with the Gambia River running through its center. By land size, the Gambia covers an area of approximately 11,300 square kilometers (4,361 square miles) and has a diverse landscape that includes sandy beaches along the coast, mangrove swamps, and the fertile floodplain of the Gambia River (Countrymeters, 2022). The river is a significant feature of the country, offering connecting the northern and the southern part of the country as well as used for transportation, agriculture, livelihoods, and wildlife habitats across the country. River Gambian inhabits several beautiful small islands including James Islan, and Baboon Island. The former was famous for its relevance as a slave holding site during slave trade, while the latter is dominantly known for inhabiting various wildlife such as chimpanzees, baboons, and hippopotamus (Jallow, 2020; The World Factbook, 2023a).

Moving on, the capital city of The Gambia is Banjul, which is situated on the Atlantic coast near the mouth of the Gambia River. It serves as the economic and administrative center of the country. In the same vein, the Gambia has a population of around 2.4 million people. Majority of that population consists of the Mandinka, Fula, Wolof, and Jola ethnic groups which can be found in every part of the Gambian. However, every ethnic group has an area of concentration in settlement like in the regions of Foni Jolas dominated while in the Basse is mainly dominated by Fulas and Serahule. As of the language use, the official language is English, but regional languages such as Mandinka, Wolof, Fula, and Jola are also widely spoken by various ethnic groups (Countrymeters, 2022; MOTIE, 2019; The World Factbook, 2023b).

Historically, the Gambia has a rich historical heritage, with evidence of human settlements dating back thousands of years (Harry et al., 2023). The establishment of the modern-day Gambia, it was part of various West African empires, including the Ghana Empire, Mali Empire, and Songhai Empire. After the fall of these empires, the European exploration and colonization began in the 15th century when the Portuguese established trade routes along the Gambian coast (Harry et al., 2023; Jallow, 2020). The colonization lasted for years where the Gambia was under the British colony including other West African countries like Nigeria, Ghana and Serre Leon in the 19th century and consequently, the Gambia gained its independence in 1965, and became a republic in 1970 (Britaninica, 2022).

Politically, the Gambia is a presidential republic officially called the Republic of the Gambia with a multi-party system. In this political structure, the President serves as the head of state and government. In the executive arm of government while other branches like legislative and judiciary serve as a regulatory body. In addition, the country has faced several political challenges through failed and successful military coups as well as a

successful change of government through ballot box. The most significant political shift in the Gambia was in 2016 when longtime ruler Yahya Jammeh was defeated in presidential elections, leading to a peaceful transition of power (Barrow, 2020; Chigudu et al., 2018; Jallow, 2020).

On the area of economy, the Gambian economy relies heavily on agriculture, especially peanuts, which are the country's main cash crops. Other important agricultural products include rice, millet, sorghum, and vegetables are equally produced for household consumption. In addition, tourism is also a significant contributor to the economy, with visitors attracted to the country's natural beauty, cultural heritage, and wildlife reserves. The Gambia is known for its birdwatching opportunities, as it is a popular destination for ornithologists (Barrow, 2022; Jallow, 2020).

On the other hand, the Gambian culture is diverse and influenced by various ethnic groups as mentioned above. Like traditional music, dance, and storytelling play an important role in Gambian society. The country has a vibrant arts and crafts scene, known for its woodcarvings, batik fabrics, and traditional instruments. As of religious practice, Islam is the predominant religion in The Gambia constituting 95% of the population as practicing Muslims while 4% are Christian and the 1% practice other religions (GBOS, 2013).

Again, like any other developing countries, The Gambia faces various challenges, including poverty, inadequate infrastructure, limited access to healthcare and education, and environmental issues such as deforestation and coastal erosion. The government and international organizations are working closely to address these challenges, particularly in the education sector, this led me to the next section about Gambia's education system.

1.1.2. The Gambia's Education System

The Gambia inherited its education system from the British. Thus, it has dedicated two ministries to managing and implementing education programs across the country. Basic and secondary education in the Gambia is managed by the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE), while tertiary education is managed by The Ministry of Higher Education, Research, Science, and Technology (MoHERST).

The constitution of the Gambia guarantees every Gambian the right to free and compulsory quality basic education (The Constitution of the Gambia, 1997). Thus, the government allocates a considerable amount of money to education in each fiscal year's budget allocation from the national GDP. The World Bank estimates that the Gambia spent 2.8 percent of its GDP on education in 2020 (World Bank, 2020). Thus, the Legatum Prosperity Index 2021 indicates that the Gambia's ranked 134th in education compared to the rest of the globe (Legatum Institute, 2021). Consequently, the Gambia's literacy rate (people who can read and write) is estimated to be 55.5% of the total population in 2022. This includes people within the age range of 15 years and above. In the same category 63.91% of males and 47.63% of female scan read and write (Countrymeters, 2022).

1.1.3. The Gambia's Basic and Secondary Education Structure

Then Gambia's education system starts with Early childhood education, which by policy should last three years before children transition to lower basic school. However, children mostly spend one year in early childhood education centers and enroll to grade one. Thus, the education is typically structured on the 6-3-3 for Basic and Secondary Education. The lower basic and upper basic total 9 years of elementary education which was guaranteed by the constitution and three years of "secondary education" (MoBSE, 2004, 2016). Early

childhood Education is still unstructured in the policy aspiration since children spend one year instead of three. In some instances, children are directly enrolled to grade one of primary education without any early childhood training.

Lower Basic School (LBS): basically, the education of Gambian children begins at age 7 according to the education policy MoBSE (2004) and MoBSE (2016). As suggested earlier, education should start at age three when children can be enrolled in early childhood education. However, most children especially in the rural areas commence their learning journey at age seven from class one of Lower Basic School (LBS). In this level, education lasts for six years then transit to grade 7 in the upper basic education level.

Upper Basic School (UBS): this level of education last for three years and completes the compulsory education for every Gambian as per the constitutions. Naturally, children begin this level at the age of thirteen (13) until sixteen (16) years old. At the end of upper basic education (grade 9), students take the Gambia Basic Education Examination Certificate (GABECE). This national examination is coordinated by the West African Examination Council (WAEC) in the Gambian. These exams give them the license to enroll in senior secondary education (Shipman, 2017).

Senior Secondary School (SSS): Admission to Senior Secondary School is very competitive since the key determinant factor for admission is the standard test obtained from the GABECE. However, it should be noted that this competitive nature does not deny student access to senior secondary education. However, their access to the best schools is mostly limited if their national exam results don't meet the standard. According to Shipman, (2017), the majority of Gambian students attend government schools that constitute about 75% of the student population (Shipman, 2017). Accordingly, senior secondary schools in the Gambia offer four major concentration areas: science, arts, commerce, and technical. This level of education last for three years prior to sitting to final exams to be awarded high

school diploma. The examination is coordinated by, the “West African Examinations Council (WAEC). This institution is responsible for senior school examination in West Africa commonly called the West African Secondary School Certificate Examinations (WASSCE). Sitting to this examination leads to the completion of senior secondary education and prepare them for tertiary education.

1.2. Research Problem Statement

Taking a cue from the background, the quality of teaching and learning in schools is argued to be critical to the overall development of students and the success of education systems. However, in many countries, including the Gambia, the quality of teaching and learning is often poor. According to UNICEF, (2022), Primary education in the Gambian is seriously challenged, “with most children not attaining the national competency targets set under the National Assessment Test” (UNICEF, 2022). On the other hand, UNICEF report highlighted that among children aged 7 to 14 years old, only 12 percent demonstrate minimal learning outcomes for reading and 9 percent demonstrate the same for numeracy. 9 percent of children in Grade 3 have the expected level of reading skills for that grade, and just 6 percent have the expected numeracy skills (UNICEF The Gambia, 2020).

Consequently, the poor quality of teaching and learning in the Gambia is a significant concern for education stakeholders and policymakers. Despite efforts to improve education outcomes, the quality of teaching and learning remains inadequate. Therefore, the current study seeks to understand the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the Gambia. Specifically, the research aims to investigate the practices, policies, and strategies that school leaders in the Gambia use to enhance the quality of teaching and learning and to evaluate the effectiveness of these practices in achieving this goal. Moreover, the study explored the structural and cultural challenges that school leaders

in the Gambia face in their efforts to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Ultimately, this study aims to provide insights that can inform the development of effective school leadership strategies for enhancing the quality of teaching and learning in the Gambia. Therefore, the researcher explored the topic from a sociological perspective by considering schools as a social system and leadership as a vessel for navigating through the structures to support high-quality teaching and learning for long-term outcomes.

1.3. Research Questions

Based on the background and the problem stated above, the researcher intends to answer the following questions:

1. How does school leadership contribute to improving the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia?
2. To what extent do the professional development opportunities provided to teachers by school leaders contribute to improved teaching practices and student learning outcomes in public primary schools in the Gambia?
3. How do School structures and policies in public primary schools in the Gambia inform the quality of teaching and learning?
4. What factors encourages the leadership style of school leaders, and how does these factors shape their decision-making and overall effectiveness in promoting teaching and learning?

1.4. Objectives of the Study

Since current study is designed to observe how school leadership affects teaching and learning by balancing agency, structure, and culture, thus, it aims to achieve the following objectives:

1. To describe how school leadership may enhance teachers' instruction and student learning in Gambia's public elementary schools.
2. To describe how the professional development opportunities provided to teachers by school leaders contribute to improved teaching practices and student learning outcomes in public primary schools in the Gambia
3. To explain how organizational structures and policies implemented by school leaders in public primary schools in the Gambia promotes or deters the quality of teaching and learning.
4. To determine the factors that encourages the leadership style of school leaders, and how those factors shape their decision-making and overall effectiveness in promoting teaching and learning.

1.5. Significant of the Study

To create a setting that is suitable for teaching and learning, the current study examines the capacity of school leadership in navigating between the structure and culture by creating positive teaching and learning in schools. Numerous scholarly publications have delved into the importance of leadership in raising academic success. Thus, the current study will contribute to the following areas.

Sorting evidence from the Gambia, the study adds to the existing literature on school leadership in educational studies, particularly in African context. Moreover, it extends the conversation on the agency of school leadership and instructional improvement in schools. It further attempts to address the gap on school leadership literature found in the Gambian context.

The findings of this study are expected to provide insight into the role of school leadership on the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia,

and to identify best practices in school leadership that can be implemented in these schools to improve the quality of teaching and learning. The results of this study may be useful for school leaders, policymakers, education officers, practitioners, and relevant stakeholders in the Gambia and other contexts, as they seek to improve the quality of teaching and learning in their own schools. Finally, the study recommends a framework for “the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education” of the Gambia on how to use school leadership in other to foster a supportive learning environment that will result in high-quality output in accordance with the sector’s policy 2016-2030 and the quality assurance framework.

CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

This chapter presents the literatures relevant to the subject of school leadership which are gathered from global, regional, and national level with the aim of establishing a gap in the literature. Another important area discussed in this chapter is the theoretical framework that is to guide the in describing the role of school leadership in improving teaching and learning by relying on the interplay of structure, culture, and agency.

2.1. Literature Review

The current study explores the potential of school leadership to raise the standard of instruction and learning in classrooms. As a result, the researcher conducted extensive reading on the subject matter to have a solid ground to stand on and eventually determine a gap in the area of study. Boote & Beile (2005) maintained that graduate or postgraduate students undertaking a thesis/dissertation should be knowledgeable in their area of inquiry before commencing the actual study (Boote & Beile, 2005; Jabbi, 2015).

Therefore, the information accumulated for the literature review was retrieved using a search engine of the “Indonesian International Islamic University’s library”; the digital platform that grants me access to JSTOR, emerald publishing, and Google Scholar. These data bases granted me access to scholarly works such as, journal articles, students’ theses, dissertations, and e-books relevant to my study. In search of these literature, I used several keywords to search for relevant works including School leadership + Teaching and learning + school improvement + capacity-building + the Gambia. These keywords are used in my search as follows:

First, I typed school leadership as my first keyword on all the data bases in searching literatures for my research. To be specific, on JSTOR, upon typing the first keyword, it

shows over five hundred thousand (500,000) literature without filtering by year or category. I skimmed through this result and picked some literatures that I felt was closed and relevant for my review. Then I filtered the same keyword by year in two-fold, 2010 to 2023 and 2018 to 2023. Result in the former showed one hundred and eleven thousand two hundred and thirty (111,230) and the latter showed twenty-three thousand seven hundred and seventeen (23,717) upon filtering by language where English was used as a preferred one.

In addition, I added teaching and learning to school leadership on the same database following similar steps mention above. Upon adding the second key word without filter I found one hundred and forty-three thousand (143,000) literatures which is further filtered by year and language in the same format and found six thousand four hundred and forty-four (6,444) literatures as of 2018 - 2023. School improvement was another keyword added to the above-mentioned keywords in my search. Upon adding the third key I found fifty-six thousand one hundred and two literatures (56,102) without filter. After filtering in similar manner, I found two thousand two hundred and five (2,205) related works worldwide.

Furthermore, I added capacity building as an additional keyword which shows a result of twenty-three thousand five hundred and thirty-two (23,532) literatures without filtering. After filtering it by year all the keywords mentioned the results showed one thousand and sixty-eight (1068) publications. Finally, I added the Gambia as another keyword to the previous once and the result showed two hundred and ninety-nine publications without filtering it by year. However, after filtering it based on year, it shows only nine (9) publications as of 2018 – 2023. Most of these publications are not directly connected to my research on school leadership.

Similar process was done on google scholar, and emerald showing different results from the unfiltered search to the filtered one based on year and relevance. I was able to scout most relevance literature from these results based on certain criteria including similarity

with my work, year of publication, study location and language. Including these literatures in my study I focused more on literatures from the west, and Africa since they shared similar leadership practice in the educational spheres. given that most African countries are colonized by the west and the education system is mostly influenced by them until today. However, some literatures are included from Asia as well which I deemed relevant for my work.

Lastly, after downloading the literatures needed, I read them thoroughly to understand the conversation on school leadership from global, regional to national level. After having an idea about these works, I categorize them into themes to guide my literature review as follows: School leadership, evolution of leadership theories which featured several theories, capacity-building, and teaching and learning which are discussed below.

2.1.1. School Leadership

According to Breyer, effective leadership could sustain educators' enthusiasm for their work and inspire them to get pupils interested in their lessons (Breyer, 2014). Breyer argued that in leadership good modeling affects teacher motivation and desire to use diverse, effective teaching methods. In other words, practical leadership in school guides the process of teaching and learning (Breyer, 2014). Shava & Heystek (2019) also underscored the significance of principals' agency in school improvement. They argued that competent and skillful leadership is crucial to organizational improvement (Shava & Heystek, 2019). School leadership, regardless of whether being a principal, head teacher, or senior management team, is one of the agential factors that could influence the academic attainment of learners either directly or indirectly (Harris et al., 2019; Hassan et al., 2019). This position is crucial to the current study in understanding school leadership's capacity to improve teacher instructional activities and students' learning.

In the same vein, Lutswamba's study championed school leadership as one of the agencies that promote "quality education, especially the feedback from principals to teachers and from teachers to students" (Lutswamba, 2017, p. 23). The central thesis of this work discusses the significance of feedback in the school system between actors. The author pointed out that the culture of constructive feedback should be advocated by school leaders to encourage, motivate, and mobilize staff to provide the best of themselves to achieve the shared goal of improving the quality of education (Lutswamba, 2017).

Concerning principals' role in creating a positive feedback culture for collective function, another author, Bhujel, also underscored those community school principals ought to be determined and initiative-taking in maintaining school enrolments, education quality, and funds for school performance. In addition, they should ensure "constant discipline in school, encouraging students and teachers through rewards and appreciation" (Bhujel, 2021). Successful school leaders use a variety of pertinent techniques, including consistent observation and supervision of classroom behavior, student attendance, teacher consistency, coaching classes for underperforming students, parent-teacher communication, and competitions between clusters and individuals (Bhujel, 2021).

Furthermore, Elomaa and colleagues (2022) argued that the way principals do their work depends on their differences and they are persuaded by numerous internal and external factors (Elomaa et al., 2022). They stressed that "some of the most extensive demands appear to be related to interaction with different stakeholders in situations where principals have the role of mediator in solving conflicting cases or addressing critical challenges (Elomaa et al., 2022). In addition, Elomaa and colleagues further emphasized the need for principals to have capacity-building instruction in interpersonal skills and human resource management, including how to handle disagreements, get along with people of different

personalities, and mobilize the entire school community to create and work toward shared objectives (Elomaa et al., 2022).

Given the extensive contestation of leadership in school systems, Evans proposed a need for a change in thinking in studying educational leadership. According to them, “the unit of analysis should shift from leadership to influence”(Evans, 2022b). This suggested a replacement research plan for “surface-level, causality assumptive that asks questions like how and why?” According to Evans, those lines of questioning shaped mainstream educational leadership research for decades. As a result, the author pointed out that the ‘who? And ‘what?’ questions are relevant in exploring leadership, by asking questions along those lines would enable researchers to identify who is/are the influencing agent (Evans, 2022a, 2022b). This position is critical to the current study because the researcher would not only look at the school leadership as a uniform unit that needs to be addressed as one, instead would look at the leadership structure and the roles of actors within the system to determine who or what entity in school leadership is effecting the positive change in teaching and learning. According to them, this new wave of critical scholars in educational research calls into question the three mainstream knowledge claims in educational leadership, which Evans refers to as the “causality belief, the leadership dependency belief, and the conceptual belief.” The author's attempt to provide a new perspective on leadership analysis “through an epistemic justification lens” makes the study essential to discuss in educational leadership circles (Evans, 2022a).

2.1.2. Evolution of Leadership Theories

Discussion on leadership in scientific spaces has been an ongoing process dated back in the 19th century. From this period to date, several theories have been developed in trying to explain leadership practices. Historically, literatures had documented the first leadership

theory called the great man theory in the 1840s. This theory's central argument was centered on the notion that leaders are "born not made". Given that knowledge keeps evolving, the great man theory has evolved to trait theory in the period between 1930s-1940s. This is an extension of great man theory, the core of trait theory is that, leaders are born or made (Benmira & Agboola, 2021).

Moving on, leadership theory keeps evolving from traits to behavioral (1940s-1950s). the behavioral theory focused on the behavior of leaders while ignored the traits and potential environment or situation (Arenas et al., 2017; Benmira & Agboola, 2021; Hunt & Fedynich, 2019). From the behavioral theory, there was a transitioned to situational era 1960s. During this period, leadership theories are focused on contingent and situational dimension. This theory focused on leaders' leadership based on situation they are found in instead of their traits or behavior. The final evolution in leadership theory (leadership in the modern era) started in the 20th century, specifically in the 990s to date. These theories are in various forms including transactional, transformational, shared, servant, authentic and more (Benmira & Agboola, 2021). From this broad description on the evolution of leadership theory, it is critical to connect this to educational leadership theories to give relevance to the current study's literature review on leadership theory.

Theories of educational leadership have their roots in the United States, where frameworks have generally been inspired by management ideas in business and industry. In the United States and other similarly developed countries, leadership theories and practices that are derived from business-oriented frames of reference have been embraced and modified for use in educational settings. Therefore, over time, a variety of transdisciplinary conceptualizations and models have been used to develop theories of educational leadership. Because of this, theories of leadership can be thought of as emerging, dynamic, and open to further development (Lorri & Santamaria', 2018). Having said that, these literature review

featured modern leadership theories in educational spheres including instructional, transformational, transactional, and distributive leadership. Each these leadership theories are discussed in detail in the subsequent subheadings.

2.1.2.1. Instructional Leadership

According to Bellibaş et al., (2021), “principals working in effective schools are instructional leaders who prioritize improving the quality of teaching and learning activities” (Bellibaş et al., 2021, p. 783). School leaders who prioritize teachers’ instructional success usually adopt instructional base leadership (Hallinger, 2003). Studies indicated that instructional leaders have an impact on school results by fostering a culture of high standards for student learning and a sense of shared purpose (Hallinger, 2007; Robinson et al., 2008), “planning and coordinating the curriculum” (Hallinger, 2003), “promoting teacher learning” (Liu et al., 2016; Shengnan & Hallinger, 2021), and advancing the quality of instructional practice (Bellibaş et al., 2021, 2022; Sebastian et al., 2016; Sebastian & Allensworth, 2012).

Bellibas et al., (2020) underlined that the instructional leadership style involves leaders' practices of observing teachers' instructional practices in classrooms (Bellibaş et al., 2020). Support collaboration among teachers to develop new teaching approaches. By ensuring that teachers take charge of advancing their pedagogical skills and student learning outcomes. Equally, they provide information about the school and student performance to parents or guardians (Bellibaş et al., 2020). Instructional leaders are believed to positively affect teaching and learning and improve instructional quality in schools (Bellibaş et al., 2020). The instructional leadership style of school leaders is crucial to teacher self-efficacy and professional development (Shengnan & Hallinger, 2021).

It is well documented in research that instructional leadership comes to light due to the far-reaching study aspiring to uncover the traits of high-performing and low-performing schools in the 70s (Karacabey et al., 2020). Scholars agreed that, unlike other leadership styles, instructional leadership places an unequivocal emphasis on teaching and learning in school settings (Daniëls et al., 2019; Robinson et al., 2008). This made the approach widely accepted in the jurisdictions of academic practitioners, researchers, and policy-makers in educational settings (Karacabey et al., 2020). Thus, education systems worldwide favored the approach and encouraged their school leaders to adopt such a leadership style (Bush, 2014; Hallinger et al., 2015; Karacabey et al., 2020). It is equally within the purview of the school leadership to manage the Instructional Programs that are geared towards monitoring, coordinating, and developing sustainable teaching and learning in schools (Gurley et al., 2016).

2.1.2.2. Transformative Leadership

Researchers documented that transformational leadership emphasizes innovation to increase the likelihood of success (Hallinger, 2021; Marks & Printy, 2003). According to Bass, this leadership style seeks to transform organizational culture by establishing a new vision and revising shared values, norms, and assumptions (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Bellibaş et al., 2020). The current study argues that both the instructional leadership model and the transformative leadership model, as put forth by Bass, aim to change organizational processes. However, as Hellinger noted, the instructional leadership model emphasizes teaching and learning, while the transformative leadership model emphasizes innovation for broad-based organizational cultural change. Furthermore, researchers highlighted that “transformational leaders” create a vision and clarify the goals and priorities that promote the organization (Bass et al., 2003). In the same vein, Hafeez & Bidari, (2022) argued that

transformational leadership brings people together around a shared vision and inspires, supports, and motivates them to achieve their goals (Hafeez & Bidari, 2022).

Studies contended that transformational leaders emphasize supporting and encouraging teachers individually or in groups to move towards school improvement (Avolio et al., 2004; Karacabey et al., 2020; Leithwood et al., 2002). This suggests that the leaders interact with the teaching staff to upsurge their desire and aptitudes to enhance excellent teaching and learning (Karacabey et al., 2020). Marks & Printy, (2003) pointed out that teachers whom transformational leaders direct are expected to be “decision-makers” and are potentially involved in “supervision of instruction, planning, and professional development”(Marks & Printy, 2003). According to Runhaar et al., (2010), teachers who identify their leaders in the school system as transformational leaders are prone to request feedback from each other (Runhaar et al., 2010).

2.1.2.3. Distributed Leadership

Drawing from the evolution of leadership it could be observe that leadership has taken series of transition from individual centric to more people centric. One of the leadership theories in the modern leadership discuss is distributed leadership. Historically, the concept of distributed leadership could be traced a bit further as early as 13th century. Oduro (2004) has been cited for suggesting that the discussion on distributed leadership dated back as far as 1250 BC, claiming this makes it the most ancient leadership practice championed for improving organizational goals through people (Bolden, 2011).

