

**LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF CAMBODIAN  
PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS AND DEPUTY  
PRINCIPALS**

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**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the  
degree of Master of Educational Leadership and Management**

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## DECLARATION

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This thesis entitled “Leadership Development Needs of Cambodian Primary School Principals and Deputy Principals” is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Educational Leadership and Management at Unitec Institute of Technology.

### Candidate’s Declaration

I confirm that:

- This thesis represents my own work;
- The research for this work has been conducted in accordance with the Unitec Research Ethics Committee Policy and Procedures, and has fulfilled any requirements set for this project by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee.

Research Ethics Committee Approval Number: 2014-1031

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## **ABSTRACT**

Senior school leaders in Cambodia are required to respond and cope with growing demands and expectations of relevant education stakeholders such as the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), school community, and students' parents. These school leaders have to face and take up a range of challenges in leading and managing their schools. However, these leaders have never received any formal or professional training in order to prepare, equip and develop them to become skilled, knowledgeable and competent educational leaders.

In view of this, this research aimed to explore the changes in the role of Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals, the expectations surrounding their roles, and the challenges they face in performing their leadership roles. Then, the research aimed to identify the perceptions of these senior school leaders with regard to their needs for leadership development in order to be more capable of leading and managing their schools more effectively and successfully. Five primary schools in a south-western province of Cambodia participated in this research and a qualitative research methodology was adopted. Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with five principals and five deputy principals to collect the qualitative data for this research. The key findings from the research are: (i) the intensified work overload encountered by the principals and deputy principals of Cambodian primary schools and (ii) their needs for leadership development. These findings specifically indicate these principals and deputy principals are in need for the improvement and enhancement of their leadership skills and knowledge; and therefore, there needs to be appropriate and professional training on leadership development for these school leaders.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

NGOs	Non-governmental Organisations
MoEYS	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport
PoE	Provincial Department of Education
RGoC	Royal Government of Cambodia
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

# CHAPTER ONE

## INTRODUCTION

### Introduction

School improvement is believed to be closely associated with 'change activities', which raise the effectiveness of a school by increasing the desired outcomes for learners (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). In relation to this, numerous studies have found that school leaders, particularly school principals, are the active change agents in school and have a pivotal role in achieving school effectiveness (Bush, 2008). This is agreed by Anderson (1989), who maintains that, "Principalship is probably the single most powerful force for improving school effectiveness and for achieving excellence in education" (as cited in Cardno, 2003). In addition, the view that the ability of school leaders can contribute significantly to important achievements of educational goals can also be found in a large body of literature. This became obvious at the conclusion of the 1980s that there was little doubt about the emergence of the principal as "a key person in the effort to achieve excellence in schools" (Smith & Piele, 1989, as cited in Cardno, 2003). Affirming this, Cardno (2003), more than a decade later, also finds out that there was even less doubt regarding the significance of school principal's role.

Leadership of the head teacher is found to be closely related to school improvement in much of the research literature (MacBeath & Mortimore, 2001), and the fact that students' learning outcomes are influenced by school leaders has also been explored in depth (Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Harris, Leithwood, Penlington, Mehta & Kington, 2009; Robinson, Lloyd & Rowe, 2008). Although this influence

may not be obviously significant, direct and fully understood (Leithwood & Rhiel, 2003), it is believed that leadership exercised by school heads has measurable effects on student learning, second only to the effects of the quality of curriculum and teaching (Day et al., 2009).

Reflecting on this brief literature overview, leadership is recognised as an essential requirement for the successful operation of a school, and is too important to be left to chance (Bush, 2008). Meanwhile, an increasing body of literature on leadership development in the twenty-first century has also affirmed that the leadership or headship position in a school requires specific preparation (Bush, 2008; Hallinger, 2003; Huber, 2004; Lumby, Crow & Pashiardis, 2008a; Watson, 2003). With regard to this, the fact that school leaders are facing increasing demands and that these demands may not be well responded to without initial, ongoing and specific preparation and development should, therefore, be taken into consideration.

### **The Cambodian Context**

Corresponding with the brief overview about the significant role of school leadership above, school principals in the context of Cambodia are also found to be responsible for important school activities ranging from school administration such as integrating the national policy plan into school objectives to pupils' learning such as following up their progress and evaluation (Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport, 2000a). Shoraku (2006) concludes in a study that education reforms in Cambodia have loaded new and additional responsibilities onto individual schools and principals. These rapid changes and increase in the principals' workloads have also been encapsulated by Morefield (2003b) as follows:

Things are changing very quickly for school principals in Cambodia. For many years after Pol Pot [the Khmer Rouge Regime], the job of the principal was simply to manage, to worry about the buildings, resources, etc. It was the teachers' job to worry about teaching and learning. Now, they are encouraged to reach out to the community and engage them in school life and to expand their role to include teacher supervision. They are being asked to reach out to parents and to become a leader for teaching and learning. This evolution of the job is very challenging for some. (as cited in Shoraku, 2006)

As a consequence, these rapid changes and reforms have become the challenges for the principals given that they have never been tried on their ability to successfully manage their schools with little government intervention (Shoraku, 2006). The reason for this is that school educational leaders in Cambodia are appointed to their positions based on their teaching qualifications and teaching experiences alone without regard to their leadership knowledge and skills. It is noted that school principals in Cambodia have been accustomed to seeing themselves just as managers who are responsible for the operations of their schools such as taking care of crumbling buildings and filling in the reports for the ministry; therefore, they feel uncomfortable with the concept of leadership which requires them to be responsible for the outcomes of teaching and learning (Morefield, 2004, as cited in Shoraku, 2006).