Notwithstanding, on the notion of its theorization, Harris (2009, p. 3) proposes that it ‘is an idea that can be traced back as far as the mid-20s and possibly earlier’. However, discussion on distributed leadership in a theoretical frame gain its popularity in the 2000s

(Harris & Gronn, 2008). Spillane et al., (2004) maintained that this type of leadership practice is centered on the “interaction of leaders’ thinking, behavior, and their situation” (p. 8) as they influence instructional practice (Spillane et al., 2004). Similarly, A. Harris, (2019) also claimed that DL involves a leadership practice including multiple leaders who work together within an institution to effect change. This aligns with the context of school leadership this study ought to explore. Given that the modern-day Gambian schools are designed in similar manner, meaning the model of leadership proposed by Harris is relevant for the Gambian school leadership.

Spillane and colleagues' early work focused on two key concepts that shape leadership practice in schools: shared leadership and interdependence (Harris et al., 2022; Spillane et al., 2001). In the contemporary view, the theory of distributed leadership is still reported to be relevant and evidence was reported in the revised version of the article entitled “Seven Strong Claims about Successful School Leadership” (Harris et al., 2022 p. 452). In this work, they claimed that a decent amount of relevant evidence to that respect has been reported since 2008. It is maintained that school leadership can inform school and students’ performance when the leadership practice is distributed Claim 5 (Harris et al., 2022; Leithwood et al., 2019).

Reflecting back on the concept of distributed leadership, is loosely defined hence the concept is interchangeably used with the concept of servant leadership. As Lumby 2017 put it, “definition of DL is problematic, in part because of the bifurcating path of its history” (Lumby, 2019 p. 6). Moving toward that trajectory holding the view that DL is loosely defined, I substitute it with the servant leadership in this case. Alonderiene & Majauskaite (2016) argued that the servant leadership had been found to have the highest positive significant impact on the job satisfaction of faculty, while the controlling autocrat leadership style has a minor effect (Alonderiene & Majauskaite, 2016). In the same vein, De Jong and

colleagues investigated the leadership practices of Dutch school principals in leading collaborative innovation. This investigation focused on the first year of the collaborative innovation program's implementation (De Jong et al., 2020). They emphasized that collaboration between principals and teachers can help to disseminate these transformation processes more widely (De Jong et al., 2020).

2.1.2.4. Transactional Leadership

According to Purwanto and colleagues (2020), the conceptual explanation of transactional leadership could not be isolated from Burn et al., (1978), which means leadership that involves appealing to followers' passions to energize them (Purwanto et al., 2020; Purwanto et al., 2019). They further stress that values such as honesty, responsibility, and reciprocity are relevant to exchange processes and can be incorporated into the transactional leadership style (Purwanto et al., 2020). By letting followers pursue their interests and reducing workplace fear, this style of leadership, according to Sadeghi & Pihie, (2012), helps employees focus on specific corporate goals, such as improving quality, customer service, lowering expenses, and increasing output. (Sadeghi & Pihie, 2012). Furthermore, Northouse hailed that transactional leadership involves an exchange between leaders and followers, in this case, between head teachers and their staff, using rewards and punishments to encourage teachers to work hard (Northouse, 2015). A transactional leader has two significant characteristics, according to (Bass et al., 2003). One, the leader can reward employees conditionally based on clear communication on equitable incentives for achievements between superiors and subordinates. Second, management by exception (Bass et al., 2003; Lan et al., 2019).

“Transactional leadership” is a subtype of “transformational leadership”, and both are connected to structural performance, according to researchers (Kalsoom et al., 2018; Odumeru, 2016; Odumeru & Ifeanyi, 2013). Transactional leadership, as echoed by Robbins (2003), is a type of leadership that allows leaders to control their followers through rewards and penalties. In other words, transactional leadership is managerial leadership, where the primary functions of a leader are to make roles and task specifications clear (Dubrin, 2004; Kalsoom et al., 2018). Miller argued that transactional leaders clarify duties and responsibilities to followers and instruct them on what must be done to accomplish goals (Miller, 2011). Transactional leaders strongly emphasize external rewards for good performance and punishment for unsuccessful outcomes (Kalsoom et al., 2018).

2.1.3. Capacity-Building

Leaders in the educational sector desire to confront issues like access, quality, and equity within a system. For instance, the education sector policy of the Gambia from 2016 to 2030 is geared towards addressing these areas. To address the quality issue, teachers should be the central agent partnering with school leaders to upshot quality teaching and learning. In educational leadership and management, emphasis was made that staff capacity-building is critical to sustainable school performance (Bain et al., 2011; Egbo, 2011; Kareem et al., 2011; Kurup et al., 2019). Egbo (2011) argues that for leaders to advance teacher deficit, teacher capacity-building is essential not only for successful teaching and learning, rather should equally be the initial position in reconstituting an education system at large (Egbo, 2011).

Fullan, (2014) and Hallinger, (2011) emphasized the importance of capacity-building and academic development. Hallinger (2011) clarified the relationship between the goal of

raising student performance and leadership that emphasizes learning via capacity-building as a strategy. The author concludes that “initial academic improvement capacity positively affected later changes in collaborative leadership, and initial collaborative leadership positively affected subsequent changes in academic improvement capacity” (p. 133). This assertion highlights the conditions of headship and “capacity-building” since the constructs are mutually reinforcing in any company (Hallinger, 2011, p. 133).

Duze’s work is another invaluable piece contributing to school leadership and its role in teacher capacity building. The central thesis of this work was to highlight and emphasize the absolute need for continuous learning and the development of teachers’ capacity to fulfill their roles effectively and efficiently in schools. The study found a gap in this area that leadership in schools fails to fulfill in most cases. Thus, the author echoed a need for consistent capacity building for teachers as they are critical in teaching and learning (Duze, 2012). Reynolds & Muijs, (2016) argued that to maintain the consistency required for effective schools, pedagogical strategy necessitates the professional development of personnel, which involves retraining current employees in new or improved techniques or inducting and training new staff in the school's pedagogical practices (Reynolds & Muijs, 2016).

2.1.4. Teaching and Learning

According to Frisk and colleagues, “Modern universities are giving strategic importance to the leadership of teaching and learning as the demands placed on higher education institutions are being guided by excellence in teaching and learning along with a focus on student performance rates” (Frisk et al., 2021, p. 2). The primary purpose of school leadership is to support “teaching and learning” (Bush, 2014). Bush reiterated that modeling, monitoring, and evaluation are critical for coordinating teaching and learning. They echoed

that school leaders should offer successful models in lesson preparation, subject knowledge, pedagogic approaches, assessment, and learner welfare (Bush, 2014; Clark, 2015). Systematic monitoring of educators' practice in a classroom setting is essential to teaching and learning with a constructive feedback approach (Gul et al., 2019; Keiler et al., 2020). In addition, leaders should equally assess school outcomes and compare their success against schools in similar conditions. This will help the leadership to redefine its vision and mission for sustainable outcomes. Furthermore, Bush (2014b, 2021) indicated that "school culture and climate must promote a positive approach to learning among all stakeholders, including students, teachers, parents, and the local community. This offers the best chance of long-term school improvement" (Bush, 2014, 2021).

Leadership's role in improving teachers' teaching methods for sustainable learning outcomes is essential in leadership literature. "Pedagogy and pedagogical developments underscore the relevance of instructional leadership and, in particular, the necessity for leaders to focus on pedagogy" (Reynolds & Muijs, 2016, p.209). This shows that creating a vision for the pedagogical process in schools is one of the primary responsibilities of school administrators. To put it another way, leaders should include the following in their instructional vision: "principles of effective teaching, behavior management, and classroom environment, including elements, such as the use of learning assistants, information communication technology, assessment, and reward systems, as well as teaching methods, such as direct instruction or learning to learn" (Reynolds & Muijs, 2016).

2.1.5. Novelty of the Study

In the literature mentioned above, school leadership was praised as a crucial instrument for improving schools, and leadership practices and their bearings on

educational performance were heavily discussed. In light of this, “instructional leadership” is regarded by academics as the most successful leadership style for advancing teacher practice in instruction and student learning.

Given the significance of leadership, school leadership in particular the subject has been explored in various fields of study in the Gambia, ranging from business administration (Njie, 2020; Saidykhan, 2020), health (Chigudu et al., 2018), development and general management fields (Bantutu-Gomez, 2001; Jammeh, 2022; Kirby, 2021; Sarr, 2021). Similarly, it has been explored by scholars in different context within the education sector. For instance, Jabbi (2015) has addressed the topic in the context of teacher training (Blimpo et al., 2013, 2015) in parental human capital and school-based leadership and student outcomes (McEwan, 2015; UNICEF & AUC, 2021) on improving education.

The above scholars studied leadership in different context as highlighted above, which sets their study apart from the current one. Given that most of them explored leadership in different context and approach which is contrast to the current study. Setting the cutting-edge distinction between my work and the above once I observe the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning considering the structural and cultural factors.

Thus, I adopt a deductive strategy to present literature on the topic of leadership specifically on school leadership, beginning at the global, regional, and national levels to map out the body of literature on the subject to identify a gap in the literature. In doing so, the researcher was able to identify a vacuum in the literature on school leadership at the national level, which suggests a deficiency in existing literature.

Leadership is highly regarded as a vessel for school improvement and success. Yet, it happens to be the most understudied subject in Gambian education system. Thus, the

researcher believes that it is imperative and fitting to carry out this study in order to present a new perspective on school leadership from the Gambian context with a focus on teaching and learning. This signals the uniqueness of the current study.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1. Realist Social Theory

The study adopts Margaret Archer's 1995 Realist Social Theory (Archer, 1995; Case, 2015; Shava & Heystek, 2019) to understand the dynamics and potential of school leadership in advancing instructional practices and learning of pupils in public primary schools in the Gambian. Archer distinguishes “the sphere of structure (the world out there)” into the indistinguishable dominions of structure and culture (Archer, 1995; Case, 2015). According to Case (2015), “the core of Margaret Archer’s (1995) theory is the concept of morphogenesis (and its inverse, morpho stasis). According to Archer, morphogenesis refers to change (genesis) in the shape of things (morpho), a change in agency, culture, or structure. The term morpho stasis, as the name suggests, refers to a scenario where no change takes place” (Archer, 1995; Case, 2015).

According to her, in every social institution, three dimensions are always in play: structure, culture, and agency (Archer, 1995; Shava & Heystek, 2019). Archer argued that structure includes roles, organizations, institutional structures, systems, policies, committees, substructures and positional levels within the organization (Archer, 1995). Culture primarily champions the way of life of a group of people which incorporates their “behavior, beliefs, values, customs, relationships and special symbols” (Case, 2015; Shava & Heystek, 2019). Finally, she describes the agency as people's emotional and psychological

build-up, social responsibilities, and capacity to act intentionally (Shava & Heystek, 2019). Consequently, Archer argued that these three dimensions could impede or enable organizational functions. The theory will explore how school leadership can maneuver within the structure and culture using their agency to produce sustainable improvement in education through teaching and learning.

System Theory Framework: Archer’s 1995 Social Realist Perspective

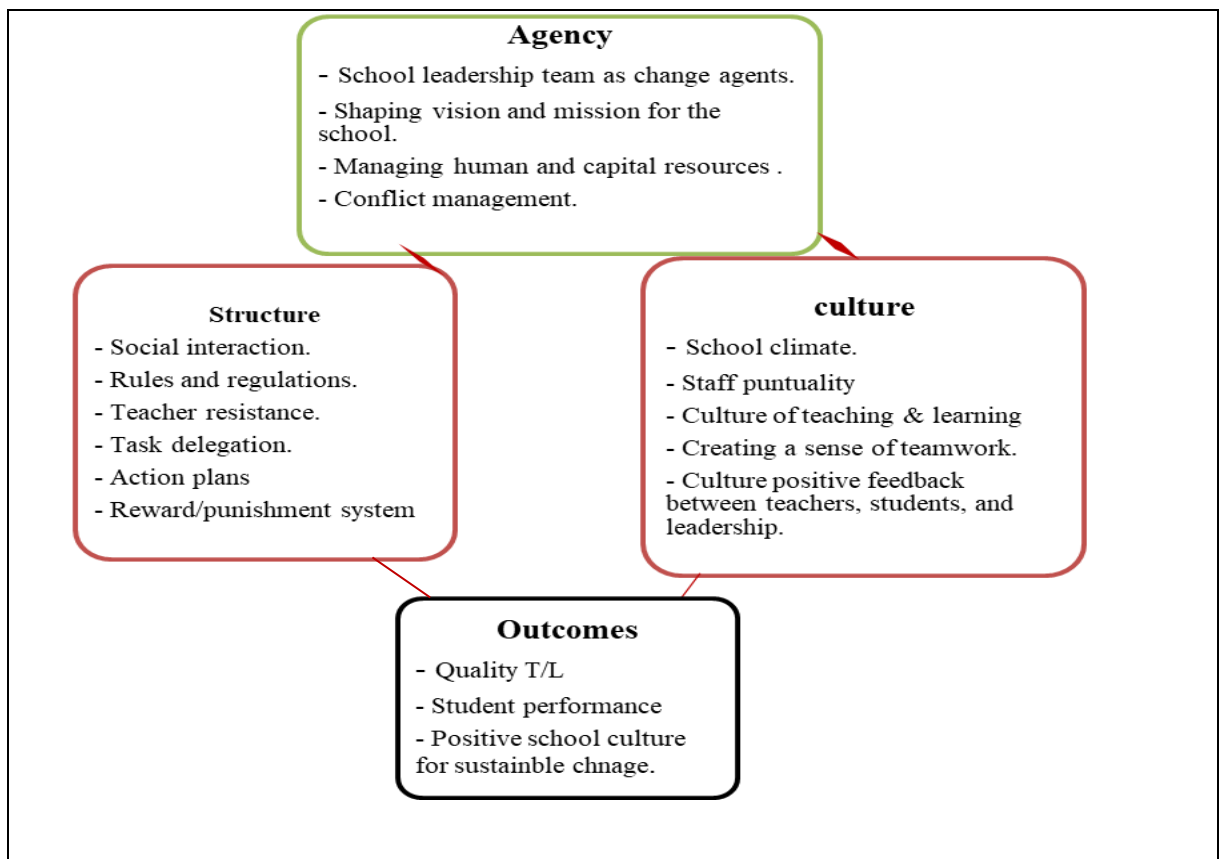


Figure 1: A general framework on the interplay of agency, structure, and culture for quality teaching and learning.

2.2.1.1. Agency

In the context of my study, “Agency refers to the personal and psychological make-up” of school leaders, their responsibilities, and their capability of executing those functions independently to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning for sustainable

learning outcomes. For Giddens, the agency is not limited to individual drive and talent. He argued that agency is boosted by control over resources. This control is drilled through accepting or rejecting rules regarded as social structures(Whittington, 2015).

Headteachers are critical agents in school leadership and are responsible for ensuring the teachers, students, and staff's needs, motivation, and well-being for effective teaching and learning. They ought to establish a strong collaboration between themselves, Deputy Head-teacher, senior teachers, school management committees, and mothers' clubs to provide effective leadership that will improve school learning outcomes. This could be a challenge for school leaders since schools are filled with many structural challenges such as financial, cultural, rules and regulations, family backgrounds, and social settings. Actors within the organizational structure could also challenge leaders in effecting desired change, and these agential factors could be teachers' commitment (Shava & Heystek, 2019).

2.2.1.2. Structure

According to Shava and Heystek (2019), structure in a learning environment refers to the “norms and procedures followed in a school to ensure effective teaching and learning” (Shava & Heystek, 2019). A system's structural domain includes the roles, organizations, institutional structures, systems, policies, committees, substructures, and positional levels within the school (Archer, 1995; Case, 2015; Hallinger, 2011; Leithwood et al., 2019; Shava & Heystek, 2019). I hold the view that for any organization to survive, its structure serves as a frame that guides the actors within to execute their duties. Effective leadership in school systems is expected to direct and guide structural change that will produce a milieu favorable for instructional practice and learning. According to Shava and Heystek (2019), successful school administrators are conscious of how important the organizational structure is to the advancing schools for sustainable outcomes (Case, 2015; Shava & Heystek, 2019).

According to the Minimum Standard and School Management Manual (SMM 2012) of the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) School managers should create an organizational framework that is based on the vision, mission, and values of their respective institutions. This suggests that school leaders are responsible for managing teachers' capacity development, and direct instructional implementation to achieve the school mission and vision.

Furthermore, one of the structural issues facing school leaders at this level in schools is inadequate funding as well as the facilities and infrastructure, especially at the lower basic level in the Gambian educational setting. The Gambia's government mandated free basic education for all children, which suggests that parents are not required to pay school fees and that parents are not asked for money by the schools. As a result, most of the public schools rely on School Improvement Grant (SIG) from the government and other outside sources for school improvement. Since the grant for school improvements is insufficient to support the schools, there are not enough money to purchase necessary teaching and learning resources, upgrade the school's infrastructure, or renovate the facilities, this presents several difficulties for school leadership. Finally, Horng and Loeb, (2010) contended that strategic school leaders do not have a one-size-fits-all approach, but they need to establish organizational structures to sustain school improvement (Horng & Loeb, 2010).

2.2.1.3. Culture

Given that school leaders are working within a system that obviously is grounded in a culture that is created and determined by actors and values within and beyond this system's geographical settings. According to Young and colleagues, school leaders may be positively or negatively impacted to lead in conformity with the current culture (Young et al., 2009).

Given the two categories of schools performing and underperforming that are investigated in the current study, in observing school leaders' role in improving teaching and learning, the primary focus of the study was to see how these leaders transform existing school cultures that might challenge their instructional vision for sustainable and productive teaching and learning.

Contemplating the transformational process of school culture, particularly teaching and learning should be viewed in a binary interactive process. As the leaders try to respond to the existing school culture and the response or reaction of other actors like students, instructors, community members, and other stakeholders towards leaders' endeavor in changing the existing culture. Shava (2019) and Baum (2002) highlighted that effecting these changes would always trigger some form of resistance, thus it is essential for the leadership to have specific knowledge and skills to effectively change a negative culture or sustain and improve positive culture (Baum, 2002; Shava & Heystek, 2019).

Furthermore, system and organizational theorists have highlighted the role of culture which I believe educational leaders should reflect on its importance and what type of culture they should adopt. According to Sterling and Davidoff (2000), effective long-term leadership must include the functions of recognizing, fostering, and modeling desired values in order to develop the ideal school culture (Sterling & Davidoff, 2000). Leithwood et al., (2019) maintain that the organizational culture of schools has been identified as a key component of the enhancement of teaching and learning (Leithwood et al., 2019; Shava & Heystek, 2019). Scholars describe culture as a way of life, which includes the actions, values, beliefs, conventions, interpersonal interactions, and unique symbols and codes of people or an organization (Archer, 1995; Case, 2015; Day & Harris, 2002; Shava & Heystek, 2019).

Since culture is dynamic and prone to changes over time, it is vital for school leaders to fathom the circumstance of their school's culture, whether it is friendly or hostile to learning, and how it could be changed for the better. This is an interesting area of observation for the current study as the researcher intends to understand how school leadership tackles those negative cultures that challenge instructional processes, interpersonal relations, and student learning in their schools. As well as overcome that individual or group resistance to their change initiatives.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Approach

To explore the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning, the study adopts qualitative research approach. According to Creswell, qualitative research is multi-method in focus, where the researcher studies human meaning-making behaviors and the ways in which these practices are both formed by and shape the social and cultural settings within which they occur (Creswell, 2015). In other words, it is a method of inquiry that seeks to understand and interpret the experiences, behaviors, and actions of individuals or groups within their social and cultural contexts (Creswell, 2015).

Given that my study was designed to explore leadership practice of school leaders, which require me to explore the behavior, school culture, leadership practices, and other human interactions I believe qualitative research was the best approach to adopt. It allowed me to explore the experiences, behaviors and actions of school leaders, and teachers which count not be quantified in my view. Therefore, using qualitative research approach was the best option at the time to properly explore leadership role in schools in the Gambia. in addition, using case study designed was deemed appropriate to investigate the research problem as discussed below.

3.2. Research Design

Case study is considered the most suitable technique to study the interplay of structure and agency, which challenge or support school leaders as change agents to advance teaching

and learning in their schools that should eventually affect the examination results within structural contexts. According to Rubin & Rubin, (2012), a qualitative study should concentrate on the depth of the information to be generated rather than its breadth. Therefore, a case study strives to deepen comprehension of the research problem. In doing so, the researcher relies on an interpretive paradigm, which the researcher considers appropriate for the current study. This design enabled me to observe, hear, and comprehend how individuals in the chosen schools make sense of their lives as suggested by Shava & Heystek, (2019). According to Henning et al. (2004), human emotions and values cannot be measured or quantified but must instead be understood from the inside out (Shava & Heystek, 2019).

Thus, my inspiration for adopting a case study approach in this research is derived from Ebneyamini and Moghadam's (2018) work, which underlined that a case study is crucial for studying research participants or a group of people as a whole, highlighting that the people who make up the group have a shared goal or set of objectives to pursue (Sarr, 2021). The school leadership team from the four schools in Central River Region five South (one of the administrative regions in rural Gambia) participated in this research, and their response through interview constitute their experience in school leadership roles in effecting positive teaching and learning in schools.

3.3. Research Participant Selection

The study adopts a purposeful participant selection approach. According to Patton, (2002), purposive sampling is a method of selecting participants for a study based on specific characteristics or criteria. This approach allows the researcher to carefully select participants that are most relevant to the research question, rather than using a random

selection process. Patton suggests that purposive sampling is useful when the researcher wants to study a specific population or subgroup that is not easily accessible through random sampling methods. It also allows the researcher to gather information from a diverse group of participants and to increase the generalizability of the findings. Furthermore, Patton also notes that purposive sampling is particularly useful in qualitative research, where the goal is to understand a particular phenomenon or experience in depth. By selecting participants who have had a similar experience or who have a particular characteristic of interest, the researcher can gain a more detailed and nuanced understanding of the topic (Patton, 2002).

It is a method frequently employed in qualitative research. It is effective for identification and selection of cases that are information-rich in order to maximize the utilization of the limited resources at hand (Patton, 2002). As a result, the researcher relied on the assistance of the Regional Education Directorate (RED) five south in Janjangbureh to identify four (4) schools that had the same leadership team for the past three years, and somehow their performance has improved or stagnated in the National Assessment Test (NAT) for the past three years. Since regional directorates are responsible for overseeing educational programs in regions, they are reliable sources to obtain that information based on national assessment test reports. Amongst these four schools, each category of school has two schools: two transformed (whose performance in the abovementioned test has improved under this leadership) and two underperforming (whose performance did not change or improve overtime under the same leadership).

Additionally, the annual Best Teachers' Award (BTA) the regional education directorate organize is also other criteria used in identifying the two performing schools. Since best managers are also awarded through this scheme the researcher believed that individuals identify as best managers would be able to improve the standards of teaching and learning in their schools. Since the researcher determined this categorization, purposeful

participant selection was considered appropriate for the current study. The researcher chose information-rich cases to explore the potential of the school leadership teams in improving teaching and learning for sustainable outcomes (Shava & Heystek, 2019).

According to Creswell, (2012), qualitative approach is use to learn about unique circumstances in a social settings (Creswell, 2012). As a result, the researcher is clear that generalizations at the national scale are difficult to make in a small-scale study of this type. Therefore, selecting four schools based on their performance in the National Assessment Test in order to explore their leadership potential in improving teaching and learning. This doesn't mean they are the representation of the population of schools in the Gambia. However, the work provided some insight on the leadership practice and these leaders change teaching and learning that results in better school performance.

Though, it is important to underline that the criteria used for identifying the best schools or the underperforming schools might not necessarily be the only way or the best practice since there are many other factors to consider. As a result, the researcher anticipates a potential bias for the categorization. Thus, he believed is the only way to reduce subjectivity in selecting participating schools in this study.

Table 1: List of Participating schools and Number of Research Participants

PSEUDONYM	REGION	CLUSTER	SCHOOL LEADERS	TEACHERS
PERFORMING SCHOOLS				
Suruwa-Kunda BCS	5 South	C-2	3 (HT, DHT, & SM)	4
Jelly Berry BCS	5 South	C-4	3(HT, DHT, & SM)	4
UNDERPERFORMING SCHOOLS				
Strawberry LBS	5 South	C-4	3(HT, DHT, & SM)	4

Jolly Phonics LBS	5 South	C-1	3(HT, DHT, & SM)	2
Total Participants			12 School Leaders	14 Teachers

Before moving to the next section, it is important to provide description of the acronyms in the table above. HT: in this instance signifies the head teacher, DHT for deputy headteacher and SM for senior master. This combination constitute the senior management team at school level.

3.4. Data Collection Approach

The keen aspiration to gather sufficient information that echoed the viewpoints of the research participants leads the researcher to choose in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participant observation, document analysis, and Focus Group Discussion (FGD).

3.4.1. Interview

For contact interview sessions, the researcher ensures direct interaction with the participants, enabling him to understand their perspectives. Interviews present the researcher with the means to obtain the participants' experiences, knowledge, thoughts, and feelings (Creswell & Gutterman, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell, 1998, 2008, 2009). One of the reasons for adopting the interview was that the I intended to allow the research participants to express their ideas freely and decide to open up on issues based at their own pace, as suggested by Bernard, (2002).

Dwelling into the specification, the I adopt a semi-structured qualitative interviewing technique (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Using this interview technique, I spoke to individuals with experience or knowledge of the problem my study wishes to explore. In this case, the I used a semi-structure interviewing technique to gather in-depth information from school leaders' questions about their work, experience, and knowledge in leading a school toward

a sustainable outcome through productive teaching and learning. This helps me to explore the motivations, opinions, and experiences of others and learn to observe the universe from the viewpoint of others. In addition, the approach helps me to reconstruct events or activities that happened prior to my arrival in a retrospective manner.

3.4.2. Focus Group Discussion

Focus groups are another form of interview that is done in groups. According to Creswell (2015), focus groups can be used to gather opinions from particular people as well as from groups of people who have similar understandings (Creswell, 2015). In that instance, I used this technique to interview teachers in groups to get their perspective on the school leaders' leadership practices, their leadership style(s), and how leadership supports their instructional process in the school for sustainable outcomes. In each of the FGDs I conducted, it involves four classroom teachers except for Jolly Phonics which was two due to the staff population. These teachers are used because I wish to use the information gathered during these sessions to triangulate the data supplied by the leadership.

Furthermore, Creswell (2012) emphasized that in situations like that, the researcher will ask a limited number of generic questions to get input from everyone in the group (Creswell, 2012). This spirit is the overarching idea for the study's interview and focus group data collection methods. During this process I gave the participants more freedom to express themselves. In doing so, I created an environment conducive and safe that stimulated the participants' desires of full participation which enabled me to generate detailed information.

Furthermore, focus groups discussion was able to deliver the finest data since I was able to use their responses as a yardstick to triangulate the response from the leaders. More importantly, the participants in the FGD were able to correct any potential misleading information given by other participants through comparable and cooperative manner.

During the focus group discussions, the culture of mutual respect, trust and confidentiality is maintained throughout. The essential practice in this process was inspiring all participants to speak and take turns in doing so.

3.4.3. Observation

Creswell (2012) argued that educational researchers adopting qualitative research often considered observational data collection relevant in a specific school or educational setting. They argued that it is one of the standard data collection styles where researchers have the chance to assume the roles of others in the process (Creswell, 2012). The author further describes observation as a process where researchers gather “open-ended firsthand information” by observing the activities of individual participants, groups, and places where the research is conducted (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell, 2012, 2014, 2015). Despite the method’s usefulness for gathering data, Creswell emphasized that observation had pros and cons. Benefits include observing events as they unfold, observing actual conduct, and observing people who have trouble expressing their thoughts (Creswell, 2012). This encourages the researcher using observation because it allows him to carefully observe participant behavior, activities, and interpersonal interactions in the classroom context.

Creswell (2012) also stressed that to observe a circumstance, one must have excellent hearing and attention to visual details. In addition, it is essential to deal with issues like potential dishonesty on the part of the subjects of the observation and the first discomfort of being an “outsider” in a setting without direct interpersonal support. To use it, you must take on a particular observer role (Creswell, 2008, 2012). As a result, the I adopted a participant observation role, giving me adequate room to amass relevant data in that capacity. Assuming this position, I spend one week in each school as a trying to blend in as a local. I volunteer as a classroom teacher in some instances, this allowed me to examine school leaders' actions,

interactions with teachers, students, leadership philosophies, and school culture. I also took a closer look on how instructors, deputy head teachers, and senior teachers behave, conduct their daily business, and play their respective parts in the teaching and learning process for long-term success.

Creswell (2008, 2012, and 2015) asserts that participating in the research site's activities will help you discover more about a scenario. This presents a great chance to see and experience the participants' perspectives. When researchers participate in the activities in the environment they are observing, they are acting in the observational role of a participant observer. As a participant, you operate as an “inside” observer who actively participates in the study's activities (Creswell, 2008, 2012, 2015).

3.4.4. Document Review

Documents, in Creswell's view, can be a valuable source of data for qualitative research (Creswell, 2012, p. 223). The author made the case that documents are made up of both “public and private records that qualitative researchers obtain” from or about their study location or participants. These documents may include “letters, newspapers, meeting minutes, personal journals, and journals” (Creswell & Gutterman, 2015). Creswell underscored that using documents as data source have the potential to offer Valuable information that can be used by researchers to understand important occurrences in qualitative studies (Creswell, 2008, 2012, 2015). In the context of this research, used documents as a different data source because I hold the view that enriched the study with additional data. Thus, documents that are reviewed in this study are staff meeting minutes, reports on classroom observations, teachers’ scheme and lesson plans, staff capacity building reports, monitoring reports and comments offered, NAT exam results, internal assessment files, and other relevant documents found by the researcher in the field.

Furthermore, Johnson & Christensen, (2021) and Creswell (2012) imply that documents allow researchers the chance to read writings written in the participants' words and language, which they have typically given careful consideration to (Creswell, 2012; Johnson& Christensen, 2021). Since the records are kept in the school and are potentially the words of the participants makes it essential to gather additional information to enrich your data. Document data sources was equally used as a medium to triangulate the information given during the interview by the SMT. I am conscious that verbal information at some point could be misleading, therefore documents recorded and file are used as a yardstick to verify some information supplied. Another interesting I used documentation is because I did not need to transcribe as a case for interview.

Nevertheless, I am aware of the potential drawbacks of documentation, which I took into consideration while gathering data. One of the dares is that I might occasionally find it be difficult to obtain documentation in some schools for several reasons, such as location. The possibility that the records could be erroneous, falsified, or inadequate is another difficulty I anticipated when employing documentation as a source of data. However, the document reviewed enhance the research data since it allows for the acquisition of information that are missed during observation and interview.

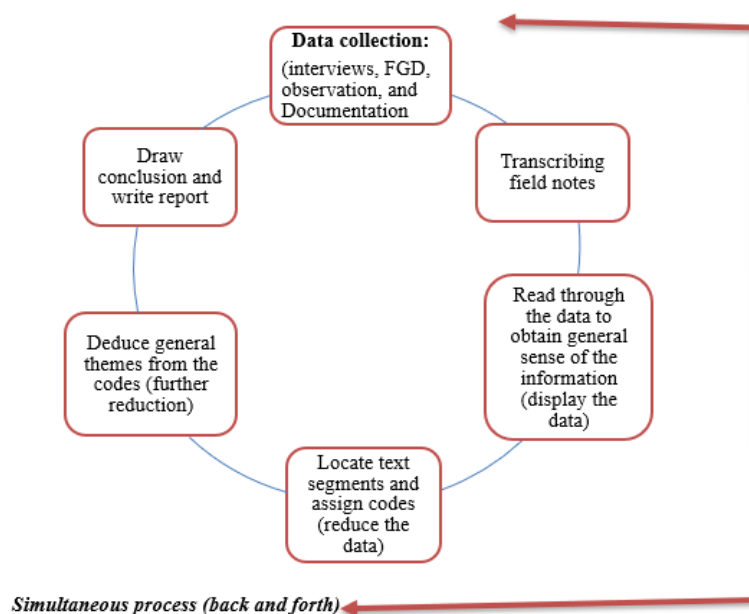
3.5. Data Analysis

The study adopts thematic analysis approach using Creswell's model. According to Creswell (2015), understanding how to interpret text and visual items is necessary when analyzing qualitative data so that you may develop the answers to your research questions by generating themes. To analyze the data collected through "interviews, focus group discussion, observation, and documentation", the researcher adopts an inductive way of

reasoning. In this way of reasoning, the research starts from specific information from the transcribed interviews, field notes, and documents to a more general theme.

Creswell highlighted six steps in analyzing qualitative data, which include “preparing and organizing the data, exploring and coding the database, describing findings and forming themes, representing and reporting findings, interpreting the meaning of the findings, and validating the accuracy of the findings” (Creswell, 2015, p. 235). Following these steps, the researcher begins by collecting data, transcribing, reading the transcripts to obtain a broad sense of the data, selecting relevant codes by reducing the data, and generating themes for reporting the findings. These steps are done simultaneously, meaning I was going back and forth trying to make sense of the data. Since the researcher used different data source logic that dictates that all the information cannot be used, as a result, the researcher did what Creswell called data winnowing (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 268) to get rid of some data. Through this process, I generated themes relevant to the study and draw my conclusion for reporting.

Figure 2: Data Analysis Process Modification of Creswell’s 2015 Data Analysis Steps



3.6. Ethical Consideration

As a researcher, it is crucial to consider the ethical implications of the study. In doing so, I ensure that the rights, welfare, and dignity of all participants involved in this study are well protected. As a result, I obtain informed consent from all my participants before involving them in the study. I gave them clear and comprehensive information about my research purpose, procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time without consequence.

In addition, I ensure that participants have a choice for participation in the study without any form of coercion. I informed them of their right to decline participation in the study if they feel uncomfortable being involved or withdraw at any point in the study. Most importantly, confidentiality and anonymity were chosen as the cornerstone for protecting the identities and information gathered from the participants. To protect the identity of my participants I used pseudonyms to identify the schools in my report and not a single participant's identity was revealed throughout my report writing.

3.7. Reliability and Validity

In this study, I intended to explore the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia. In doing that I explored the leadership practices, experiences, and perspectives of school leaders regarding their decision-making processes in implementing their policies and programs to improve the standard of teaching and learning. Thus, to ensure the reliability and validity of the information gathered, a triangulation system was used by combining the use of Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) with teachers and document review as complementary sources of information to verify the findings derived from interviews with the school leaders the SMT.

In this case, reliability is regarded as the consistency and repeatability of findings. So, I addressed the issue of reliability through the use of multiple data sources such as interviews, observation, document review, and FGD. Hence, using FGDs with teachers and conducting document reviews, I desired to cross-reference and validate the data I gathered from the school leadership through interviews. The cross-referencing was done by comparing and contrasting the data gathered from these various sources. I used teachers' responses from the FGDs as additional data sources in the meantime to triangulate the information given by the SMT. I am conscious of the fact that, if people are asked to talk about themselves, there is a high chance they would want to report things that are positive. Employing this approach, I was striving to establish consistency in the findings, and reducing the likelihood of individual bias in influencing the results. Furthermore, the use of FGDs has created room for diversification of the information obtained from the teacher group. The inclusion of multiple perspectives from teachers, who are directly involved in the teaching and learning process added further information and improve the validity of the findings.

On the other hand, validity is viewed through the lens of the accuracy and credibility of the findings. So, the triangulation approach used in this study has improved the validity of the data gather by providing converging evidence. As a result, using different data sources I was able to corroborate the information gathered from interviews with school leaders, to improve the trustworthiness of the findings. Other than FGD, document review was used as an additional data source to complement the interview data. Examining documents such as classroom observation records, school policies, meeting minutes, visitors' books, internal and external assessment files, and memos provided a context to the situation in the schools and allowed triangulation of data given by leaders. Using this process has created room for

enhancing the validity of the findings by corroborating the data collected through interviews with evidence and official records.

3.8. Limitation of the Study

This study has demonstrated the potential to add to educational leadership and management literature. Likewise, it can benefit researchers, school leaders, education officers, policymakers, and practitioners in Gambia and beyond. However, the conclusion from the data collected through interviews, focus group discussions, observations, and document review cannot be generalized. It can only represent part of the education sector of the Gambia or the regional education directorate because the sample consists of four schools drawn from a single regional directorate. In addition, focusing on only one category of schools performing or underperforming would have allowed the researcher to present a more detailed picture of leadership roles in school improvement. Hence, the researcher needed more opportunities to explain both categories comprehensively. In addition, the timing of the data collection period was short thus, I did not have enough time to gather in-depth information on teachers' students and leaders' day-to-day interactions. Participant groups should have included community members like SMC, MC, OR Parents to get their perspectives as well.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESEARCH RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In general terms, the study is designed to explore the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia, with specific objectives of answering four research questions. Thus, the chapter presents the findings of the investigation from interviews, focus group discussions, observation, and document review to provide evidence from various data sources. The findings featured the participants' voices equally, and the researcher made meanings from the participants' views through an interpretive approach in the discussion section. The research questions for the study are designed based on the researcher's curiosity about the role leadership at the school level plays in school improvement, paying particular attention to their organizational structures, capacity-building, and other relevant factors connected to leadership.

Given that most literature reviewed in this study supported the idea of school leadership being vital for school improvement Presenting, the views of headteachers, deputy headteachers, senior masters, and teachers might add essential knowledge to the subject. In that spirit, the data gathered were analyzed and presented through a thematic approach. Hence, the findings are presented in relation to the research questions and are further discussed under three major themes and sub-themes. This thematic presentation in the discussion section conforms to the theoretical foundation of Archer's 1995 Realist Social Theory adopted by this study. Before we delve into the finding section, I briefly describe the study site and its demography.

4.1. Demography of the Selected Schools

As discussed in the introduction section, the Gambia education system is managed by two ministries, namely, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education (MoBSE) and the Ministry of Higher Education Research Science and Technology (MoHERST). The former is responsible for basic and secondary education, while the latter coordinates tertiary education. This study focused on the basic and secondary levels paying particular attention to leadership in elementary schools.

The ministry responsible for basic education has some sort of decentralized management system. Who devolves some degree of managerial authority of schools to the six regions across the country through regional education directorates headed by a regional director. These regional directorates coordinate and implement national education policies and programs under the supervision of the regional directors whom the Permanent Secretary of MoBSE equally supervises.

The selected schools in this study are in one of the regional education directorates in the rural parts of the Gambia, as mentioned in the methodology section. This directorate supervises the educational process of over one hundred schools, including conventional and Islamic schools (Madrasas). Among these schools, four were selected as a case in this study. Before giving the demography of these schools, it is essential to give the socio-economic context of the region itself.

The Central River Region (CRR) is the fifth administrative region in the Gambia, governed by the regional governor. This region is inhabited by people with diverse ethnic, religious, and linguistic orientations. The multiculturalism of the region enriches its social context. In addition, the region is predominantly agrarian, where most people are farmers. Thus, their primary source of income is farming and petty business. This description will

give readers an idea about the geographical settings of selected schools. Hence, below is the demography of the participating schools.

Table 2: Demography of The Participating Schools

Pseudonym	Location	No. Students	No. Staff	Headteachers' Qualification	Leadership Experience
Jolly Phonics LBS	Rural	130	6	(PTC) Primary Teacher Certificate, and Dip. in School Management	23 years
Suruwa Kunda BCS	Rural	301	25	(HTC) Higher Teacher Certificate, and Dip. In School Management	12 years
Strawberry LBS	Rural	1441	26	(PTC) Primary Teacher Certificate, and Dip. in School Management	25 years
Jelly Berry BCS	Rural	766	30	(HTC) Higher Teacher Certificate, and Dip. in Professional English	9 years

4.2. Research Findings

As mentioned above, this section presents the findings of this thesis, corresponding to the four-research questions being investigated. The themes generated are drawn from the research questions and are presented in a narrative format by comprehensively analyzing the research questions. So, taking a closer look into the data collected, the results shed light on various aspects of school leadership to provide a deeper understanding of leadership roles in school improvement. Henceforward, the findings are presented in thematic areas, including; Leadership's contribution to school improvement, professional development, organizational structures, and factors that shape leaders' decision-making process.

4.2.1. Findings for Research Question 1

4.2.1.1. The Contribution of School Leadership in Improving the Quality of Teaching and Learning

Most Literature has discussed leadership in educational spheres, as indicated in the literature review section. Many of these positioned leadership to be vital for school improvement. A similar situation is found in the Gambia's public primary schools under the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education. Thus, the findings signal the leadership situation in schools involved in this study, which are categorized as performing and underperforming schools.

On the one hand, in the performing schools, the findings suggest that leadership has played a crucial role in improving teaching and learning and overall school improvement. Leaders in these schools are determined to improve the quality of teaching and learning. As such, they have developed organizational structures that support them in improving the conditions of their schools. Some of these structures created are school policies, and the policies and programs are tailored to the school's vision and mission for sustainable improvement.

Consequently, leadership in both schools fostered quality teaching and learning through various leadership practices. These include their leadership styles, values incorporated into their staff, and the implementation of the policies and programs in the school. Speaking of programs, internal monitoring is one of the programs perceived to contribute to the schools' performance. Since each school has established a team responsible for internal monitoring in various areas, notably the teaching and learning process. Therefore, the senior management team regularly monitors the instructional practices through classroom observation, and feedback is given to the teachers for improvement. This

is evident in the remarks of the deputy headteacher of Suruwa-Kunda, as he mentioned the following:

Teaching quality has improved due to regular monitoring, as teachers are motivated to perform their duties. This encourages them to deliver to expectations, as they are expected to do a job or task and be monitored at the end of the day. This leads to significant improvement in teachers' performance (Interview, 27th March 2023).

Moreover, “performing schools” have a well-structured leadership team comprising senior management. Thus, each individual in this team is informed of their duties and what is expected of them. This makes it easier for them to coordinate successfully in discharging their duties effectively. In an interview, a deputy headteacher described his role as follows:

As a head of the school's internal monitoring team, I oversee the school's internal affairs, observing teachers' lesson plans, schemes of work, and teaching processes. This observation is crucial for understanding lesson presentation, class management, and instructional practices (Interview: 26th March 2023).

Similarly, teachers expressed their satisfaction with the nature of the leadership structure in their schools, as mentioned by a teacher in the focus group discussion.

Leadership is crucial in addressing challenges and ensuring institutions succeed. Here Students and teachers know who to contact for problems, and leadership is essential for a stable and effective organization (FGD 28th March 2023).

In the same vein, it is found that leadership in both schools has exhibited various leadership styles that potentially improve students' performance. Regarding leadership approaches, both schools have demonstrated instructional, transformational, and transactional leadership orientations in their practices. Suruwa-Kunda and Jelly Berry's leadership was determined to improve teaching and learning, inspire collaboration, encourage innovation, and recognize individual teachers' efforts through a reward and punishment system suggesting instructional, transformational, and transactional leadership orientation. Similarly, both are dedicated to transforming their schools' organizational structure and creating a culture of teaching and learning for sustainable school improvement. The interview with the headteacher of Jelly Berry, who stated the following, provides more support for the aforementioned leadership viewpoints.

I was determined to build a system where the spirit of shared vision and mission is nurtured, fostering a sense of collective responsibility among my staff, teaching, and non-teaching. By empowering and inspiring my staff. Doing so can produce a vibrant, groundbreaking teaching and learning environment (Interview: 30th March 2023).

The headteacher of Suruwa-Kunda also stated the following:

Here we promote collaboration, innovation, and professional growth among staff, allowing teachers to explore their potential and enhance teaching and learning. Leadership nurtures talents and provides support, creating a sense of ownership and commitment towards the school's success (Interview: 25th March 2023).

Furthermore, leadership in performing schools shapes and directs the school culture and climate, which are considered conducive to teaching and learning. Speaking of culture, it has been discovered that performing schools have a culture of teaching and learning in which teachers are inspired, motivated, and supported in their instructional practice. Therefore, leadership in these schools is found to be contributing immensely to the improvements realized in the performing schools.

In addition, teachers at Jelly Berry maintained that the school had changed drastically in term of performance, management, and leadership when their current headteacher came. However, some describe the headteacher as an authoritative leader who ensures the school realizes its vision and mission through consultation, coercion, threats, and sometimes intimidation tactics one of the teachers said the following an FGD.

Honestly, leadership in this school are doing well, but one problem we faced is that we the teachers are given very little room for negotiation or collaboration. The headteacher in particular have an authoritative tendency as such we are forced to do think. To put it simple, comply with his methods or you go (FGD, 2nd April 2023)

Like Jelly Berry, the headteacher at Suruwa-Kunda is also described as a great leader. This begs the question, what makes a leader a great leader? This answer is sought from the views of the participants. The four teachers unanimously agreed during the Focus Group Discussion (FGD) that their headteacher inspired them as individuals in becoming a better person as well as their instructional practices. As put by one of the teachers below:

I can say we are motivated to give our best to usher in quality teaching and learning in the school because our headteacher serves as a role model and a mentor for us. He created that environment where we are inspired to give it our best for good quality education (FGD, 28th March 2023).

In addition, another teacher describes the same headteacher as a “human transformer.” He cited a case of two teachers who were posted to Suruwa-Kunda in the middle of the term because they could not work with their previous headteachers. These teachers were branded as troublemakers, and most headteachers rejected them when posted to their schools. Despite this labelling, the headteacher of Suruwa-Kunda accepted them with the hopes of changing them. A teacher in the FGD accounted as follows:

He welcomed them without prejudice and was able to rehabilitate them and make them team players. Currently, those teachers are doing well with us in the school (FGD, 28th March 2023).

Similarly, the deputy head teacher in the same school also describes the headteacher as a “good and kind-hearted person with great honesty and integrity”. He accounted that under his leadership, they were able to transform the process of teaching and learning in the school over time and eventually improve students’ performance in internal and external assessments. I confirmed this statement from documents reviewed as additional data sources to increase reliability and trustworthiness. In addition, through observation, I was able to realize that the headteacher had created a sense of teamwork among his senior management team (school leaders) and the entire teaching staff. This observation is supported by the senior master who made the following remarks;

In the school here we work as a team irrespective of your status, we collaborate and support each other whenever necessary (Interview, 27th March 2023).

Upon asked how they were able to create such an environment in this school, he responded by saying that the culture was inspired by the headteacher.

Notwithstanding, it must be said that the role of school-level leaders (SMT) was one of many determinants of the success registered in these performing schools. It is found that the local communities are equally contributing to these improvements, especially parents. Headteachers maintained that, without the support of the parents, they could not have done what they were doing for the school. They have recognized that parents’ involvement in the

Parent Teachers' Association (PTA) and the annual School Performance Monitoring Meeting (SPMM) was essential for these improvements. These suggest that the parents' role has complemented the SMT's effort through the structures created to improve teaching and learning.