In addition, Cambodian school leaders are also situated in the contexts which are increasingly conducive to work intensification, role overload and ambiguity, and an increase in managerial administrative tasks (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport, 2000a; Morefield, 2003b, as cited in Shoraku 2006). This is due to the fact that the principals and certain other educational leaders in Cambodian schools are mostly

appointed based on their teaching background without considering their formal and professional leadership development or training (Morefield, 2004, cited in Shoraku, 2006). If such issues are not properly addressed, these school leaders, especially the principals, are not likely to acquire adequate and effective leadership skills and knowledge for performing their roles of leading and sustaining successful schools.

## **Rationale**

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGoC) had officially endorsed and started implementing a plan for achieving “Education for All” by 2015 with its fundamental thrust being to ensure that all Cambodian children and youth have equal opportunity to access formal and non-formal education. One of the main policy objectives of this plan is “capacity building for decentralization through enabling operational autonomy of schools and institutions” (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, 2003, p. 1). In this sense, school principals are seen to be accorded to new roles and responsibilities and to be accountable to different stakeholders. In the Cambodian education sector, school teachers and principals are regarded as the key persons who can make students’ learning achievement possible (MoEYS, 2000a). However, for these school teachers and principals to succeed in managing a school, they need to be able to coordinate, develop and improve the planning of the work in their school based on actual availability of school information, resources, community support and participation as well as encouragement from other leaders and managers (MoEYS, 2000a).

Drawing on this, it can be assumed that Cambodian school principals are undertaking additional new roles and responsibilities. With regard to this change

and expansion of Cambodian school principal's role, the provision of leadership development could be the right intervention to enhance and enable them to perform their role more effectively and efficiently. Nevertheless, these principals are known to have never received any formal or professional training on this because they are appointed as the school principals on the basis of their teaching backgrounds in their schools (Morefield, 2003a, as cited in Shoraku, 2006). In reflection of this, it would be significant and beneficial to conduct research on this topic in order to examine and identify the needs of leadership development of the principals and deputy principals in Cambodian schools, especially in primary schools.

## **Research Aims and Questions**

Given the expansion of the school principals' role and the ambiguity and challenges of their leadership roles, the overall purpose of this research was to identify the needs for leadership development experienced by the Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals. With the identification of the perceptions of these school leaders, the idea of an appropriate and supportive leadership development programme for these school leaders could be initiated and recommended for future implementation and practice.

The research aims to guide this research were:

- To examine the role changes of Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals.
- To identify the challenges and issues in leadership practices encountered by these school principals and deputy principals.
- To identify the needs for leadership development by these school principals and deputy principals.

The research questions to guide this research were:

- What are the role changes that the principals and deputy principals are facing and experiencing in the context of Cambodian primary schools?
- What are the challenges and issues in leadership practice that these school principals and deputy principals are facing and dealing with?
- What do these principals and deputy principals know and understand about their leadership development needs?

## **Thesis Organisation**

The thesis is set out in five chapters as follows:

*Chapter One* presented the background and the rationale for this study and outlined the aims and research questions which frame the shape of this thesis. This chapter also provided the thesis organisation.

*Chapter Two* provides a critical presentation and examination of the literature on: (1) changing roles of school principals; (2) challenges for school principals in their leadership role; and (3) provision of leadership development for school principals.

*Chapter Three* outlines and justifies the qualitative methodological approach utilised for this research. The participants in the study are introduced in this chapter and the processes of how and why they were selected are described. This chapter outlines the research design, the data collecting methods used and the data analysis processes used in the study. It also details the ethical considerations.

*Chapter Four* summarises the findings from the data collecting tool – the ten semi-structured interviews and provides an overview of the main outcomes that emerged from these interviews. This chapter analyses the findings from the interviews question by question.

*Chapter Five*, first of all, brings together the findings from the ten semi-structured interviews; and the participants' perspectives are examined to identify key themes, commonalities and differences. Then, these themes are synthesised into the two broad themes – the intensified workload and the need for leadership development. Following this, the conclusions are drawn basing on the discussions of the findings. The recommendations are then made to the relevant stakeholders and partners. Finally, the recommendations for future research are also made to the concerned groups of people and institutions such as the principals and deputy principals, higher education institutions and the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport.