The SPMM is a policy pronouncement that allows parents to directly engage the leadership and teaching staff to discuss issues relevant to school improvement, particularly students' performance on external and internal assessments. Parents participate in these meetings, providing suggestions and finding common ground with teachers on initiatives that could improve student performance, such as study classes. Evidence for this finding was sourced from the SPMM and PTA files during the document review.

In the same manner, parents were found to be critical players in developing and implementing school policies, particularly on the textbook and homework policy. Most participants reverberated the role of parents in the implementation of homework policy, which most perceived as an essential structure that contributed to students' performance. Consequently, it is safe to suppose that parents' role in facilitating or helping their children to complete their homework is a plus to the successful implementation of the homework policy, as alluded to by the participants.

Furthermore, local community leadership structures are also critical in school improvement, particularly the School Management Committee (SMC) and Mothers' Club (MC). In teaching and learning, mothers' clubs in these schools played a positive role in providing students with learning resources. Participants in the performing schools maintained that their mothers' clubs contributed in various ways, including helping underprivileged children with learning materials, cleaning the school environment weekly or monthly, and contributing to school feeding programs through the school gardens. As mentioned by the headteacher of Jelly Berry:

Mothers' clubs are instrumental in teaching and learning and have been very helpful in providing teaching and learning resources to schools through the Education Sector Support Project (ESSP). This project is run by the mothers' clubs funded by the world bank to support children in rural communities to access education. They also play a significant role in the enrolment and retention campaign (interview: 30th March 2023).

The headteacher of Suruwa-Kunda also commented similarly on mothers' clubs' contributions. In the same vein, a similar situation is also reported in underperforming schools. However, in the case of Strawberry, the mothers' club's involvement in teaching and learning was not emphasized, but their involvement in poultry rearing in the school was. The headteacher stressed the mother's club's role in managing the school poultry house, which was a source of funds for the school. He further stated that these funds collected from the poultry are used to purchase teaching and learning materials for the schools, suggesting MC's indirect involvement in teaching and learning.

Though some teachers contested this claim, stating that the leadership is not very helpful in providing the necessary teaching materials. Whereas if they purchase teaching materials like chalk, vanguard, and markers, accessing them was usually challenging, according to the teachers in the focus group discussion. However, they recognized the mother's club's contribution but accused the leadership of failing to serve them in the best way possible.

Additionally, the school management committee's effort is also recognized by the leadership, especially the chairperson of the committee, and a substructure responsible for the school environment and learner welfare. They are praised for supporting teaching and learning through community monitoring, resource mobilization at the local level, and coordinating study groups in the communities. In addition, participants recognized the crucial role of the SMC chairperson in teacher accommodation where housing is not provided for teachers.

Furthermore, the Regional Education Directorate (RED) is another crucial player in fostering school success. Personnel in these offices are responsible for educational matters in the regions. Thus, this study found the Regional Education Directorate Five (5) South supportive by providing schools relevant services needed. Participants maintained that they provide services ranging from human and material resource mobilization, monthly school monitoring, and building school leaders' capacity through workshops and management meetings. In addition, the directorate has personnel in the field called cluster monitors who work directly with school leaders for school improvement, especially in teaching and learning. Therefore, it cannot go without pointing out that RED equally complements school leaders' efforts in providing better services for sustainable school improvement.

On the other hand, underperforming schools have leadership that aspires to improve their performance based on my observation but cannot realize that desire due to so many factors. Given that leaders ought to have the competence to develop structures enabling them to attain the desired success in the school. The study found contrary results in these schools since most structures, such as school policies, were inherited. When I asked the headteacher of Strawberry whether he have created the policies displayed on the wall he responded as follows:

No, most of these policies were here, I only made the water policy. I did not change these policies because I think they are relevant for my vision for the school (Interview, 3rd April 2023).

I further asked what was his vision for the school, he claimed that he envisioned to improve students' and teacher performance in the school. But he appeared to have limited plans in achieving this vision, since he could not relate the available policies to his leadership strategies for school improvement.

Since leaders in these schools did not develop these policies corresponding to their vision for the school, they appeared to find it challenging to implement them (observation).

The leadership's inability to improve these inherited policies and redesignate members with clear roles and responsibilities potentially challenges them in advancing their schools.

Likewise, community participation is found to be very weak in these schools, particularly in Jolly Phonics which is believed to challenge leadership. Records from the visitor's book, logbook, and community monitoring booklet show no records of parents visiting the school, nor do they participate in any meetings throughout the academic year 2022/2023. The SPMM that was to be conducted annually was not done since the 2020/2021 academic year. Generally, the involvement of community members in the process of teaching and learning was minimal. This suggests that the leadership is reluctant or lacks the capability to exploit the potential of local communities in school improvement.

In the case of Strawberry, based on my observation the community is somewhat involved in the school but not directly in the teaching and learning process. However, the chairman of the SMC is a frequent visitor in the school, according to the community monitoring booklet. Upon questioning the headteacher, he stated that he is one of the signatories to the school account, and his signature is needed for cash withdrawal. Suggesting that they are found to be more involved in the financial issues of the schools, like poultry rearing.

Overall, evidenced gathered through interview, FGD, document review, and observation shows that the school leadership's effort and other agential factors contributed immensely to improving teaching and learning by providing necessary support to teachers. Leadership practices, the creation of structures, culture, community participation, and resource mobilization are found to support teaching and learning. In addition, based on my observations and interviews in the performing schools it could be inferred that school leaders are motivated and determined to improve teaching and learning quality through their

teacher professional development programs, which is discussed in the following subheading below.

4.2.2. Findings for Research Question 2

4.2.2.1. Improving Teachers' instructional capacity through professional development opportunities

Teacher professional development is perceived to be a crucial element in improving standards of teaching and learning in schools. Thus, the study's findings indicate that performing schools (Suruwa-Kunda and Jelly Berry) have a well-structured, systematic, and regularly scheduled professional development program offered to teachers, evidence for this statement was sought from document review and observation. There is a scheduled and structured TPD program displayed in the headteachers office and records are found collaborating the implementation of the plan. These professional development programs have improved the instructional capacities of teachers, which contributes to improving the standards of teaching and learning. It is realized that teachers in these schools have demonstrated advanced pedagogical skills in delivering their lessons. Furthermore, through observation, it is found that teachers are competent in preparing and delivering quality lessons.

Upon questioning them in a focus group discussion (FGD), most said their leadership deserved the credits. Since they are consistent and determined to improve their instructional capacities at all costs, thus, they provide them with relevant and advanced professional development opportunities within and outside the school for better service delivery. These initiatives focus on lesson and scheme preparation, micro-teaching, mentoring, classroom management, record keeping, and understanding the Service Level Agreement (SLA)

components. Improving teachers' capacity in the said areas equips them with relevant knowledge, skills, tools, and resources, which enhance their instructional practices.

Consequently, several reasons are associated with the success observed in performing schools. One of the reasons associated with success is the recurrent and continuous Teacher Professional Development (TPD) opportunities offered to the teachers. It is found that leadership in performing schools encourages teachers' participation in TPD and offers them the required resources and support to advance their teaching and learning process.

Additionally, the headteachers report through interviews that they endeavour to offer their teaching staff relevant and contemporary pedagogical skills and knowledge from experienced and knowledgeable educators within the region and beyond. These include regional education officers, cluster monitors, seasoned headteachers, and other professionals in related fields. To sum up, professional development offered to teachers increases their ability to impart knowledge and skills to their students through quality teaching and learning. Given that teachers had access to varied and pertinent professional development opportunities. This is confirmed by teachers in the FGD as one of them state the following:

The type of professional development we are receiving here is quite good, and we found them refreshing since leaders bring resources persons who are well grounded in the area of training (FGD, 28th March 2023)

On the other hand, findings in underperforming schools are contrary to those in the performing ones. Jolly Phonics and Strawberry's leadership demonstrated inconsistency in providing teachers with necessary professional development opportunities. As a result, teachers in underperforming schools demonstrated an insignificant advancement in their instructional capacity and minimal improvements in teaching and learning. In Jolly Phonics, no professional development records were found for the last two years. This is collaborated by the participants claiming they had no professional development for over two years. A

participant makes the claims below when asked about the leadership's initiatives for teacher instructional development.

Since I came here, I never saw the leadership take any initiative to support teachers' instructional practices. However, people said they used to give SIG to support school-based workshops but did not have any since I came here, which is over two years now (interview: 23rd March 2023).

Similar comments were made by teachers during the focus group discussion. one of the teachers made the following claim confirming the senior masters' statement.

Honestly, our last school-based training was in 2020 that was my first year here. From that to date we did not have any training in relation to our capacity building or professional development (FGD, 24th March 2023).

On the other hand, Leadership at Strawberry occasionally offers their teachers capacity-building opportunities, but teachers' behaviour and attitude towards the training are reported to undermine their efforts said the SMT during an interview. They have reported that teachers' attendance has challenged them when organizing this professional development training. They maintained that their teachers are not willing to sacrifice their weekends for training where they would not have any financial benefits. Thus, most of their teaching staff refused to attend the organized training, which undermined the purpose of the training.

From the teachers' perspective, they argued that the leadership in the school is unwilling to spend the money set aside for training to give them access to programs that are crucial and pertinent to their professional and instructional practices. One of the teachers state the following during FGD:

The only professional development training offered to us repeatedly was lessons preparation and schemes was, which I think cannot be the only training we need to improve our instructional and professional growth. So, it does not make sense to be repeating the same thing over and over (FGD, 6th April 2023).

They believed that this would not aid them in improving their teaching strategies. Therefore, they think the training is useless and a waste of their time, and they would instead do something more worthwhile. Consequently, the inconsistency in providing regular and

necessary training has potentially challenged the teachers to deliver quality lessons resulting in poor teaching and learning culture.

Additionally, based on my observation through document review and interviews, I found that the quality of professional development opportunities provided to Strawberry and Jolly Phonics teachers are insufficient to meet their unique requirements and problems. As a result, there was little of an impact on instructional capacity. Thus, the ineffectiveness of professional development in these schools can be associated with agential, structural, and cultural factors.

The fact that leadership in underperforming schools are not regularly providing the required professional development to their staff suggests their unwillingness or inability to provide their teaching staff with the necessary professional development to increase their competency in the classroom. This shows an agential component that presented difficulties for the struggling schools. Additionally, the absence of a welcoming, professional learning community and a culture that encourages ongoing improvement hinders applying new ideas and techniques. This is the case in both schools because TPD culture is weak, potentially degrading the standard of instruction. So, the difficulties and structural problems in underperforming schools, such as teacher resistance and inconsistency, further undermined professional development programs' efficacy.

Therefore, it is safe to say that the professional development opportunities provided to teachers have enhanced their ability to instruct in successful schools. However, improving teachers' abilities and competencies remains a serious problem for underperforming schools. In order to close the achievement gap, underperforming schools must review their organizational structures, including school policies and teacher professional development programs. If they successfully develop structures that support TPD culture, it will eventually

result in quality instructional practices that are sustainable for teaching and learning. This brings us to my study's next theme, discussed below.

4.2.3. Findings for Research Question 3

4.2.3.1. Organizational Structures: Implication on School Improvement

In every organizational setting, structures are vital in aiding leadership to achieve the desired goal. In the context of this study, the organizational structures include school policies, leadership structures, resource allocation, committees, and sub-committees. The findings revealed the following after exploring these aspects in the participating schools to understand their relevance in school improvement.

Given that participating schools in this study are categorized as performing and underperforming, the findings are presented as such. In the case of performing schools, the findings indicated that they have well-defined, flexible organizational structures encouraging effective decision-making and resource allocation. These structures were identified through observation, document review, and interviews as having distinct lines of authority and responsibility. This allowed effective communication and collaboration between the members of the SMT and the entire teaching and non-teaching staff in their schools.

Furthermore, Suruwa-Kunda and Jelly Berry's leadership has shown a strong and effective leadership setup that encouraged innovation, promoted professional development, and established a healthy school culture. These enable the leadership to create and implement effective school policies such as homework policies, assessment policies, attendance policies, student and teachers' codes of conduct, sexual harassment policy, professional development policy, and monitoring policy. These policies supposedly

contributed immensely to improving students' academic and teachers' instructional performance.

Contrary to the performing schools, underperforming ones are found to have unstructured and unsound organizational structures, where leadership roles are not clearly designated. This situation has the potential to undermine school improvement. To circle back to the leadership structure, it is found that some members of the SMT are not informed or aware of their roles and responsibilities in the school. A senior master at Jolly Phonics states the following:

I am not aware that I am the senior master until when we learnt learned about your visit to their school. This is the time the headmaster told me I am the senior master and I would be having interview with you (Interview, 23rd March 2023).

This suggests poor task delegation and division of labor in the leadership team.

In addition, poor coordination and collaboration were observed among the SMT and the teaching staff. Participants in Jolly Phonics described their leadership as a one-man show since significant decisions are made by the headteacher alone without involving the rest of the team and other staff, especially in financial matters. In the same vein, teachers expressed the feeling of being unable to depend on the leadership to support them in their instructional practice since they did not show any commitment to providing them with the necessary resources for teaching and learning.

On the other hand, Strawberry's leadership is somewhat structured, and members of the SMT are informed about their roles and responsibilities in the school. However, based on my observation through one week interaction, they appeared to lack the capacity to execute their duties as expected. Many factors resulted in this, including their professional qualifications, lack of proper capacity-building for leaders, and structural and cultural factors. Given that the leadership inherited most of their current policies from the previous administration, it is challenging for them to implement these policies effectively. As a result,

the policies become ineffective, and the leadership is putting minimal effort into remedying this situation since they failed to develop new policies to address the challenges faced.

Similarly, through observation and document review, I found inconsistency in both schools' internal monitoring practices compared to the performing ones. Leadership was expected to develop and implement internal monitoring of teachers' instructional practices, but this was not the case in both schools. Strawberry had an internal monitoring schedule developed, but the practice was inconsistent and weak. Whereas teachers' instructions were monitored, the feedbacks given by the observers are too general and weak based on the comments found on the Classroom Observation Tools (COT). In contrast, Jolly Phonics did not have a monitoring schedule, and no record of internal monitoring was found for the academic year 2022/2023. This practice contravenes the Minimum Standard and the School Management Manual (SMM).

Furthermore, it was found that leaders in these schools needed help developing relevant organizational structures to create a school culture that could support teaching and learning. This position inspired from my observation of the types of policies available in the school. Most of the policies displayed in the headteachers office were outdated. Upon asking the headteacher of Jolly phonics how he developed his school policies he made the following comments:

When making policies I invite all stakeholders in the process, but these policies displayed here are from the previous administration as you can see most are date back in 2016 (Interview, 21st March 2023).

Given that both schools have inherited most of their current school policies, they needed to develop policies relevant to teaching and learning per their vision for the school. Speaking of vision, the school's vision and mission statement developed since the school was established and was never changed, which I believe should be subjected to amendments per the leadership's vision. Even though they are not changed, the leadership should

compensate for this stagnation with more progressive policies and programs. However, as mentioned above, this was impossible because most policies in both schools are inherited.

Likewise, the committees and sub-committees available in these schools are ineffective since most members are unaware of their roles and responsibilities based on observation. Thus, there is a need to redistribute assignments with clear guidelines for effective service delivery. Reflecting Archer's position on structure, they argued that structures could be both enablers and obstacles to organizational success. In this case, it was found that structures were obstacles since they challenged the leadership to provide the desired school improvement based on my observation.

It has been determined from interviews, observations, and focus group discussions that leaders in these schools' work to raise student achievement and general success. However, they do not have the ability or agency to make the needed changes. I, therefore, argue that for these desired advancements to be possible, leadership must address the challenges that hinder teaching and learning in the school.

Given that the participating schools in this study are located in the rural part of the country under the same regional education directorate, it is assumed that they might face similar cultural and structural challenges. Through observation in the field, this assumption is found to be true. Both schools had reportedly faced similar cultural challenges such as child marriage, school dropout, teenage pregnancy, societal norms, values, peoples' perceptions towards Western education, teachers' and students' attendance and punctuality, parents' educational background, and overall school culture. Structurally, the schools shared the same challenges ranging from irrelevant/outdated school policies, weak organizational structure, teacher resistance, less functional community leadership structures and participation, and poor internal and external monitoring structure.

In light of these situations, I explored the leaders' agency in performing and underperforming schools on how they address these challenges. The findings revealed that the leadership in performing schools first addresses the structural problems in the school. The headteachers in Jelly Berry made the following remarks:

I adjusted the schools' vision and created policies relevant to teaching and learning for sustainable school improvement. Also, I redesigned the leadership structure by assigning members of the SMT with clear roles and responsibilities (Interview, 30th March 2023).

Similar comments were made by the headteacher of Suruwa-Kunda, who further states the following:

I equally tried to address the issue of teacher resistance regulations (Interview, 25th March 2023).

Correspondingly, the issue of community participation through SMC, Mothers' Clubs, and other relevant stakeholders was improved through dialogue the headteachers said. In addition, there is scheduled weekly and monthly monitoring of teachers' instructional activities in their classrooms (internal monitoring schedule), which is featured in the reports given by the cluster monitors. On the other hand, through observation and evidence from documents reviewed, this is not happening in schools classified as underperforming; the leadership in these schools failed to create a framework to address the structural challenges they face.

According to leaders in Suruwa-Kunda and Jelly Berry, upon addressing the structural challenges, they move on to the cultural ones through community engagements, sensitization campaigns, and volunteering in community service to win the hearts of local people. The headteacher at Jelly Berry made the following remarks during an interview.

I used religious and local leaders to engage the community members on child enrolment and retention campaign. Through this, I was able to improve enrolment and retention in the school (Interview, 30th March 2023).

Similar practice was reported by the headteacher of Suruwa-Kunda who maintained that engaging the religious and local leaders was crucial. They were able to remind them

about the importance of education, irrespective of the kind. Since most people in rural communities have reservations and prejudice against Western education. As a result, they would want their children to be in the local religious centers called “*Darah*” instead of sending them to conventional schools.

Consequently, both leaders reported that the situation has improved through the interventions of religious and local leaders. Though enrolment and retention remain problematic in most schools, the condition worsens in Jolly Phonics. Many factors are associated with this, including parental background, social norms, people’s perception of Western education, and poverty. The headteacher of Jolly Phonics confirms this by making the following remarks:

Enrolment in this school high when we have school feeding program, but when food is finished it very difficult to have children here especially those in the Early Childhood Center (ECD) and grade one (Interview, 21st March 2023).

The above statement is suggesting the socioeconomic situation in jolly phonics. The headteacher further elaborated on the economic situation of the community by stating that most of the parents sent their children to school when there is food to reduce the burden of food provision since they will eat at the school, the quantity to be prepared will be reduced for sustenance.

Overall, it is found that agential, structural, and cultural factors are enablers and challenges to improving teaching and learning in schools. In schools where the leadership makes the structures work for them, resulting in positive school culture, then in this case, structures and the agential factors are considered enablers for school improvement. However, in an instance where the leadership failed to use their agency to address the structural and cultural challenges, they are considered deterrents for school improvement. This led me to the next theme which present factors that shape leadership practices and their decision-making processes.

4.2.4. Findings for Research Question 4

4.2.4.1 Factors that Shape the School Leaders' Leadership Orientation and Decision-making

As social beings, people are not insusceptible to the social world's influence, especially in their immediate environment. This inspired my fourth research question to explore the factors that shape or contribute to school leaders' leadership practice and decision-making process. Through observation and interview, the findings present some context on the factors that inform the schools' leadership orientation and decision-making process, including cultural, social, and religious elements. These are further discussed in the subsequent sub-headings below.

4.2.4.1.1. Culture: An External Force in Shaping School Leaders' Leadership Style and Decision-making

As mentioned earlier, cultural norms and values of local communities are crucial elements that inform these schools' leadership styles and decision-making processes. Communities' cultural rituals, practices, and expectation hugely affects the leadership way of running the day-to-day affairs of the schools. According to some participants, because most communities still hold their cultural values close to their hearts, school leaders in these communities must conform to their cultural practices if they are to retain their children in that school.

In the case of Suruwa-Kunda, the leadership reported that they are meticulous in implementing their policies and programs because the community is very strict with their cultural norms and values. For any headteacher to survive in that community, you must show utmost respect to their values, join them in their cultural rituals, and incorporate them into your school policies and programs, the headteacher said. Given that the community still

hangs on to its norms, especially on gender issues like women's dress code, leadership must adhere to their values for girls to wear long dresses. In an interview, the deputy headteacher narrated a story that girls are not allowed to wear shorts even during sports; this is how he put it.

We normally face some challenges, especially when it comes to the area of sports. Since girls refuse to put on pants. The people in this society believes that women should not wear shorts or, at best, not play sports. Therefore, when it comes to sports in the school here, we have more boys than girls because their parents prefer them to dress like that to come out. After all, culturally, males are built for sport instead of females (Interview: 25th March 20223).

Therefore, situations like that force the leadership to adapt to the realities on the ground and keep them in mind when making decisions or making programs. Another interesting story was the culture of break-taking from school during the rainy season. This is common in Suruwa-Kunda, Jolly Phonics, and Jelly Berry because many are farmers, and parents prioritize farming over children's education, school leaders say. The leadership in these schools reported that they experience high absenteeism from children in classes four to six. Children in these categories are grown and can work on the farms. Hence their parents would withdraw them from class to the farm in the case of boys, while girls babysit their younger siblings.

The headteachers at Jelly Berry and Suruwa-Kunda stated that upon realizing that the practice is more of a community culture, children in the upper classes are interrupted during the rainy season. They adjusted their flexible academic calendar to accommodate this problem. For Suruwa-Kunda, they prepare make-up classes for these students upon their return or prior.

Furthermore, ethnic and cultural diversity is found in this study's participating schools. Thus, leaders in these schools adhere to this cultural and ethnic diversity among students and staff. Therefore, they devised anti-bully and inclusive learning policies designed to accommodate all. These policies are found in all the participating schools

irrespective of performing and underperforming. Other than cultural factors, another crucial element shapes the leadership practices of school leaders discussed in the theme below.

4.2.4.1.2. Social Forces: A Determinant in Decision-making

Another crucial element found to be relevant in school leaders' decision-making process and overall leadership practices is the Socioeconomic situation in the school. Because most of these communities are agrarian except that of Strawberry, the school's socioeconomic situation and the surrounding communities are critical to the leaders' decision-making processes. Since the schools' primary funding sources are through the government, the leaders find it challenging to implement programs that require a substantial financial burden. Therefore, they had to develop programs within the rubrics of the grant from the government. According to most leaders, this posed serious challenges when planning their budgets for the School Improvement Plan (SIP) to address some educational challenges.

Another social force influencing school leaders' decision-making is the involvement of stakeholders, given that these schools consist of various stakeholders, including the School Management Committee (SMC), Mothers' Clubs, Parent Teachers' Association (PTA), students, and other community members. Therefore, leaders' decision-making is influenced when balancing diverse interests and views and, most importantly, maintaining positive coexistence in the school between the stakeholders. The headteacher of Suruwa-Kunda described how he involves stakeholders in decision-making when planning the school budget. This is what he had to say:

When making the school improvement plan, I invite all the stakeholders, including the SMT, SMC, teachers, students, and the Mothers' Club president. When they come, I usually ask them what plans we can implement for the incoming year to help us improve the school. Different suggestions are usually given, but I ensure we reach a consensus before making any decision A (Interview: 28th March 2023).

This proves that stakeholders influenced or shaped school leaders' decision-making and leadership practices. This led me to the next subheading on findings for research question four. Furthermore, the local leadership structure in communities is equally found to be influencing leaders' decision-making.

4.2.4.1.3. Religious Motivations

This aspect is observed in Suruwa-Kunda as a base for guiding leadership in decision-making. The headteacher and the deputy headteacher in the said school demonstrated high religiosity in their leadership practices. Their faith-based values and principles inform most of their practices and speeches. Upon interacting with them for days, I observed that these leaders had integrated their values and beliefs into their educational and leadership practices, including decision-making. One interesting thing in this school is that leadership makes it their primary duty to nurture good ethics, character, and morals in their students and staff in general. It is observed that a culture of daily congregation prayer is established. Teachers and students gathered at 13.00hrs to perform midday prayer (Zuhur) before going to class. A similar practice is done for late afternoon prayer (Asar) daily. When the headteacher was asked about why he prioritized character and moral development, this is what he had to say:

Morals are essential in leadership, as people with strong morals desire people they can match. Negative morals can lead to withdrawal of children from schools, as some people value religious education. To convince these people to appreciate Western education, leaders must possess good morals. Morals are essential ingredients in leadership (Interview: 28th March 2023).

The above narrations present the findings of the study, which are further discussed in the discussion section below. The next section presents three major themes with sub-themes to rationalize the study's findings. Hence, this leads to the next section of the study.

4.3. Discussion

This section discusses the study's findings by contextualizing the results through an interpretive approach. I rationalised the findings of my research and tried to link them with the literatures discussed in the second chapter of this work. To facilitate a nice flow of discussion, I presented the section in thematic areas which are consistent with the study's theoretical framework.

4.3.1. Agency: School Leadership's Ability to Effect Meaningful Improvement in Teaching and Learning

The notion of school leaders being central in school improvement has been reported by several participants during interviews and FGDs, particularly among those from the performing schools. Suggesting that school leadership plays a significant role in improving the quality of teaching and learning in schools through the use of right agency. So, leaders' ability to provide positive feedback to teachers was critical to improving the standards of teaching and learning. A similar thing argued by Lutswamba, (2017); Gul et al., (2019); Keiler et al., (2020). In a school where leaders create a culture of given constructive/positive feedback to their teachers stand a better chance of improving teachers' job satisfaction as found in the performing schools.

Coming back to the leadership role, I hold the view that the primary function of any leader is to effect change. My findings revealed that leaders in the performing schools had addressed the structural and cultural challenges they encountered in improving standards of instruction. A situation found in the performing schools suggests that their agency triumph over the potential challenges they face. The study of Shava & Heystek's, (2019) came up with likewise finding, but my findings have gone beyond the agency of school leaders alone but have recognised an army of other agential factors that complement leaders' agency. This

means that, leaders' agency is recognized as a crucial element in improving school's situation. However, I am with the believe that they cannot do it alone in the context of the Gambian school system, due to so many reasons.

One of those reasons are the way school management is structure. Gambia like any other country, leadership at school level is recognise as key to school improvement as suggested in the findings. But their supremacy to eject in meaningful change is always undermined if they distance themselves from the stakeholders that ought to complement the leadership.

While I am still talking about leadership, I am conscious of the fact that there are some distinctions between leaders and managers. So, it is essential to point out that being the best manager does not necessarily make you the best leader. Given that leaders are expected to inspire, guide, nurture, facilitate, lead, and transform their followers into the best course possible to attain a common goal. I am, therefore, particular to see that leadership in these schools possesses the traits mentioned in transforming the said schools into performing ones.

Furthermore, the findings indicated that the participating schools are surrounded by lots of potential human or material resources within and outside the school. It is, therefore, the job of the leaders to mobilize and exploit the resources available for school improvement. Thus, the findings further suggest that the leadership in these schools has managed to use most of the resources available within the school and the community to improve the school's performance. This is done by involving local community and teacher structure in the school to support them in school improvement. This signals the leaders' capabilities in effecting meaningful change using their agency which is consistent with the work of Hassan et al., (2019).

In the same vein, during the focus group discussion, teachers commented on the quality of their school leaders. They recognized headteachers as the leading men behind most successes in the past few years since they were the main initiators for most programs and policies in the school. This points out the influencer in the leadership team, which aligns with Evans's (2022) proposed approach of looking into the who and what in leadership inquiry. My position slightly differs from that of Evans's who was proposing a critical perspective trying to downplay the relevance of the mainstream leadership in school settings. However, I still hold the view that the mainstream leadership championed in classical literatures are still relevant in exploring leadership role in schools.

Moving on, the findings reported in the finding section indicates that leadership at the performing schools had registered success in teaching and learning because they had prioritized monitoring, positive feedback, evaluating, and building teachers' capacity. These areas have been consistently inquired in scholarly discussion in to learning and teaching (Bush, 2014; Fullan, 2014; Kurup et al., 2019; Lutswamba, 2017). Maintaining these practices allowed Suruwa-Kunda and Jelly Berry to improve their schools' performance through quality teaching and learning.

Similarly, findings indicated that some leaders are seen to be serving as a role model to their followers as suggested by some participants. Teachers in Suruwa-Kunda claimed that their headteacher's personality, behavior, and attitudes is quite appealing. As a result he inspired them into becoming a better public servant and give their best towards attaining schools vision and mission for sustainable school improvement. This finding is similar with Bush's, (2014, 2021) argument on leadership theories, particularly on instructional and transformational where he put emphasis on leadership being centered on acting out as role model. In an instance where followers look up to their leader, it becomes easy for leadership to lead the followership towards a sustainable improvement.

This led me back to the point where teachers in Suruwa-Kunda described their headteacher as a human transformer. I could not help but concur with the participants without exaggeration that the head teacher exhibits positive leadership traits based on the description and case analysis in the finding section. Given that the primary goal of leadership is to assist their followers, the analysis indicates that leadership in Suruwa-Kunda helps his teachers by guiding and inspiring them into becoming the best versions of themselves.

Another interesting dimension featured in the study's findings is the leaders' ability to recognize the need to established a culture that promote certain values and standard of instruction. Values such as kindness, honesty, and moral integrity are critical ingredients for leadership in inspiring their followers as it is the case in Jelly Berry and Suruwa-Kunda, this argument is in line with Purwanto et al, (2020) findings on the role of fostering a culture of values as a leaders' ability . Therefore, discussing school leadership in a cultured environment, leaders' moral values should be given special attention since they are critical in their leadership practice.

Falling back to the point of identifying influencer in the leadership, I deliberately explore the potential of individual leaders within the team to identify the who and the what suggested above. So, despite school leadership in Gambia being structured as a team (SMT), the study has recognized individual leaders' efforts that are found to be the main initiators of most school programs. This is not to downplay the role of teamwork but to identify the main agents influencing the team's actions. In this case, those are the headteachers in both Jelly Berry and Suruwa-Kunda this conforms to Evans, (2022a, 2022b), suggesting the who in influencing the change process.

By designed, headteachers are supposed to be change initiators and be supported by their team including the SMT and other structures within the school. So, when the

headteacher lacks the necessary skills and knowledge (agency), and failed to exploit the external agencies to support their efforts, the schools would risk being stagnant (morpho stasis) as the findings indicated in the case of the underperforming schools. This is consistent with Case, (2017) and Shava & Heystek (2019) who placed an emphasis on leaders as change agents in schools. The irony in this all is that, the so-called SMT appears to be inactive since the deputy headteacher and the senior master as well as other staff members were not ready to take further initiative for school improving because of the fear of being referred as power hungry.

Therefore, I believe that, there is a need for the rigid top-down approach in leadership practices be reconsidered. Because the findings in both schools indicated that leadership structure in both schools is top-down approach which has limited the potential of teacher leaders and other SMT members in schools because the headteacher appeared to be unwilling to include them in decision making. These signals the relevance for schools to support distributed leadership practice. Dismantling the rigid autocratic leadership practices found in the schools will promote collaboration among leaders as suggested by Harris et al., (2019); Harris, and Gronn, (2008). Leaders' actions are crucial to school success as demonstrated in the case of performing. So, allowing leaders to perpetuate an autocratic leadership practice that continues to alienate the stakeholders will further undermine schools' success. Thus, the leadership practices that encourage collaboration, shared decision making, innovation, and mutual respect is highly encouraged to be adopted by school leaders to change their schools.

Furthermore, another aspect of leaders' agency revealed in the findings is their ability to exploit all the potential elements that could usher in a footpath to improve teaching and learning in schools. Given that I am viewing school as a social system, it came no surprise that other agential factors are found to be complementary to leaders' agency. Therefore, if

leadership in the underperforming schools facilitates an environment where all stakeholders are involved in the educational process, they stand better chance of advancing school performance. Therefore, the finding in the case of the performing schools yielded same to Bush's, (2021) work where they claimed that school leaders ought to create a culture that allow parents, students, teachers, and community members to work as a team to improve performance.

It is essential to highlight that Gambian schools are designed in such a way that, they must work with local leadership structures such as SMC, PTA, MC, and, RED in order to make any meaningful change. With that in mind, the study explores the leadership's capability of exploiting both human and other natural resources at the community level to help in school development. Since the local community is perceived to be vital in the educational process, especially in complementing teachers' efforts in students' learning, it requires leadership with radical and progressive visions to bring the community on board to improve school performance.

The education sector policy 2016-2030 dictates school leaders to work with the local community to improve school performance. As mentioned in Part 2 of the Quality Assurance Framework (QAF), which is dedicated to "Quality Assurance of Teaching and Learning" (MoBSE, 2011). In this section, school leaders are encouraged to include members of the community, including members of the SMC, mothers' club, and Village Development Committee (VDC), to help them provide services relevant to school improvement.

In the spirit of MoBSE, (2016) policy, school leaders are mandated to organize annual school performance monitoring meetings to involve parents in the educational process of their children. This meeting aims to give parents an avenue to discuss their children's performance and learning process with teachers and school leaders. In doing so, parents

work with the teaching staff to develop policies and programs to improve teaching and learning for sustainable school improvement. In light of that context, my finding indicated that, parents play a vital role in the teaching and learning process. Their contribution is found to be enormous in the annual SPMM. In this meeting they help in developing homework policies with the teaching staff in these schools in the spirit of improving students' performance aligning with the education sector policy 2016-2030. Through the same medium, parents reaffirm their position in guiding their kids at home, ensuring they do their homework and study through study groups.

Consequently, school performance seems to be improving in performing schools where leaders incorporate parents and local leadership structures in decision-making, teaching, and learning, which is similar with Wahyuningsih & Sumarsono's, (2017) conclusion. However, it is important to note that leaders could equally involve these stakeholders still remain stagnant. So for such situation to improve schools performance, leaders agency is critical to facilitating to collaboration and shared decision making process. With poor leadership, such collaborations will be meaningless. Yet, still I hold the view that such practice has potential to improve schools in rural Gambia as it seems to work in Suruwa-Kunda and Jelly Berry. Despite this possibility, it is regrettable that the findings revealed that some leaders are hesitant to involve parents at some point in the local leadership structure, such as SMC and Mothers' Clubs, in their decision-making, particularly regarding money.

Thus, I encourage the leadership to regroup and work as a team in collaboration with the community structures for better school performance. Suppose these leaders continue to alienate themselves from the agencies and structures meant to complement their efforts. They will fail the children entrusted to facilitate their growth by providing them with

relevant skills and knowledge to become their best version through a transformative approach. Consequently, the underperformance will be perpetuated.

In addition, the regional education directorate is another vital agent found to be helping school leaders to improve teaching and learning for sustainable school improvement. To support school leaders, RED divides the region into clusters where each is assigned a monitor to work with the school leaders. As prescribed in the Cluster Monitors Manual (CMM), Version 2, page 5, developed in 2008. It is the job of the cluster monitors to help schools achieve the best possible teaching and learning and the highest possible standards for pupils. As cluster monitors work alongside the school leaders and other stakeholders, they are helping to build capacity and assist schools in achieving the quality education that Gambian young people deserve (MoBSE, 2008). Therefore, it is safe to argue that school leaders' efforts and capability for school improvement are complimented by RED primary through cluster monitors.

Participants confirmed the role of cluster monitors in their schools ranging from conflict management, resource mobilization, capacity-building training at both cluster and school levels, and teacher recruitment with the help of the regional education directorate. This is confirmed by documents reviewed from the cluster monitor's file. It has been found that cluster monitors are visiting the schools at least twice a month. They monitor teachers' instructional practices and leadership practices. They also guide and provide positive feedback to the school leaders and teaching staff. Usually, their monitoring ends with recommendations given to leaders to address before their next visit.

Since the current study is inspired by Shava and Heystek's (2019) work, the central argument of the current study in connection to leaders' agency parallels with their findings, i.e., if agency triumphs over structural and cultural factors, schools' condition will improve eventually. However, additional agential factors are deemed relevant for improving teaching

and learning in the school. School leaders' role is affirmed, but it cannot be the only agential factor accountable for improving these schools' performance; other agents mentioned above are too.

4.3.2. Structure: Organizational Structures Adopted by School Leadership in Improving Teaching and Learning

Institutions are grounded on structures that guide their daily operations. Thus, in the context of this study, the structure is a view from the theoretical viewpoint of Margaret Archer's Realist Social Theory which considers structure as "roles, organizations, institutional structures, systems, policies, committees, substructures, and positional levels" within the school. Hence, every successful school leader understands how critical these structures are to improving educational standards, especially the quality of teaching and learning.

I explored the school's structural settings through interviews, observation, FGD, and document review to understand how they support or challenge teaching and learning. The study's findings suggested that organizational structures were enablers, at the same time, obstacles to school improvement. Such structures in this study are school policies, leadership roles, task delegation, and teacher professional development programs.

Both leaders interviewed show a strong awareness of the relevance of structures in school improvement. However, two schools with well-structured leadership had demonstrated a potential to make those structures work for sustainable teaching and learning. At the same time, the other two found it challenging to make it work for them well. Henceforth, those structures are discussed in the subsequent sections below.

4.3.2.1. School Policies

In an ideal world, school policies were meant to play a significant role in improving the educational process in the school system. With that understanding, the researcher believes that school policies can create standards for instructors and students and set the tone for the school's culture. Most school policies are grounded on improving students' and overall school performance. Consequently, these policies are critical in shaping the school's structure, eventually creating positive school culture.

Furthermore, the researcher believes that school policies, such as but not limited to the code of conduct and staff attendance policy, can ensure that teachers are cooperative and become team players in achieving quality education by following rules and regulations within the school. My views are inspired by Archer's position on structure, as she argued that structure could shape organizational growth when guided by the right agency similar to the work of Case, (2015) and Shava & Heystek, (2019). Consequently, I believe that having an exemplary leadership in the school with a focused and consistent approach to school improvement as it was found in the performing schools has created a robust and effective school structure that can promote teaching and learning.

As indicated in the finding section, most structures (policies) in the underperforming schools were inherited from previous leaders while most if not all, of the performing schools were developed by the current leadership. These policies developed or inherited by school leadership effectively improved teaching and learning in some schools while sometimes challenging it as revealed in my analysis. So, it is important for leadership to develop policies and programs in accordance with their vision towards school improvement. Bellibas et al., (2020) also argued that encouraging school leaders to create new policies, vision with

that team to boost a sense of shared values toward successful school improvement. It cannot be one-size fits all process. What works for team A might not necessarily works for team B.

My findings indicated that this understanding was lacking in Jolly Phonics and Strawberry, since the leadership assumed that as far as there are policies, it would be that easy to implement them. this naive believed among the leaders in both schools have made it difficult to make any meaningful improvements through the existing structures. This study parallel in findings to Eloma, (2022) for placing relevance for leaders to have structures that would support their effort towards school improvement. Given that the manner in which leaders work depends on their differences and the internal and external factors that persuades them in discharging their leadership practices. This is evident in the finding given that leadership in each of the participating schools have their unique way of delivering leadership services. I therefore echo on the need for leaders to create their own policies without relying on policies created by other leaders. Relying on the inherited structures as found in the underperforming schools would only challenge them in delivering effective services, this finding adds another dimension to the structural context in schools argued by Shava & Heystek (2019).

To sum-up looking at the school policies developed or inherited in the schools through the lens of the realist social theory, it could be argued that school policies in this context are categorized as structures that were efficiently used by the leadership in some instances for school improvement by creating a culture of teaching and learning that improve the quality of instructional practices for the sustainable educational outcome.

4.3.2.2. Roles and Responsibilities

In an organizational setting, people are assigned various roles with specific responsibilities to be discharged. This study's findings indicated that the roles and

responsibilities of the school's leadership team, including the SMT, teachers, and other staff, contributed to the development of teaching and learning through the structural settings of a school. It is found that individual staff are designated to various roles and responsibilities through leadership, where every member knows their terms of reference. This has helped them in implementing programs and policies without muddling and scuffling rather they were working in teams in a collaborative manner lining up with literatures on distributed leadership Harris, (2013) and Spillane et al., (2004)

In the same vein, viewing from structural dimension, one of the findings of this study is leaders' practice of delegating responsibilities to various members in the senior management team and other staff members was crucial to their schools' success. Kalsoom et al., (2018) also argued that distribution of clear role and responsibilities in an institution helped the leadership to operate well in serving their people. So, I therefore argue that in an environment where division of labor is champion through consultation, collaboration and shared decision making could eventually improve the quality of teaching and learning.

I argued that where school leaders have a clear demarcation in roles and responsibilities, teachers found it easy to address their challenges and any other issue that might arise in teaching and learning. Thus, leaderships ought to delegate responsibilities such as monitoring teachers' records of work ranging from lesson plans, scheme of works, registers, and availability of teaching and learning resources. This will increase the sense of responsibilities among teachers and individual leaders as well as teachers will be empowered through positive feedbacks.

Other findings indicated that school leaders in some schools are empowering their staff to make decisions and act independent by utilizing their agency, which posed to boost their school performance. As found by Duze, (2012) and de Jong et al., (2022) with slight difference but in essence arguing that encouraging teachers' innovation and initiative

takings promotes school improvement. If teachers and actors within the school particularly other members in the SMT and teachers are encouraging to innovate, they can eventually develop an active and vibrant organizational structure that can quickly adapt to the changing nature of today's education system. This possibility was evident in the leadership structure at Suruwa-Kunda. Their leadership has created an environment that did not limit their staff based on their position rather encourage them to innovate and work independently in discharging their duties.

Another interesting finding of the study revealed that some schools have a weak and unsound leadership structure where some members are not aware of their roles and responsibilities. This suggest that underperformance is likely to continue since there is no structure available to provide continuity in leadership services enriching de Jong and colleagues' (2022) conclusion. For success and sustainability to attain, a good leadership team should be in place for a school to succeed and who are informed on their roles and responsibilities to serve their institution effectively.

As I always argue that the primary duty of leaders is to serve their people by providing them with the best service possible to advance their organizational goals. Therefore, if SMT members are claiming to be ignorant of their duties, this begs the one-million-dalasi question prompting me to ask the following questions. How could they serve their people if they are not aware of their duties to be executed? Can someone genuinely serve without knowing their roles and responsibilities? The simple answer to these questions is No. I argue that they must know what is expected to serve or perform their duties. Therefore, individuals within an institution must be informed of their terms of reference for better service delivery. Henceforth, there is a need for restructuring and reorienting members of SMT at Jolly Phonics on their terms of reference.

Another interesting finding indicated in my analysis is that, the headteacher at Jolly Phonics is one of the most senior managers in the region, who is set to retire in the next six months. Thus, logic dictates that if the headteacher is gone, one should anticipate finding a solid leadership team ready to handle this changeover. I am, therefore, surprised by Jolly Phonics' leadership's lack of structure and direction. Despite the so-called SMT, this school's leadership appears to be a one-person show. This led to my next argument, the leadership in this school has little prospect of enhancing teaching and learning, which would result in successful school improvement if this trend is allowed to continue.

Therefore, for any leader(s) to deliver relevant services, irrespective of their industry, they should have a direction. Meaning, its members should know what is expected of them as leaders by knowing their roles and responsibilities. This provokes my thought towards the words of Professor PLO Lumumba of Kenya, who described leadership as “an art of service.” If that is the case, the leader must know their responsibilities and the services they should deliver. Thus, for most leaders in the underperforming schools to be challenge in serving or claim to be unaware of their roles and responsibilities has seriously challenged the potential of leadership to improve the quality of teaching and learning in these schools.

Structurally, the headteacher should have a crucial role in directing and molding the leadership team at the school level in compliance with the Minimum Standard and the Quality Assurance Framework (MoBSE, 2015). However, this is different in these schools. This makes it challenging for them to affect any structural or cultural change within their schools. However, sound leadership provide services like developing their teachers professionally for effective teaching and learning as indicated in the study's findings aligning with several literatures on capacity building presented in the literature review section. Thus, the topic of TPD in other words capacity-building is another structural dimension identified in this study and discussed in the next section.

4.3.2.3. Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

Any endeavor to enhance teaching and learning must include teacher professional development (TPD). The Gambia Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education is cognizant of this; as a result, they gave teachers' professional development significant weight by allocating funds through the School Improvement Grant (SIG). Such professional development training sessions for teachers should be organized by leadership once every three months (termly), in accordance with the School Management Manual (SMM). By doing this, it will be possible to ensure that teachers have the knowledge, skills, and resources required to succeed in their classrooms.

It is important to develop teachers professionally for the sake of school improvement. While the study found some schools failed to offer this opportunity to their teachers for over two years. The idea of empowering teachers through professional development initiatives has been recognized by many scholarly works including Duze, (2012), Egbo, (2011), Marsh & Farrell, (2015) and Sumintono et al., (2014) to improve their instructional standards and potentially inform learning outcome. This contravenes their own school policies, particularly the policy on teacher professional development.

Comparing to schools that had regularly and consistently offered TPD to their staff, outperformed the schools that are not. This conforms the relevance literatures placed on capacity building in connection to teaching and learning particularly by Egbo, (2011). Undoubtedly, teacher professional development is critical for improving teachers' instructional and professional capacity. Therefore, for some leaders as indicated above keeps failing to improve their teachers' capacity by training them to catch up to the modern education systems, there is a tendency that they would be left behind. And, the desire for sustainable development goal four (SDG4) will not be attained. Aligning those findings with

Reynolds & Muijs, (2016) claim, teachers are central to any educational process, therefore, training them on the new pedagogies, skills, knowledge, and technology usage would prepare them to deliver in their classrooms, which was found to be lacking in some schools. In an event these capacities are improve, it would eventually help learners to realize their full potential.

Talking about learners' full potential, this drags me back to discuss the concept or the primary aim of education. The primary function of education is to transform the learner into their best version. This is done through teachers' ability to nurture, facilitate, guide, motivate, and inspire learners in teaching and learning. This is possible when the school has sound leadership, prioritizing teacher professional development and creating an environment for teachers to help their students realize their potential.

Philosophically, the sole purpose or aim of education has been widely contested. Nevertheless, I go by Sahin's (2013, 2019, 2021) work on the "Tarbiyyah Model" of education, where he argued education to be a holistic approach to developing and transforming humans into better people. Therefore, for any educational institution to be successful in helping its learners to grow holistically, the leadership should focus on a transformative educational approach. As in most scholarly discussion on transformational leadership theory, particularly the work of (Mafora, 2013). So, if school leaders take a transformational stand as found to be in some school, had prepare their teaching staff pedagogically and professionally to help children through that transformative educational process. This was possible because the leaders had created a "culture of teaching and learning" relevant to the development of school and learners. This finding echoes the relevance of the "culture of teaching and learning" that is further discussed below.

Overall, structures are essential to any organizational success since agents within the system rely on them to discharge their functions. Therefore, school policies and other

structural settings within the school are critical in creating structure and culture that aids effective teaching and learning. So, school leaders are encouraged to create their own structures for sustainable improvement rather than relying on inherited structures. Relying on Case, (2015) and Shava & Heystek, (2019) they stressed that an interplay of agency and structure leads to culture production, which they considered crucial for organizational growth and success. Hence, this led us to the next theme discussed in this study.

4.3.3. Culture: Leadership's Role in Creating a Positive School Culture for Sustainable Improvement

Studies have echoed that a school's culture can significantly impact its effectiveness and success. Therefore, leadership as a change agent is crucial in creating a conducive school environment and culture that can inform long-lasting progress for sustainable school improvement. Thus, discussion on culture will be explored in two sub-themes: Culture of Teaching and Learning and Teachers' Attendance and Punctuality, using Archer's 1995 realist social theory as an analytical lens.

According to Archer's realist social theory, understanding the structures and agencies that cause the underlying social occurrences perceived as norms and values in general culture in an organization is crucial. As a result, it indicates that in an educational setting, consideration should be given to the organizational structures and individuals that develop them to build a school culture conducive to teaching and learning. In Archer's view, the acts of actors, which are impacted by social mechanisms that function at the macro level, make up social structures. Thus, leadership is essential in forming these social processes, which shape a school's culture, particularly the culture of teaching and learning and teacher attendance and punctuality covered in the following subthemes below in the context of this study.

4.3.3.1. Culture of Teaching and Learning

In most literature, the term “a culture of teaching and learning” is commonly used but is defined loosely. Thus, the findings of this study revealed that most leaders in this study did not have a definitive construction on what culture of teaching and learning meant to them. However, one of the headteachers described that, they view culture of teaching and learning as a system where both his staff and students adhere to the values and principles laid for effective school improvement. So, ensuring that all stakeholders are part of the teaching and learning process was found to be critical to some leaders. This description of the concept same to Shava & Heystek’s (2019) argument.

They define a culture of teaching and learning as an attitudes of all key participants toward instruction and learning, as well as the promotion of effective instruction and learning procedures in classrooms (Shava & Heystek, 2019). Drawing from the response given by the participants and the literature cited I define the culture of teaching and learning as a situation in which individuals working within the school system have shared values, beliefs, and practices that govern their interactions, particularly those between teachers and students. Though, it ought to be underscored that this culture of teaching and learning could be either positive or negative depending on the school's leadership capacity and creativity.

Having said that, the findings of the study indicated that a school leadership in the performing schools had created a positive “culture of teaching and learning” since they were able to create an environment where students are eager to learn, and teachers are willing to teach. As Shava & Heystek’s (2019) findings suggested. Despite the fact that both studies are conducted in Africa, the national context made it possible for some diversification.

Furthermore, school leaders in some schools are found to be setting clear standards, support their teachers' professional development, and create opportunities for teamwork and

collaboration to inspire students and instructors. Taking a cue from the above explanation coupled with data obtained through interviews, focus group discussion, and observation, the findings indicates that both Suruwa-Kunda and Jelly Berry have a positive culture of teaching and learning. Therefore, I correspond with Shava & Heystek's argument that "academic success" may be possible for a leadership that has effectively created a positive teaching and learning culture in their institutions. This is true in both Jelly Berry and Suruwa-Kunda, where the leadership has successfully fostered an atmosphere where kids are eager to study, and teachers are driven and motivated to teach. It is crucial to note that these leaders, particularly the headteachers, possess various leadership traits and management techniques, which suggests that they have multiple approaches to developing this culture. Also, for any culture to be respected and admired, the creator(s) should lead by example (Bush, 2014) on the topic of modeling. Thus, leaders' daily activities should be dedicated to sustaining that culture of teaching and learning by inspiring and motivating both learners and teachers.

The interaction between the headteachers of both schools and their teachers was visible to the researcher through observation. The researcher observed that Suruwa-Kunda's leadership is more adaptable and open to his teachers than Jelly Berry's. The headteacher finds it simple to motivate the teachers to foster such an incredible culture in the school because of their shared feelings of care, trust, love, and respect. This corresponds with Case, (2015), but my findings stretched towards certain values that leaders in Suruwa-Kunda strived to draw out from their staff to sustain the school culture created. This was possible because the headteacher's kind demeanor is one of his most essential strengths in running that school.

Thus, the headteacher's qualities are valuable in building structures that can produce a culture appropriate for long-term school improvement by offering resources and assisting

teachers in effectively implementing their instructional approaches. Leaders with such capacity have the potential to build a thriving teaching and learning culture. To increase teaching and learning in the classroom and ultimately boost student achievement and school improvement. It is crucial to give teachers access to resources for teaching and learning and to help them develop their capacities. This has been found to be a case in the performing schools because their leadership are consistent to provide teachers necessary resources for teaching.

Moving ahead, Jelly Berry Basic Cycle School's leadership has a great goal to enhance teaching and learning in the institution to achieve long-term school improvement as indicated in the findings. Teachers and students in this school are found to be motivated and enthusiastic to participate in the teaching and learning process. Reaffirming to Young et al., (2009) position on all hands-on deck approach in the process of teaching and learning. In addition, it has been noticed that leadership in this school was able to develop a culture of teaching and learning. However, this culture of teaching and learning is not created through a mutual process between teachers and leadership.

I was able to spot a gap between the leadership and teaching staff through observation. This is further explored through the FGD, and it was realized that the teaching staff appears to be two groups; that pro-leadership and those against. Some teachers felt that leadership needed to consult or involve them in decision-making. Because they are usually commanded or instructed by the leadership to do certain things without consultations or collaboration. This angle of my study's findings added new perspective to Shava & Heystek's (2019) conclusion. They have presented the positive aspects of culture creation failing to report the circumstance that leads to the creation of such cultures. as the two cases suggests, school culture could be made from coercion or through collaboration and mutual understanding grounded in love and respect.

Teachers in one of the schools described their headteacher as more of a follow-the-rules type, he makes sure that teachers follow the rules and ordinances, especially the school regulations, to work towards achieving the common goal of school improvement. With that strategy, most teachers describe the headteacher as authoritative and tend to impose his will on teachers as mentioned above. This kind of leadership practice for culture creation might sometimes be effective as Safi et al., (2022) put it while discussing authoritative leadership practice given that power is not arbitrary used by is guided by certain principles and values. However, I argue that if the teacher group is forced into a corner, there is a tendency for rebellion or opposition. Currently, the culture of teaching and learning is advancing the instructional process and eventually promoting sustainable improvement in performance. However, there is a potential for this culture to be compromised if teacher resistance overrides the leadership's assertive style.

While it cannot be denied that such structures of staff discipline and control might be effective, they cannot perpetuate a school climate grounded on mutual respect and love as indicated in the findings. As argued by Sterling & Davidoff (2000) on leaders nurturing some values that could push a sense of shared values. Maintaining a culture of teaching and learning where teachers and students are inspired and motivated to partake in the educational process is possible if the following happens. That is, if teachers felt valued, cared for, and respected by the leadership as colleagues rather than their subjects or subordinates. When this happens, leadership will find it easier to inspire and bring teachers on board with any initiatives they might come up with.

4.3.3.2. Teachers' Attendance and Punctuality

Teachers' punctuality and attendance have also been identified in this study as essential aspects of school culture because they have significantly impacted overall

academic success. Teaching and learning have been adversely affected in some schools, especially at Strawberry LBS, by the culture of teachers' tardiness or absenteeism, and my first two days at Strawberry allowed me to observe the problem of teacher tardiness and absence. Unexpectedly, teachers purposely sign in the time book a time earlier than when they arrive at the school, for instance, showing up around 8:30 am and signing at 07.40 am as their arrival time. Since this practice continued during my time at the school, the researcher presumed this might be a standard procedure.

I hold the view that school leaders are responsible for directing, guiding, and dictating teachers' attendance and punctuality. Having said that, the analysis shows that one of the performing schools have a clear structure that can communicate the leaders' expectations to teachers and possible consequences, they might face if they fail to meet those expectations on lateness and absenteeism. This issue has been well-elaborated in studies (Imhangbe et al., 2019; Marsh & Farrell, 2015) on leadership. This is different for other schools since the leadership has inherited most structures. Thus, they need help to make them work for their teacher and school management. The irony in all of this is that the finding suggested that this school's leadership did not provide any guidelines nor set any standards for teachers to meet to improve the school. Therefore, the goal for school improvement, particularly in teaching and learning, exists in theory, but no systems are in place to make such change permanent.

To foster a positive school climate, school leaders must be able to inspire and motivate their followers to share their vision for school reform. In addition, they must also act as a role model for their followers as well. Sadly, this is not the situation at this school, where most teachers believe that the leadership ought to do more to serve as an example for them. Since leadership frequently fails to provide them with basic teaching and learning materials, teachers found it challenging to educate in their classrooms successfully. As I have said in

the section above, leadership must provide instructional resources and enhance teachers' instructional or professional competence for a school to establish a culture of teaching and learning related to school improvement.

Reflecting on the work of Ugwu et al., (2022), my position that leaders should be role models and teachers should look up to them be inspired and motivated in their instructional process. Sadly, leadership in the underperforming schools failed to inspire nor serve as a role model for their teachers, which contradicts Leithwood and colleagues' (2019) aspiration for position leaders as role model.

I have closely observed the leadership structure, actions, and daily interactions in both schools, especially that of the headteachers. It has been observed that the headteachers hardly stays in their office, particularly the one in Strawberry. He spent most of his time in his room at the teachers' quarters during Ramadan. This behavior of the headteacher has inspired laziness among the teaching staff since most of them sit in the classroom while children are playing. as Leithwood et al., (2019) pointed to school leaders as pace setters, so for them to relinquish their duties, especially during school hours, allowed teachers to be indolent, frequently absent, or late could undermine quality.

In addition, records at strawberry showed that overall teachers' attendance and punctuality are below standards since it is less than 95%. The minimum standards dictate that staff attendance should be 95% and above. Thus, frequent absenteeism and tardiness can potentially undermine student performance and the quality of teaching and learning. Therefore, leadership at Strawberry must build a school structure that can eventually result in a positive school culture, especially in teacher attendance and the culture of teaching and learning.

Creating such school culture through regulations can facilitate the management of teachers' attendance and punctuality. This could be done by fostering a climate where teachers are valued and supported, which may entail delivering chances for professional growth, competitive benefits, and the recognition and reward of exceptional achievement. After this, leaders can create an environment where they can increase teachers' enthusiasm and job happiness, eventually increasing teachers' punctuality and attendance. This position corresponds with (Torres, 2019) who claimed that teacher job satisfaction inform performance when grounded in distributed leadership.

Though the issue of teacher attendance and punctuality are not unique to only Strawberry, Jolly Phonics also has its fair share of this practice. For Jolly Phonics, absenteeism is found not to be an issue. However, the headteacher's tardiness and frequent movement in and out of the school during school hours to the village have been flagged as a lousy leadership practice, setting bad samples for teachers. As stated above, the leadership's role in creating positive school culture is crucial corresponding to the works of Holmes et al., (2013) . Thus, such behavior from the headteacher might compromise the positive culture they ought to make.

Nonetheless teachers seemed to have the desire to teach, they felt discouraged by the behavior of the headteacher. Hence, they had little or nothing to complement their effort for school improvement. One of the teachers expressed his frustration about the situation in the school, particularly about the leadership. He wanted to transfer to another school because he felt unsupported and could not fully deliver to the expectation since leadership could not provide the necessary materials for teaching and learning. This sentiment is shared among the teaching staff for being uninspired to deliver to the best of their ability.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This is the last chapter of this work which presents the significant findings and the contribution of the current study to the academic discussion, particularly in educational leadership and management. Furthermore, the recommendation and limitations of the study are also identified in this chapter. Thus, the conclusion and recommendations are presented in separate sections as follows;

5.1. Conclusion

This study is designed to explore the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning in the Gambia. In that course, I devised four research questions to be answered in shedding light on school leadership. Answering these questions, the study fulfills the following objectives as mentioned above. One, to describe the contribution of school leadership in enhancing teachers' instruction and student's learning process in schools; two, to explain how professional development equally supports teachers' instructional activities; third, to explain how organizational structures support or deter teaching and learning quality; finally, identify some key factors that shape the leadership practices and decision-making process of school leaders.

Bearing these objectives in mind, the study came up with the following conclusion with the help of various data sources, including document review and FGD, as a way of triangulation. The study positioned school leaders' agency as an entry point for effecting changes, and solid agential factors, including leadership usher in these changes. Hence, focused and solid school leadership contributes immensely to improving the quality of teaching and learning. Participating schools in this study share similar structural and cultural

problems in rural communities. Thus, leaders in performing schools are not deterred by these potential structural problems in improving their teachers' instructional practices. Their agency was more potent than the structural problems they faced. School leaders who champion consultation, collaboration, capacity building, innovation, and humanism as their amor in leadership stand a better chance of improving their schools' instructional quality.

Therefore, school leaders' (SMT) contribution towards school improvement is more progressive when they involve local leadership structures and other relevant stakeholders in their leadership practices. Leaders who fail to exploit the human and natural resources in the communities, including SMC, VDC, MC, and PTA, are unlikely to improve their schools' instructional standards. Another aspect of school leaders' contribution to instructional quality is creating a good culture of teaching and learning in their schools. A school where students are motivated to learn, and teachers are motivated to teach stands a better chance of producing quality performance. These indications are more visible in the performing schools than underperforming ones.

Continuous staff professional development is integral to promoting and sustaining quality in an organization. Thus, school leaders who offer regular and relevant professional development to their teachers are more likely to improve their schools' instructional quality compared to those who do not. Leaders in performing schools are more consistent and focused on improving their teachers' instructional capacity through professional development programs. These play a crucial role in the recent successes of these schools, particularly in students' performance in internal and external exams.

Furthermore, organizational structures are critical to the success of any institution, including schools. So, school leaders who are supported by their deputies, senior masters, and other teacher structure have solid responsibilities of shaping the quality of teaching and learning in the schools. Thus, leaders that are informed on their roles and responsibilities

within a sound leadership structure can improve their schools' instructional capacity. In addition, leaders with structures that champion the practice of monitoring, accountability, punctuality, and mutual respect have improved the quality of teaching and learning in their schools; this conclusion aligns with Bush (2014) and Bush & Glover (2014). Who maintained those school leaders who share their leadership roles with the SMTs can improve their schools' instructional quality and overall school performance. Therefore, leaders who utilize the organizational structures within their schools can improve teaching and learning, as is the case in performing schools.

External and internal factors are critical determinants in shaping individual behaviors and practices. Thus, leadership practices and decision-making of school leaders involved in this study are shaped by several factors, including social, cultural, and religious factors. Societal values, cultures and traditional practices are found to be critical in leaders' decision-making process. Also, leaders who are religious are more drawn to faith-based leadership practices where decisions are shaped by values such as morality, honesty and integrity as found in Suruwa-Kunda.

5.1.1. Implication

This study is inspired by the work of Shava & Heystek (2019), as mentioned above. The findings in this study confirm their position and further add new dimensions to their conclusion. They maintained that competent and skillful leadership is crucial to organizational improvement. Therefore, leadership's agency is critical to school success. This is relevant for this study, as the "personal and psychological make-up" of school leaders and their ability to independently execute their roles and responsibilities to create an environment conducive to teaching and learning for sustainable learning outcomes is

critical. The description of agency in this study is consistent with Archer's 1995 Realist Social Theory description.

Notwithstanding, agreeing with Shava and Heystek's work, which concluded that the agency of school leaders in the South African school was crucial for school improvement, is not the only conclusion drawn from this study. The study further identified several key elements that complement school leaders' efforts in school improvement. These elements include the community through their school management committee structure, mothers' clubs, and regional education directorate. This is considered one of the weaknesses of Shava and Heystek's 2019 work. They have focused on school principals neglecting other relevant actors like local school leadership structures and other relevant stakeholders. As Steve Jobs says, "One person never does great things; a team of people does them." I agree that leaders' agency is critical, but it does not mean it is the only determinant; it has complementing elements.

The current study also places a strong prominence on teacher professional development. Hence, professional development posed to be critical for improving teachers' instructional and professional capacity. The above position on teacher professional development, in other words capacity-building, concurred with the work of Duze (2012), reiterating the absolute need for continuous learning and the development of teachers' capacity to fulfill their roles effectively and efficiently in schools. Therefore, the study suggests that school leaders should adopt, maintain, and support teacher professional development to improve performance. Similar to Reynolds & Muij's (2016) argument, they highlighted that to maintain the consistency required for effective schools, a pedagogical strategy requires the professional development of personnel, which involves retraining your teaching staff on the new or improved techniques or inducting and training new staff in the school's pedagogical practices.

Overall, this study has contributed to the discussion on leadership in the educational sphere by providing evidence from the Gambian context, adding to the existing knowledge from different parts of the world on the same subject. The study suggests that school leadership is vital in improving teaching and learning if it is structured well and coupled with personnel with the required knowledge and skill sets to use their agency by creating structures and culture for sustainable school improvement. This is consistent with the works of Shava & Heystek (2019) and Breyer (2014). The study further recognized other agential factors that complement school leaders' agency to usher in sustainable school improvement. The role of school leadership coupled with community leadership structures, efforts of the regional education directorate, and other stakeholders were vital for school improvement.

Moreover, it has been recognized that schools need more resources to sustain a robust system that helps leaders effectively implement the leadership styles mentioned above. Therefore, the study proposed a pragmatic leadership approach incorporated with empathy-based leadership as the leadership model in Gambian schools. If anything, this is close to the notion of "Traditional African Leadership," which is grounded on "humanism, collectivism, and moral values," as proposed by Ugwu and colleagues (2022). Leaders who use empathy as their leadership armor can inspire collectivism, humanism, and moral values for sustainable school improvement.

This does not suggest that instructional, transformative, transactional, and other leadership styles cannot be used; if anything, they should be integrated. Furthermore, leaders should effectively address the gap between leadership and followership to change school structures and cultures. In doing so, they should strive to create a mechanical society rather than an organic one, if I am to use Durkheim's term. In a mechanical society, people have a shared interest and goal, and the social fabric is wired by empathy, making their bonds more robust and productive.

5.2. Recommendations

Given that the current study was focused on schools in one of the regional education directorates in rural Gambia, thus, its ability to be generalized is limited by its scope and nature. Therefore, future studies should explore the subject from a broader perspective with a slightly different research approach. Future studies can include schools in rural and urban areas for a fair picture of the national context. Suppose future researchers intend to use a qualitative approach. In that case, they are encouraged to adopt an ethnographic method to have more time with the participants to establish stronger bonds and collect detailed data on leadership at the school level. Furthermore, it is recommended that leadership in performing schools be further studied exclusively to shed more light on their leadership practices in eliminating those potential structural and cultural challenges they face. A similar thing is recommended for underperforming schools.

To policymakers, education officers, and practitioners, the study recommends a need for a shift in the appointment or selection of school leaders from longevity or seniority-based to merit or competency-based. Selecting individuals to become school leaders based on seniority is ineffective in recruiting leaders based on capacity. Hence, it was found that leaders' agency was more critical to success than their age or length of service. If there is any indication of that, headteachers in schools categorized as underperforming are on the verge of retiring. Thus, they are the most senior compared to those in the performing schools. Therefore, using longevity or length of service as a yardstick to recruit leaders at the school level should be a thing of the past. Thus, the Ministry of Basic and Secondary Education is encouraged to standardize the recruitment process of potential school leaders. Having a standardized testing system for aspiring school leaders to be eligible for leadership in schools, as is the case in Indonesia for principal recruitment; details on this could be found in the work of Sumintono et al. (2015) entitled "Becoming a Principal in Indonesia:

possibility, pitfalls and Potential.” Ministry can further learn this best practice from countries like Malaysia, Singapore, and other countries with successful education systems like Finland.

Also, the one-year management/leadership training offered to current school leaders should be given to aspiring school leaders. The knowledge and skills they learned during this one-year program should be acquired before assuming leadership roles. This should be used as a platform to prepare future school leaders. Singapore adopts a similar system to advance its school system, as Ng (2016) discussed in their work entitled “Developing Leaders for Schools in Singapore.”

In addition, education officers at the regional education directorates, including cluster monitors, should emphasize school leadership practices, from monitoring teacher professional development to policy development. In the same vein, school leaders should encourage to develop their school policies that are tailored towards their vision for the school. Leaders’ failure to establish their structures limits their capability of effecting their desired changes since they might find it challenging to make the inherited systems work for them. Furthermore, school leaders are encouraged to set standards and ensure that they are met through monitoring and building the capacity of their staff to improve teachers’ instructional ability for sustainable school improvement. Finally, the study proposes that school leaders adopt a pragmatic leadership style grounded in empathy-based leadership.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Permission Letter

January 22, 2023

The Regional Education Director,
Regional Education Directorate Five South
Janjangbureh Town,
Central River Region
The Gambia

Dear Sir,

PERMISSION LETTER FOR FIELD RESEARCH

I am writing to request your permission to conduct a research study in your region. The purpose of this study is to understand how school leadership could enhance quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia. The research will focus on school leadership and quality of teaching and learning resulting to quality education.

The study will involve four schools and will be conducted from March 2023 to May 2023. The data collection methods will include interviews, observations, focus group discussion, and document analysis. The data collected will be used to describe how school leadership facilitate quality in teaching and learning.

I understand the importance of obtaining permission from the appropriate authorities before conducting research. Thus, I assure you that all data collected will be kept confidential and only used for research purposes. I will also ensure that the study will not disrupt the normal operations of the schools in any way.

Sir, I would be honored if you could grant me permission to conduct this research in your region. If you have any concerns or questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at abdou.barrow@uiii.ac.id or +6281388512768 Via WhatsApp. I am looking forward to hearing from your office soonest time possible.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Abdou Barrow
MA student

Appendix 2: Consent Letter

15th March 2023

Indonesian International Islamic University
Faculty of Education
Depok, Indonesia

Dear Sir/Madam

PARTICIPANTS' INTERVIEW CONSENT LETTER

I am writing to inform you that you have been selected to participate in an interview as part of a research study to be conducted by Abdou Barrow MA student at the abovementioned university. The purpose of this study is to explore the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia. The study is focused on the regional education directorate five south in the Central River Region of the Gambia.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. If you choose to participate, you will be asked to complete an interview, which will take approximately 30-45 minutes per session. The interview will be conducted by the abovementioned student and will be recorded for transcription and analysis purposes.

By signing this consent letter, you are giving your informed consent to participate in this study. You have the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Please understand that the information you provide will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Your name and any identifying information will be removed from the data prior to analysis.

If you have any questions about the study, please contact Abdou Barrow at abdou.barrow@uui.ac.id or +6281388512768 Via WhatsApp.

Sincerely,



Abdou Barrow

Interviewee's Signature

Date: _____

Head Teacher/Deputy Head teacher/Senior Master/Classroom Teacher

Please underline the title that corresponds to your title above. Thank you for your participation in this study.

Appendix 3: Interview Guide Instrument

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW USING OPEN-ENDED APPROACH FOR HEAD TEACHERS

Goal: This tool is implored to enable the researcher to collect detailed and varied data and provide a complete and revealing picture of the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia.

Procedures:

Brief Introduction on the purpose of the study and explain the interview modalities.

Through this, the researcher will build rapport with interviewees.

Administering the consent form

Conduct the Interview anticipated duration of 30 - 35 minutes.

Some background questions like:

Can you tell me about your background and experience as a head teacher?

How long have you been a head teacher, and at which schools have you served in that capacity?

Sections	Research Questions	Key Interview Questions
A	How does school leadership impact the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia?	<p>Leadership and teaching and learning: How would you describe school leadership's relevance in improving teaching and learning?</p> <p>Agency/Structure In your view, what are the key indicators for successful school leadership? Agency How would you describe your leadership style/s in your school? Agency Do you think this leadership style/s has contributed to your school's success or failure? Please explain how? Agency/structure Can you give examples of actions or decisions you have made as a head teacher that have positively impacted your school's teaching and learning? Agency Where/who are/is the main funding sources for your school, and how do you prepare your budgeting for these income sources? Structure How do you allocate these funds within the school to support the policies and programs you design for your school? And how much do you spend on training your teachers to deliver high-quality instruction to their students? Agency/Structure Who are involved in your school's school-level management and leadership? And, to what extent are they involved? Structure How do you ensure that your leadership decisions and practices align with the national education policies, particularly the School Management Manual (SMM) and the Minimum Standard? Structure</p> <p>Challenges and opportunities:</p>

		<p>Can you tell me what are some of the challenges you face when preparing your budget? Structure/culture</p> <p>In your view, do these challenges directly impact your effort to improve your school's teaching and learning quality? Culture/structure</p> <p>How do you overcome these challenges as a head teacher? Agency</p> <p>What opportunities do you see for improving your school's teaching and learning quality? And what futuristic programs do you have to sustain quality teaching and learning? Agency/culture/structure</p>
B	<p>To what extent do the professional development opportunities provided to teachers by school leaders contribute to improved teaching practices and student learning outcomes in public primary schools in the Gambia?</p>	<p>In your opinion, how important is professional development for teachers? Agency</p> <p>Can you give examples of specific professional development opportunities that you have provided to teachers in your school? Agency</p> <p>Can you tell me how these programs have impacted their teaching practices and student learning outcomes? Structure</p> <p>How do you design the professional development opportunities offered to your teachers? (Possible FUQ) Who is involved in the development of such programs? Culture/agency</p> <p>How do you evaluate the effectiveness of these professional development opportunities provided to teachers in your school? Structure</p> <p>How do you ensure that the professional development provided to teachers is relevant and tailored to your schools and teachers' specific needs? Structure/agency</p> <p>Challenges and opportunities:</p> <p>What are the main challenges you face in providing effective professional development opportunities to your teachers? Structure/culture</p> <p>How do you overcome these challenges? Agency</p> <p>What opportunities do you see for improving the professional development provided to your teachers in your school in the future? Culture/structure</p>
C	<p>How do the organizational structures and policies implement by school leaders in public primary schools in the Gambia affect the quality of teaching and learning?</p>	<p>Organizational structures and policies:</p> <p>Do you think the organizational structures and policies in the schools can affect the quality of teaching and learning? Please explain how? Structure</p> <p>Can you give examples of specific organizational structures or policies you have implemented in your school and how they have impacted teaching and learning? Structure/agency</p> <p>How do you make those policies and programs in your school, like school improvement plans and other programs? Culture/structure/agency</p>

		<p>How do you ensure that your school's organizational structures and policies are aligned with the goals of improving teaching and learning?</p> <p>Structure</p> <p><i>Challenges and opportunities:</i></p> <p>What challenges do you face in introducing new organizational structures and policies in your school? Culture/structure</p> <p>Are there any instances where your staff or community resists your programs? Please explain how? Culture/structure</p> <p>How do you address these challenges or resistances? Agency</p> <p>What opportunities do you see to improve your school's organizational structures and policies?</p> <p>Structure</p>
D	<p>What factors influence the leadership style of school leaders, and how do these factors shape their decision-making and overall effectiveness in promoting teaching and learning?</p>	<p>In your opinion, what are the key factors that influence your leadership style? Culture/structure</p> <p>How do these factors shape your decision-making process? Structure/culture</p> <p>Can you give an example of how one or many of these factors have influenced your leadership style and decision-making in the past? Culture/structure</p> <p>In your opinion, do these factors impact your effectiveness in promoting teaching and learning in your school? Explain how? Culture/structure</p> <p>Can you discuss any challenges you have faced in balancing these factors while maintaining effective leadership? And how do you address these challenges? Structure/culture/agency</p> <p>How would you describe your school's culture and climate? Culture</p> <p>Can you describe the interpersonal relationship between you and your staff and between the staff themselves? Culture</p> <p>In your experience, are there any other factors that have not been mentioned that influence a school leader's leadership style and decision-making?</p> <p>Culture/structure</p>

Conclusion: I will summarize the interview's main points and thank the head teacher for their time and insights. Before going, I will ask them if there is anything else they would like to add or if they have any questions.

SEMI-STRUCTURED INTERVIEW USING OPEN-ENDED APPROACH FOR TEACHERS

Goal: this tool is implored to enable the researcher to collect detailed and varied data and provide a complete and revealing picture of the role of school leadership in improving the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia.

Procedures:

Brief Introduction on the purpose of the study and explain the interview modalities.

Rapport building

Administering the consent form

Conduct the Interview anticipated duration of 30 - 35 minutes.

Some background questions like:

Participating teachers to tell me about their background as teachers.

Parts	Research Questions	Key Interview Questions
A	How does school leadership impact the quality of teaching and learning in public primary schools in the Gambia?	<p>Can you describe your experience as a teacher in this school? Turns shall be taken for this. Agency</p> <p>How do you perceive the role of school leadership in shaping the quality of teaching and learning in your school? Agency</p> <p>How would you describe the leadership style of your school leaders? Agency</p> <p>In your view, can mention instances when your headteacher demonstrated strong leadership skills? Agency</p> <p>In your opinion, what are the most essential qualities a school leader should possess? Do you think your headmaster has those qualities? Agency</p> <p>How does the headteacher inspire and motivate teachers to improve their teaching practices? Agency/culture</p> <p>How does allocating resources, such as funding and materials, impact your school's teaching and learning quality? Structure</p> <p>Are you involved in decision-making in the school, especially in financial matters? If yes, explain your roles in this process. Culture/structure/agency</p> <p>Can you share any examples of how the headteacher has encouraged collaboration and teamwork among all teachers and staff? Culture</p> <p>Can you recall any obstacles the headteacher and his team have faced? Structure/culture. Please tell me how they handled that situation. Agency</p> <p>How does the headteacher handle conflicts or difficult situations with staff members, students, or parents? Agency</p> <p>What suggestions do you have for how school leadership can improve the quality of teaching and learning in your school? Structure</p>
	To what extent do the professional development opportunities provided to teachers by school leaders contribute to improved teaching practices and student	<p>To what extent have you participated in professional development opportunities provided by your school leaders? Structure</p> <p>How often does the leadership in your school provide these professional development programs? Structure</p> <p>Can you provide specific examples of professional development opportunities that have positively impacted your teaching practice? Structure</p>

<p>B</p>	<p>learning outcomes in public primary schools in the Gambia?</p>	<p>Would you say these professional development opportunities have improved student learning outcomes in your classroom? Please how? Structure/agency/outcome How does the school leadership determine which professional development opportunities to provide for their teachers? Structure. Are you involved in this process at any point in time? Culture Would you say the school leadership ensure that the professional development opportunities align with the current curriculum and educational goals? Structure. Please explain how? Agency Can you explain how your school leadership supports you in applying the knowledge and skills gained from professional development opportunities to your classroom practice? Agency How frequent do your school leaders conduct Classroom observation? Who are mostly involved? Structure How do the school leaders encourage collaboration and sharing of best practices among teachers? Culture Are you at any point included in evaluating the effectiveness of the professional development opportunities provided to teachers? Please explain how? Culture/structure What challenges have you faced regarding access and support for professional development opportunities, and how were they addressed or not addressed by school leadership? Structure/agency/culture What suggestions do you have for how school leaders can effectively provide professional development opportunities to teachers that contribute to improved teaching practices and student learning outcomes in your school? Structure</p>
<p>C</p>	<p>How do the organizational structures and policies implement by school leaders in public primary schools in the Gambia affect the quality of teaching and learning?</p>	<p>How do you perceive the organizational structures and policies implemented by school leaders in your school? Structure Can you provide specific examples of how your school's organizational structures and policies have positively or negatively impacted your school's teaching and learning environment? Structure Can you describe your school leaders' approach to decision-making and problem-solving? Agency Do you think this impacts your school's teaching and learning quality? Explain how? Structure/agency How does your school leadership manage resources such as funding, materials, and personnel? Structure Can you explain how their actions affect your school's teaching and learning quality? Structure Can you explain your school's communication and information-sharing process? How does this</p>

		<p>communication structure impact your school's teaching and learning quality? Structure/culture</p> <p>In your opinion, has your school leadership created a positive school culture/climate/habit? Please explain how? Culture</p> <p>Can you recall any initiatives/changes that your headteacher and/or his/her leadership team have implemented that you think have really improved the school? How effective? Structure</p> <p>How does the school leadership's approach to teacher evaluation and professional development impact your school's quality of teaching and learning? Structure</p> <p>Did your school leadership have a reward and punishment system for teachers? Please explain how? Culture/structure</p> <p>Can you describe the extent of community participation in your school's operations? Culture. Do you think this impacts your school's teaching and learning quality? Structure</p> <p>What suggestions do you have for how school leadership can improve your school's organizational structures and policies to enhance the quality of teaching and learning? Structure/culture/agency</p>
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Conclusion: I will summarize the interview's main points and thank the head teacher for their time and insights. Before going, I will ask them if there is anything else they would like to add or if they have any questions.

Appendix 4: Manual Coded Interview Transcripts

ONE OF THE DEPUTY HEADTEACHER INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Date: 26th March 2023

Researcher

Good afternoon, my name is Abdou Barrow. I am a master's student at Indonesian International Islamic University in Depok, Indonesia. I am reading education, concentrating on leadership and management as well as educational policy. Okay. But my research, as I said, it is focusing on school leadership, which is an area in leadership, and management. So, as I said, you are under no obligation to continue with the interview. If you feel that you are not comfortable anymore to continue with the interview, you can stop me at any point in time and you can withdraw at any point in time without any consequences or without anything else. Okay? So, you can also stop me and ask questions if you are not clear with any other thing before we proceed. Proceed. Okay. Without further due, I will allow you to tell me about yourself, your background, as well as your experience as a deputy headteacher.

Participant

Okay, thank you very much I am **XXXXXXXXXX** originally, and I'm a teacher at **XXXXXXXXXX** School. I went to the Gambia College and I graduated in 2013. So, I was posted to **XXXXXXXXXX** School after graduation for two years, and then from there, posted to **XXXXXXXXXX** here for the past seven, or eight years now. I've been, the deputy head teacher in the school here for, the past two years. Since then, I've been working hand in glove with the headteacher in the school. Yeah.

Researcher

Thank you so much. So, did you serve as a deputy headteacher in any other school?

Participant

No, this is my first-time deputizing.

Researcher

Okay. Yeah. So basically, you have two-year experience as a deputy. Okay. Thank you so much. So, we start the interview properly. Can you describe your role as a deputy head teacher in this school?

Participant

My role here generally speaking is internal management. That is to manage the internal affairs of the school. We have an internal monitoring team of which I'm the leader. Okay. I dedicate responsibilities to the monitoring team. We normally observe teachers from different areas in the school as an internal monitoring team. We observe the lesson plan of teachers. We observe their schemes of work. We also observe their teachings, and sometimes we go to their classroom for classroom observation. We did this because we wish to see how they present their lesson in the classroom, manage their class, and also look at their instructional practices which I think is very, very important. Apart from that also, we are also responsible as an internal monitoring team, responsible for monitoring the school vendors, as well as the school garden, I can say even in the school environment, my team is responsible for all those things in the school here. Okay. About Concerning teaching, learning to be specific is lesson plans and schemes, let me just say generally records of work. Yeah. In which we are responsible.

Researcher

Thank you. In your opinion, does the school leadership impact the quality of teaching and learning in this school as far as you know?

Participant

Yes, of course, it does very well because of the monitoring we normally do teachers have improved in different areas, because some teachers will be in the classroom physically, but while mentally not in the classroom. Sometimes they'll be there, they'll not be teaching, and they'll not be delivering to expectation. But through monitoring we normally do weekly sometimes we even do daily has motivates teachers to perform their classroom duties. It encourages them because we believe that if you are doing a job or you are given a tax to do and you are not being monitored at the end of you will not deliver the expectation. Through this, we have seen a lot of improvement Yes. In the area of teachers, especially in performance.

Researcher

That's wonderful. Yeah. Okay, next question. How would you describe your head teacher's leadership style?

Participant

Yeah, I would say it is excellent. He's a man who delegates responsibilities. The first day I was given that, He made it categorically clear to me that you are now the internal monitor. Mm-hmm. That is the deputy head teacher. And as of today, I'm going to tell you my responsibilities and I will never interfere with any responsibilities. Okay. And for that, for that, I like him a lot. Yes. Although monitoring the way, we are normally monitoring our things in the school here, he, he's the one or he's someone who loves the delegation of responsibilities. He delegates responsibilities to each and every one in this group. So, his management style, I can say it is excellent for me.

Researcher

That's wonderful. Do you think his leadership style has any connection to the success or the failure of the school is having?

Participant

I will not say failure. Okay. What I will say is a success. Okay. because we have registered a lot of successes in the school. And the most fascinating thing is, he's a man who never, mismanages the School Improvement Grant SIG that is normally paid to the school account through the government of the Gambia. He always put it to good use. Whatever we need as teachers in the school, he always, provides it for us. Teaching and learning resources is never an issue in the school here. Okay. The school is enclosed by a fence, and he was the one entirely responsible for it without the help of any other person anywhere. All from the SIG so that alone is okay.

Researcher

That's wonderful, as a deputy head teacher, are you consulted or involved in decision-making in your school? Especially in terms of financial matters?

Participant

Yes, of course. Areas like, um, this school feeding sponsored by world food program financial issues and the school improvement grant. Whenever he goes to update the book, whenever he comes, he will call the senior masters and he sits it and then he'll tell us everything about school finance in the school. Whatever expenditure he made, he used to call all the school management committees before making any decision on finance.

Researcher

That's wonderful. Can you remember any specific practice or initiative that your leadership has? That is either a team or an individual leader brought to the school that has improved the teaching environment?

Participant

Yes, I can. Yeah. That is the weekly marking of lesson plans and schemes. Every Friday, you know we normally collect all the lesson plans, all records of works, lesson plans, schemes assessment, and books. Okay. Um, analysis of Marks test, test questions, and all

those things. We normally collect it every Friday we sit together as a team and then we monitor Mark all these things and that so has improved a lot. It has improved a lot of teachers. That was the, um, I am the first person to bring that initiative into the school here. Okay.

Researcher

Okay. Thank you so much. Can you explain how your school involves and engage teachers in terms of decision-making? Are they involved at any point?

Participant

Yeah, at some point, not all the time but sometimes, whenever staff meetings are called the principal will ask me to write a circular to inform all teachers, about the staff meeting. So, some decisions are normally been made at the staff meeting in the presence of all the teachers. And, they'll also be asked to give their opinions based on the decisions that are made by the administration, so that I can say sometimes they're involved. Yeah. So not all the time, but sometimes they're involved. Yeah, because you know, there are certain areas. Yeah, obviously. Yeah.

Researcher

So how would you describe that system where sometimes you represent them, sometimes you involve them fully, and then their opinions are adhered to? Is it safe to say that is a Democratic leadership style here?

Participant

I will say it is not, it is not democratic anyway, uh, because whatever we have to do, Um, as far as we are working together as a team they should be involved and know whatever is going on. Um, but, you know, it's, it's not easy sometimes. Yeah. They just, it's, it's not just easy. I know. Yeah, yeah, yeah. That's okay. Yeah, that's okay.

Researcher

How did your team, the SMT work to address some challenges or improve issues Within the school premises that has to do with teaching and learning?

Participant

Yeah. Um, if we normally monitor records and we happen to see that a particular teacher is not up to date or a particular teacher is not doing what is expected of him or her, we will mark the records and then we will write a warning letter to the particular teacher. Through this letter we remind him or her of what is they are supposed to do, and they are not doing it. This is what you should do and you're not doing it. So we are expecting to improve next time because if it happens again, you'll write and then we submit it to our administration and that we don't want. So that is what we normally do whenever we monitor or assess.

Researcher

How do you measure or evaluate the effectiveness? Regarding the leadership services you provide to the school, do you have any mechanism that, you use to measure your leadership practices?

Participant

Mm, yes. Um, with the help of, there is a tool we have here called the SLA the service level agreement that will help us a lot because, that tool, we normally fill it every week. That is the total number of lesson plans, each and every teacher plan. It will record the total plans. You have total number of schemes, the activities conducted, assessments given. That is where we record everything, at the end of every month, we give it to the teachers to see the works they did during the course of the month. Okay, the other thing we also do is we go around the classes we take the total number of periods for all the teachers. We record it, so that, when we are marking these lesson plans and schemes, we can no targeted number then the actual number of lessons, normally plan. So, the SLAs help us a lot in terms of that. That's fine. Yeah.

Researcher

That's wonderful. Okay. Now we move to the second part that is professional development opportunities given to teachers in the school. How does leadership in your school here and ensure that teachers have. To professional development opportunities. And what are your roles, if there is any?

Participant

Um, I think, um, the only thing we normally do in the school year is, this staff development workshop. School based workshop. Okay. We normally conduct it here and, um, whenever is conducted. It's, it's, it's, it's very, very effective. Yes. Because, um, we'll be sharing responsibilities among ourselves as senior teachers. So, we'll be talking about the SLA some will be talking about lesson plans and schemes. Okay. So, we'll be talking about how the administration works and different, different areas. We even assigned some teachers who are very good in the school to come, also assist subject areas like English. Like French. Okay. To source how to write letters, formal letters in formal letters, things like that in English and in French. We normally do conduct in the school year and that has helped us a lot.

Researcher

Yeah, that's wonderful. And what do you do as an individual, as a deputy head teacher? Do you have any specific role to play in this?

Participant

Yeah, so, so I'm the one who normally coordinates everything. Yeah. I'm the coordinator of this school-based works. Yeah. I'll. I will be responsible of everything, but my major function there normally is to talk about teaching and learning. I always emphasize on those records of work. I also normally prepare this format of a lesson plan mm-hmm. Format of a scheme of work. We also explain to the teachers how to filled those areas on the lesson plan and the scheme of work also. So that the areas on the, the SLA that is service established level agreement, how everything is filled. Yeah. And only take care of that.

Researcher

To what extent do these professional development opportunities, in your view, have contributed to improving teachers' instructional process in the classrooms?

Participant

And I will say, it has improved teachers because, during the training or during the meeting, we normally emphasize the importance of having extra classes that is after school. And we also emphasize that if teachers are absent from school to have the contact hours intact whenever they come they organize these extension classes, to compensate for the lost hours, this could be done in the morning or in the afternoon. So that has also helped us a lot in terms of attaining the 880 instructional hours. Yeah, I think that helps. Good.

Researcher

Can you give any specific training or program that you have done that have directly impact teachers teaching and learning in the class? Their instructional process. Specific training? Yes. Or workshop or anything.

Participant

Only thing we do here is this school-based workshop. Yes. That is the only, that is the only thing that we conduct in the school year to improve teachers' performance in the, in the classroom and things like that. Yeah.

Researcher

In these school-based workshops, do you have instructional trainings, like pedagogy, classroom enablement trainings? Do you have those?

Participant

Yes. we normally invite the cluster monitor and some representatives from the regional education office to train us on such areas like pedagogy, classroom management and the likes. Okay.

Researcher

Okay. Do you think those trainings have any impact on teachers in their classrooms?

Participant

Off course it does, it has impact in the classrooms because this training will light teachers more on the things they don't know, especially concerning the records of work. And also, this item setting that is this question setting. Some teachers, although there'll be setting questions, but the questions will not be standard, but they don't know how to set these questions. But, out of the training we normally show them on how to set questions that is standard. Especially on this multiple choice corrects and theory questions and how to differentiate them on how to award marks in terms of question settings. I think that has also helped them a lot. It has improved them a lot in terms of performance. Yeah.

Researcher

How do you and your colleagues in leadership measure the impact of these opportunities that you give to teachers? How do you measure their impact?

Participant

I would say it is good out of their analysis, let's say their assessment analysis. We normally measure it from that, we look at students' performance in certain areas and assess the teacher's performance through that. And that is where we know whether the teachers performing or not. Okay. If we found that the teacher is performing through the analyzed data, we normally write a motivational letter to encourage the particular teacher to continue the good work. And if we happen to see that from the teacher's analysis, that performance is going down in other words performance is very, very poor, we call the teacher as a team and then we discuss with the teacher how to improve students' performance as a whole in other to attained the vision of excellence. Yeah.

Researcher

That's good. As far as you know, are there any challenges your school faced in providing these professional development trainings like school-based workshops?

Participant

Yeah, we sometimes face some financial challenges to coordinate these trainings. Given that we also like to invite the Parent Teachers' Association (PTA), and other committee members to attend, usually, their attendance is always poor. That is another constraint we are facing because sometimes whatever we are doing in the school here, we would like to engage the parents also to know what is going on. That is a big challenge for us here. Whenever they're invited to come and obtain information like that, so that is a big challenge.

Researcher

Do you find some challenges like having resource persons?

Participant

Sometimes whenever we invite resource persons from anywhere, they normally respond. Sometimes we do invite our cluster monitor as a resource person and whenever we write to them, they'll respond.

Researcher

How do these professional development programs, how are they designed? What, exactly did you do when you were planning this?

Participant

We, first of all, are included in the action plan because every time we normally prepare an action plan. So that is where we include it, that this particular week we are going to conduct this teacher professional development in the school. Then after that, the people who are put on an organizing committee will be responsible for the conduct of the activity. So, they'll be working on different, different areas of responsibilities. Some will be there as, MC that is Master of Ceremony. As presenters, also we invite them as resource persons. The activity.

Researcher

Like if you are pro-organizing these school workshops, do you sometimes call teachers and ask them what they need for what they don't need training?

Participant

No, we don't normally do that. We just normally inform them that we're going to have staff development workshop and these are the areas we want to also look into. But, initial every workshop we normally conduct, we have AOB, so we allow teachers to come with their ideas and then we see how to incorporate it in the trainings.

Researcher

So what are the strategies did you use to ensure that these workshops or training we are providing to teachers are relevant to effective teaching?

Participant

Come again.

Researcher

I mean what are some of the strategies you use to measure or ensure that the professional development training you are given to your teachers are relevant to their teaching and learning? Do you have any way to measure, okay, today we are going to deal with SLA because this is what we are considering or this is what we're considering.

Participant

Yeah, we normally do that even, the COTs this classroom observation tool. We also discuss a lot on that one also, that is a tool that we normally use to monitor the teachers in the classroom. Sometimes when we give them the forms to go, There will be some queries on certain areas because they don't understand what the form is telling them. So, we normally provide the COT forms and give it to all the teachers, and then we discuss all the steps one after the other so, that immediately after the training they will be able to administer the form.

Researcher

That's wonderful, now we move to the third section that is about, organizational structures and policies in the school. When I entered, I've seen so many policies like, like sexual harassment policy, anti-bullying policy, dress code policy, and assessment policy. These are policies that, in my view are very important policies, thus, they help teaching and learning as well. But this question I want to understand how are they implemented in the school and how does their implementation affect teaching and learning? So in that case, the first question I would be asking is, how would you describe your school's organizational structures and policy?

Participant

I would say it is good, each and every policy is backed by a group of individuals or teachers. So, when we're talking about sexual harassment there is a body responsible for gender issues, talking of homework policy there is a body responsible for its implementation. As of admission policy there is a body who responsible. These structures have positive impact in the school.

Researcher

That's wonderful, so, since it has positive impact in the school and then each policies are backed by individuals for its implementation. So, in your view, do they affect teaching and learning directly?

Participant

Off course it has impact on teaching and learning. It improves a lot, especially this sexual harassment policy and this homework policy. It has helped the school a lot because, in those days, teachers sometimes they'll not even give students homework a teacher will be teaching for the whole academic year when you go through the child's records you will find that no homework is given. The homework policy, the body responsible for the homework in the school, they're doing a lot. They have tried a lot and we are seeing that now teachers are

giving homework to kids and they're marking the homework and they're giving feedback to the kids. So, it has, it has, it has, it has a positive impact on the kids.

Researcher

That's wonderful, does your school involve teachers when you are developing these policies?

Participant

All of them. Because I can remember last year, the second term was the time we made a lot of policies here. But it was collective, all the teachers were present. And then the master would be there to supervise and guide us in the process. These are the policies I have here. Concerning these policies the headteacher listens to teachers and the teachers will be telling him their ideas, then he would take note of them and act on them.

Researcher

How about programs like action plans and SIP school improvement plan budgeting? Are teachers involved as well?

Participant

Let's say two or three weeks ago, there was a meeting staff meeting and teachers are involved. And whenever the master is preparing the SIP, he will call all the teachers and we did it together. The action plan also is the same thing. he'll tell us that these are the actions or these are the plans or these are the activities I have you can go and discuss with the teachers, If you want to add any activities there, you can add it there. For instance, sports, debates, quizzes, and other things like this. Teachers will come up with different, different ideas, so we put them together and draft our action plan. Yeah, and even budgeting this s budgeting also are normally important because what we normally do is you will tell, for example, let's say the sports department to come up with their budget, What they need for the whole academic year. The same thing is done for all other departments. He will delegate responsibilities, for us to draw our budget and then we submit it to him.

Researcher

That's good. How do you ensure that, uh, the organizational structures and policies that you give are aligned with the national policies and documents like the minimum standards and the school management manual? how do you ensure that they're in line with those?

Participant

Yeah, what we normally do with the school manual and other things is we have the books with us here. What we normally do is sometimes when we are having the staff meetings to be discussing some important chapters in the book in relation to the policies we have, especially this one, this, this sexual harassment policy that is very, very important. So, we share those things in connection to all the policies we have here. I think that has helped a lot. That has seriously helped a lot because all the policies we have here, I can say there is no, that has nothing to do with the national policies anyway. Because all the policies we have, they're all inculcated in it. Yeah, so I can say they derived from the national policies domesticated at school level.

Researcher

So, do you have a problem when it comes to the community's perception of these policies? Do you have any challenges or even by teachers, let's say dress, dress code? Some teachers will want to dress in another way, but the policy says, did you have set problems?

Participants

No, we do not have those problems here yet.

Researcher

In your opinion, what more could be done to improve your school's organizational structure and policy?

Participant

Uh, the policies for me the policies are okay, yeah, they're okay. Probably the only challenge we are facing here that I would like to work on is enrollment because that one is a big issue here. Sometimes they will be enrolled but retention is always a challenge, especially during the rainy season, they bring their kids because they want to go and work on the farm. Immediately after the season is over, they will withdraw their children from school again. Basically, school is seen as a daycare center where if parents are busy they send their children if they are free they are taken back.

Researcher

That's good. Now we've come to the last part of the conversation, but in this question, I want to understand the factors that influence the leadership style of these school leaders. You, the head teacher, and your senior master one, what are some of the things that influence your decision-making as well? So, I want to understand that.

So, first of all, I want to know what leadership style did you, your leadership team adapts in your school? What leadership style?

Participant

Democratic leadership style, yes.

Researcher

I will agree that it's democratic given the fact that you always put the opinions and the concentration of everyone into the picture. Other than that, do you also, as a SMT, do you also give tasks to other teachers in other words delegate responsibilities?

Participant

Yes, we do that, especially in this feeding program the responsibility is given to one of the teachers who's not even part of the senior management team. so, we normally give responsibilities to those who are not part of the SMT, and even with this register closing, the responsibility is given to one mathematics teacher who verifies all the works of classroom teachers, although he is not part of the leadership team. So, yes we delegate responsibilities to our teachers.

Researcher

That's good. So, do you have a system whereby teachers are punished if they don't do their work? Or they are rewarded if they do their work?

Participant

I will say reward anyway, especially nowadays, this Best Teachers' Award program in the region is helping a lot because it is making teachers compete and be more responsible in their jobs. Last year we even faced a big challenge here, there was serious competition between our teachers here. Thus, we were even unable to select our best teacher, since leadership should nominate the best teacher from the school level to the cluster level. So, it was a big challenge, but at the end of the day, we went back to the performance of the students. That was where we were able to determine the winner at the school level. In these extension classes, teachers who normally go inside, we, the grade nine, the principal has, have a token for them, he gives them some amount of money, as a token of appreciation at the end of every month. I can say two years there was also a speech and prize-giving ceremony in the school here, and teachers were handsomely rewarded, especially those who did well during the course of the year, they were given some cash prizes.

Researcher

Since you have a reward system, which is very clear and generous, how about teachers who are not performing to the expectation? What do you do to them?

Participant

We just keep on writing to always encourage them to do their work so that least can improve their work performance and things like that. Yeah. That we normally do that. Sometimes we write warning letters to teachers whom we see are not performing well.

Researcher

I'm trying to establish the leadership style/s your team usually adopts in managing and leading the school. So, therefore, , that I heard from now, you have a combination of three different types of leadership in this school. That is, you have democratic leadership. You have a distributive leadership style, in fact I would say four, you have an instructional leadership style as well as transactional leadership. Transactional leadership leaders are leaders who reward teachers if they do well or followers and punish those who are not performing well. This might involve stopping of teachers salary, serving them warning letters. So if you do that, you are adapting transactional leadership at that time. So if you are particular about teaching and learning, whereby you are monitoring their records, lesson plans, scheme of work, and you sit in the classroom to ensure that they have proper skills to present to the class, that is instructional leadership. So, if you give responsibilities that is distributed literacy, you just respond, you share responsibilities. So, decision making you involve other people in, listen to their opinion as democratic. So, you do not have one type of leadership style in your school where you have at least four combined, which I believe have contributed a lot to the success of your school.

Researcher

The next one is, what are the key factors that inform your leadership style and decision-making as a team? If you want to make a decision or if you want to make passions in the school, what are some of the key things that come to your mind or that you've discussed as a team?

Participants

like, if you want to bring any new thing or?

Researcher

yeah.

Participant

What we normally do is discuss as a team. Because every week we have an SMT meeting and I can say that I have a very active leadership team who always would like to bring in new things. So, what we normally do is we discuss that as a team, and then we write a circular to all the teachers informing them that this is a new thing that we wish to introduce. Usually, their consent is sought before the implementation of the program. So, every teacher is advised to adopt it, if it is agreed upon.

Researcher

Wonderful, do you face structural challenges or cultural challenges in implementing those new ideas? The structural challenge, in a sense. Probably rules in the schools that deny you from doing it or teacher structure. For example, there is a group of teacher structures that probably challenge you or resist the new system and they say, we are not going to accept this other idea. We will come up with this one. Or culturally, let's say you want to come up with something, but the society you are living in is cultured and then the social norm denies you from, doing some of those things.

Participant

Yeah, we normally face some of those things, especially when it comes to the area of sports. you know, sometimes we tell these kids that, ports, whenever you coming to sports, you don't bring rappers. You need to put on shots and other things like that. But because of the culture in this society, what they believe is sometimes you find it very difficult to change that behavior. When it even comes to sports in the school here, we have more boys, than girls, because their parents prefer them to dress like that to come out because culturally males are built for sport instead of females. That one has seriously contributed, in that area. But for us here, we don't just come and impose things on people, we share our programs and policies with the community members. That this is what we plan and this is what all of you are doing, whether you like, it or not. What we normally say is that this is the plan we have is a suggestion from the internal monitoring team and we believe that if it is implemented,

this is going to have efficient learning in the school. But, what we are urging you to do is, we want to give it a try and see whether it will work or not. Okay. So, we ask for their consent, if they're in for it, then we will go for it. So if they're not in for it, they will give, they will ask them to give us their reasons. Then we listen to their ideas and listen how, if their ideas are tangible, we just leave it aside. But if we see that they just want to refuse just for the sake of no reason. Sometimes we just tell everyone we will go ahead. because your reasons are not tangible, so we just go ahead and see. Yeah. Sometimes we also do that.

Researcher

Given that you have a good, large number of teachers. Yes. You have 25 numbers. Okay. And then you are managing diverse people. Even five different people grouping together is a large number to mana talk less of 25 people. Do you have some instances whereby you see that a particular individual teacher or staff is trying to recruit a soap of rebellion or something?

Participant

Yeah, it normally happens. Yeah, it normally happens, but our principal is a hundred percent against that. Okay. He likes inclusiveness he would like all the teachers to be together. So that is why in the school here, you will not see different groups of teachers sitting separately. Wherever you see us, we are always together. Because that is something that has been introduced by the headteacher. Since he believes that if teachers are having different, different groups sometimes it brings a lot of problems in management. So, whenever he sees teachers, sitting somewhere alone on the other side he'll just call all of us to come together and then he will buy Attaya (green tea) to bring us together into one group. So that is why they, in the school here, we don't have this rebellion against the leadership. Sometimes teachers themselves will even admit to themselves that they have change when they compare their behaviors in Jahanka BCS to their previous schools. So, what I normally tell them is this is a kingdom, everyone is one. Wherever we are, we are always together. So that is why we don't encounter things like that. However strong headed a teacher is, or whenever the teacher comes here with the kind of family we have here. They always had to conform to the culture we have here.

Researcher

This is a wonderful culture that is natural in the school system. So to say you have a very positive culture, you have a level of collaboration, teamwork, and mutual respect among yourselves, and among the teachers, but still, I want to go further to ask about interpersonal relations that is between the students and the teachers. So, what is the relationship teachers to teachers, teachers to leadership, and the community? How do you describe this?

Participant

I will say it is good. Sometimes teachers do have problems with students. Um, at the school level here, but sometimes we solve the problem before the problem gets out. It is also common that, when people are staying, sometimes they do have problems that are teacher-to-teacher relationships, normally encounter problems like that. Some teachers will be having issues while the administration will not be aware. But immediately the administration is aware that this particular, they're having issues, he will call the teachers involved and then he'll call the SMT and the chairman of the school and then address the teachers involved. Teacher to the community, here we don't have a problem between teachers and the community simply because we are always together in the school here. We don't normally go outside. I've been here for eight years and there are certain compounds in the community here I don't know. Whenever you see teachers leaving the school know that they're either going to the field or they're going to pray at the Masjid, but apart from that, we are always together in school here. So, I think that has reduced the rate of, problems between the teachers and the, the community. Yeah. That has helped a lot, so what I would say is our relationships are cordial.

Researcher

That's wonderful. I think **IIIIIIIIII** this bring us to the end of the conversation we are having. I thank you so much for answering my questions comprehensively, and then I apologize for keeping you here longer than expected, I really appreciate you. But before I leave you, I will want to ask you if you have anything to say, or any question or concern about the interview please go ahead.

Participant

What I would is that it is good, this interview has also, enlightened me a lot. the questions that I asked, honestly speaking, I was not expecting some of these questions because I thought that the day has connection to other areas. But, so far so good I will say that the interview is, very, very good. I appreciate it. I also appreciate you being here and I wish someday I will also be where you are. Sure.

Researcher

Then, again, I thank you and then this will bring us to the end of the interview and the interview lasts for 44 Minutes. Okay. And then we are ending the interview at 12:59pm, almost one o'clock in the afternoon in the head teacher's office. And I thank you so much. Yeah. Thank you.

Participant

Thank you too.

Appendix 5: Theme Identification Process for Discussion

Data Reduction, Sorting, and Display

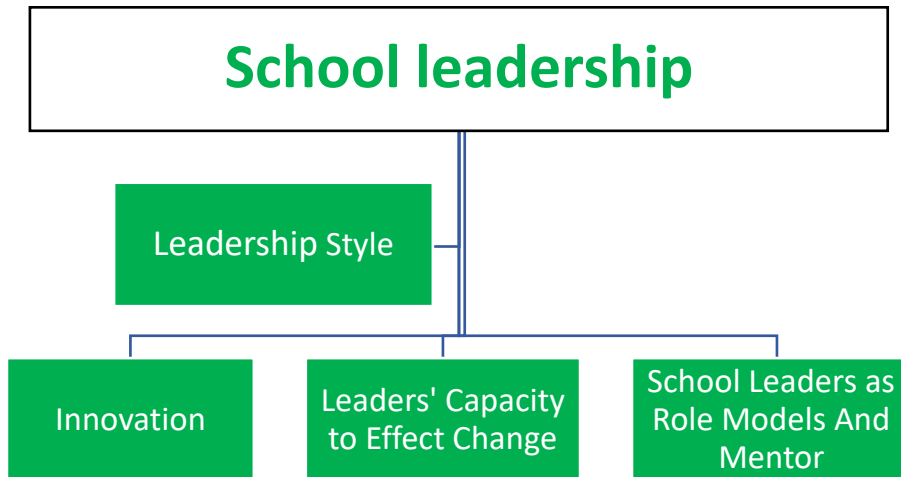
Theoretical Based: 1995 Realist Social Theory of Margaret Archer's

Since this study is designed to answer four questions, and in answering those questions in the findings and conclusion, the study relies solely on Margaret Archer's 1995 Realist Social Theory which has three key concepts namely: Agency, Structure, and Culture. The researcher assigned the codes based on that theoretical underpinning in trying to generate themes that will be discuss in the findings. It should be note that themes generated here are not just random but are all component of the said theory which I will further reduce to generate main themes and sub-themes.

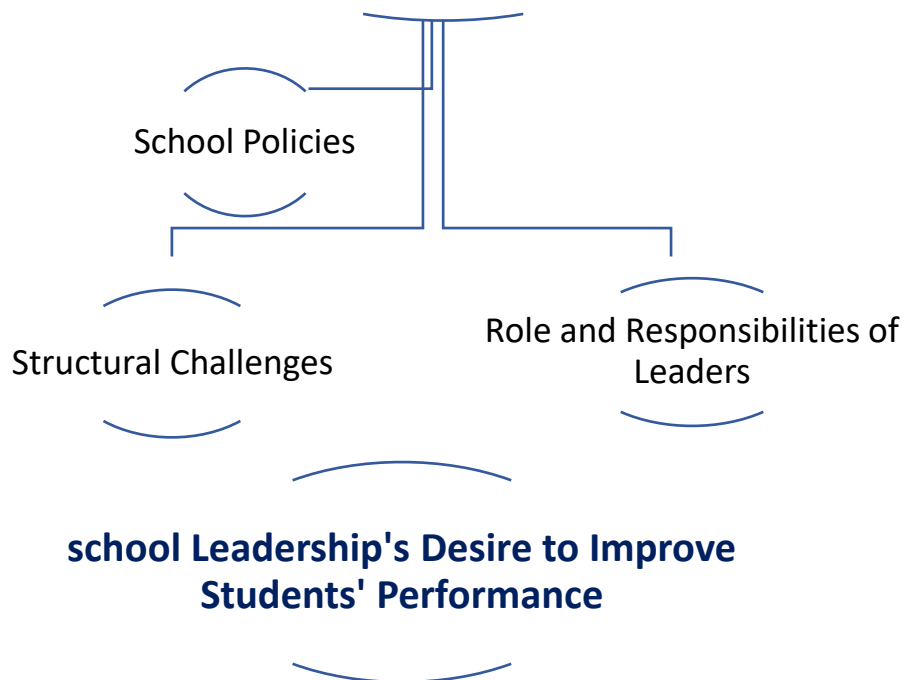
School Leaders hip	Organizational structure	School culture	School improvement	Teaching and learning	Community participation	Capacity-building	Teacher motivation
Filling system Monitoring Desire to improve quality Performance monitoring Leadership quality Desire to improve teaching and learning Leadership practices Record keeping Decision making Leadership aspiration vs practices Evaluation Leadership capacity Leadership role Team building Functions of school leaders	Motoring School policies Organizational structure Classroom observation schedule Performance monitoring Structure Action plan Policy vs structure Assessment system Dress code policy Roles and responsibilities Delegation of responsibilities Bureaucracy Structural challenges Financial challenges Policy vs teachers' desire Funding source Market structure School policies	Instructional culture Communication Feedbacks Monitoring Teacher attendance Culture of punctuality Assessment culture Culture of teaching and learning School culture Record keeping Staff performance monitoring Team work Delegation of responsibilities Division of labor Decision making Teamwork and collaboration	Desire to improve quality Teacher performance monitoring Students' performance Effect of TPD (instructional improvement) Determination for school improvement (performance) Student discipline and T/L Financial matters Resource mobilization Innovation Improvement of teaching and learning Lack of resources	Instructional practices Teachers' preparedness Students' performance Instructional culture Teacher professional development Quality teaching and learning Instructional design and planning Lesson delivery Instructional evaluation Teaching resources Innovation Instructional	Community participation Community outreach Community engagement Performance monitoring Evaluation Community resistance Student disciplining and community reaction Community force SPMM Community guidance Parental support Community perception	Teacher professional development Capacity-building vs school improvement Capacity building Frequency of TPD Effect of TPD Planning TPD Staff cooperation Capacity building teachers	Desire to improve quality Teacher motivation Teacher motivation Teacher participation in decision making Staff motivation Reward and punishment system

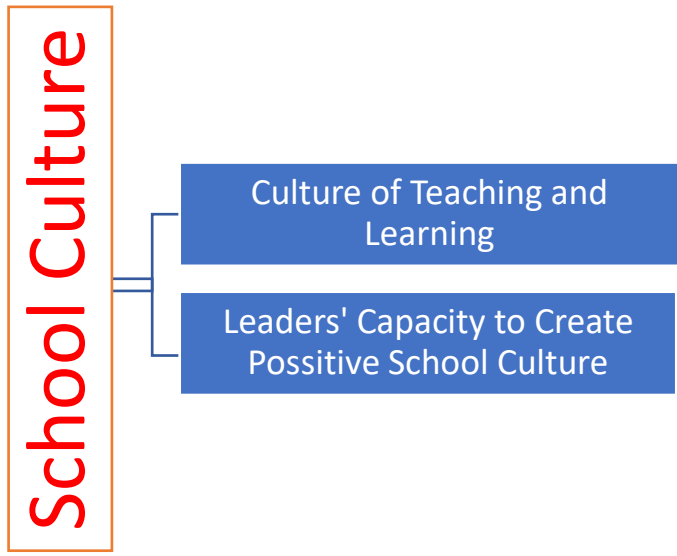
<p>Role model</p> <p>Mentoring</p> <p>Dress code</p> <p>Experience</p> <p>Leadership style</p> <p>Delegation of responsibilities</p> <p>Leadership style</p> <p>Conflict management</p> <p>Resource mobilization</p> <p>Length of service</p> <p>Management strategies</p> <p>Control mechanism</p> <p>Leadership initiatives</p> <p>Innovation</p> <p>Policy development</p> <p>Leadership approach</p> <p>Resource management</p> <p>Innovation as a complementary effort</p>	<p>Reward and punishment system</p> <p>Textbook</p> <p>Policy as a guiding principle</p> <p>Implementation of school policies</p> <p>Social structure</p> <p>Policy vs practice</p>	<p>Consultation</p> <p>Social norms</p> <p>Team spirit</p> <p>Corporal punishment</p> <p>Determining factors</p> <p>Interpersonal relationship</p> <p>New culture</p> <p>Religious values</p> <p>Moral and social values</p> <p>School climate and environment</p> <p>Information sharing.</p>		<p>evaluation</p> <p>Improvement of teaching and learning</p> <p>Classroom management</p> <p>Students' capacity</p>			
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THEME GENERATION (Themes and Sub-themes)



Organisational Structure

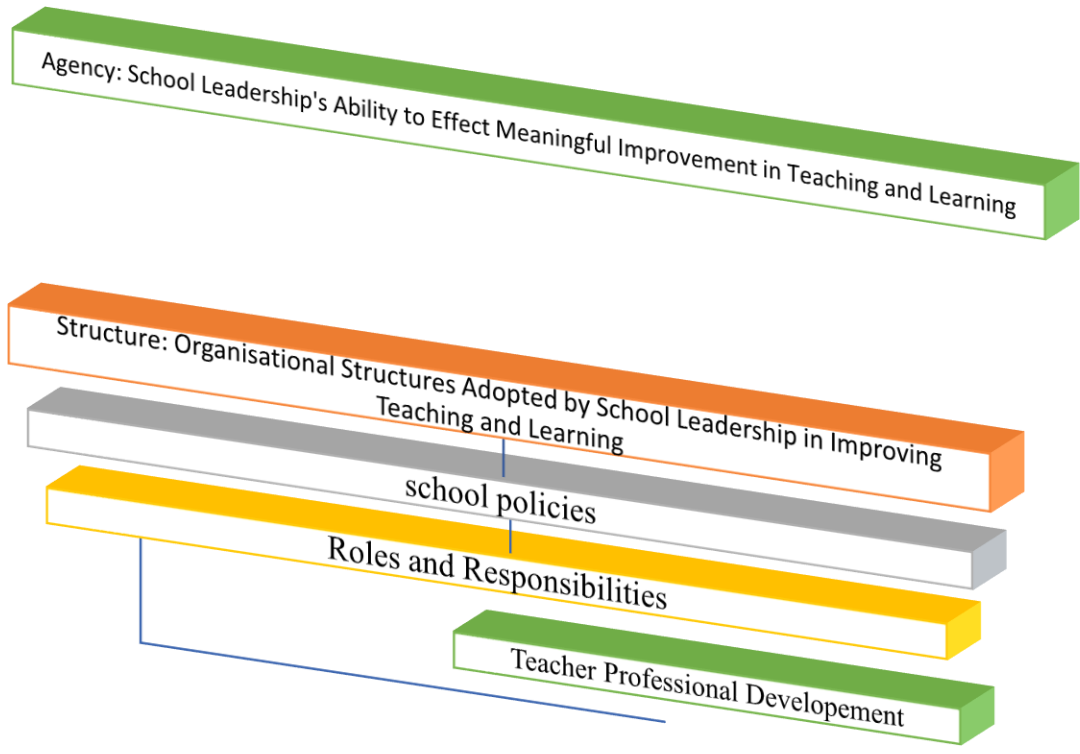


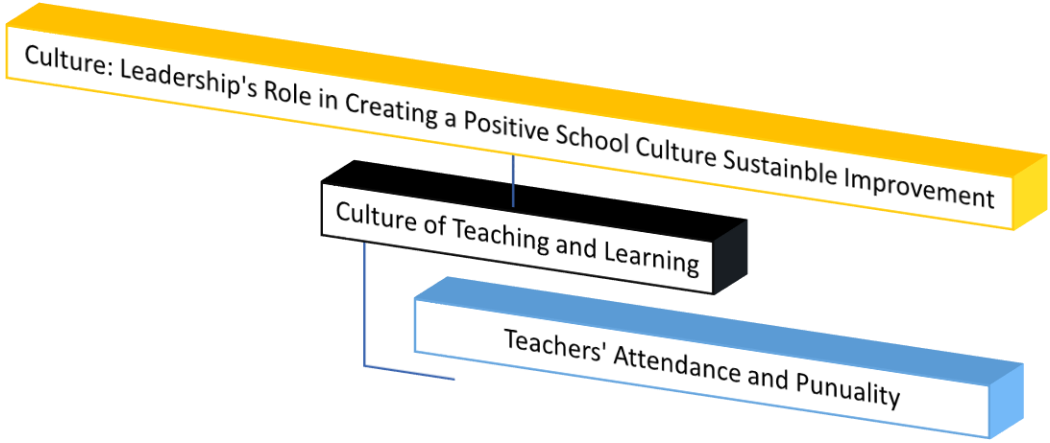


Teacher Professional Development (TPD)

Leadership's Capacity to Improve Teaching and Learning

FURTHER REDUCTION – FINAL THEMES





Appendix 6: Some Field Photos