## **Summary**

This introductory chapter laid the foundation for the subsequent thesis. It introduced the research background, rationale and research aims and questions. It outlined a brief overview of senior school leaders' role, particularly in the current Cambodian context, its relevant changes and surrounding expectations. It also pointed out the challenges of these school leaders in practising their leadership roles, and their needs for appropriate and sufficient leadership development in order to lead their schools more effectively and successfully. Finally, the chapter presented the overall layout of the thesis which covers five chapters.

## CHAPTER TWO

### LITERATURE REVIEW

#### Introduction

This chapter provides a review of the literature in support of this research project. The themes emerging from the literature included role changes of school principals, challenges for school principals, and provision of school leadership development. By considering these elements, the development of school principals in their leadership role and practice is of significant importance and benefit.

#### Changes and Expectations Surrounding the Role of School Principal

##### *Changes in the Role of School Principal*

During the last couple of decades, research literature which focuses on school effectiveness and change claims that the role of school principals should not be just as administrators and managers but as change leaders (Pashiardis, Thody, Papanoum & Johansson, 2003). In addition, this view about the role of school principals as the key agent for change is also seen by researchers that they are in a position to shape the conditions of their organisations and to build the capacity needed to implement new programmes or to follow new practices (Diebold, Miller, Gensheimer, Mondschein & Ohmart, 2000; Davies, 2007; Jackson 2007). Competent school principals are generally expected to have a litany of characteristics such as building partnerships; creating collaborative networks and alliances; setting directions; consulting widely; empowering and mobilising others; understanding complexity; demonstrating integrity; translating strategy into action

and facilitating capability building (Davies & Davies, 2006; Lambert, 2007). The roles and characteristics of the school principals as the key agents for facilitating and supporting change are summarised by Kadji-Beltran, Zachariou and Stevenson (2013) as follows:

- 1) Facilitate the development of a shared or collective vision that expresses the moral purpose and goals of the reform and set clear directions to which the work of all staff can be aligned;
- 2) Promote professional development to enhance the knowledge, skills and dispositions of teacher and other staff by connecting them to opportunities for professional learning;
- 3) Cultivate the cultural norms and provide the structural organisational conditions and technical resources to support the vision;
- 4) Maintain a coordinated focus on teaching and learning with high expectations for student learning;
- 5) Involve and inspire individuals to be committed to contribute through collective leadership to a common objective. (p. 307)

The changing roles of school leaders have been broadly discussed and reviewed in the literature. An overview of these changes of the school principal's role has led to a suggestion by Whitaker (2003) to group them into five main categories. The first category of these role changes is the 'local management of school', which is often referred to as 'site-based management' or 'site-council governance'. Within this role, decision-making is brought down closer to the school and school officials and parents are empowered with more authority in decision-making (Whitaker, 2003). The second category is the 'tension between management and leadership', which is partly due to the implementation of the local management of the schools, and its dilemma whether to focus on professional matters and teaching-learning issues, or to tackle the overload of administrative work (Dimmock, 1996, as cited in

Whitaker, 2003). The third category is the 'increased accountability', which means school principals have to confront increasing pressures and to be accountable for a higher expectation of their students' academic achievements (Whitaker, 2003). The fourth category is the 'altered relationships with parents and community' which reveals the role changes of the principal with regard to the boundary-spanning functions (Whitaker, 2003). Kochan, Spencer, and Mathews, (2000) and Murphy (1994) note that as the principals devote more time with the parents and the community, the boundaries between schools and their external environment tend to be more permeable (as cited in Whitaker, 2003). Finally, the fifth category is the 'school choice', which means that the principals have to develop marketing strategies to promote their schools to obtain and keep students in an environment promoting school choice (Whitaker, 2003).

### *Expectations Surrounding the Role of School Principal*

School leaders are expected more than before to perform their roles more effectively, and these demands arise from two contrasting sources: the accountability pressures and the devolution to the school level (Bush, 2008). Bush maintains that, "the additional responsibilities imposed on principals in many countries make great demands on post-holders, especially those embarking on the role for the first time" (p. 26). He also points out that school principals are facing immense and growing accountability pressures in many countries, with the expectation from the government, parents and general public for schools to achieve challenging outcomes through the principals. Therefore, the appropriate configuration of a school principal's educational role could be claimed to be the facilitator of processes like collaborative inquiry, problem solving, and school

development (Grimmett, 1996; Reitzug, 1997; Sergiovanni & Starratt, 1998). In the meantime, school leaders in the developing countries are known to be facing even more pressures than those in the developed world. Some examples can be seen in certain countries such as African countries, where the principals have to manage schools with poor buildings, little or no equipment, untrained teachers, lack of basic facilities such as water, power, sanitation, and hungry learners (Bush & Oduro, 2006 as cited in Bush, 2008). In the Cambodian context, school leaders, particularly the principals and deputy principals, are in a similar situation and experiencing similar problems and challenges. These senior school leaders have never received appropriate and professional training on how to lead and manage their schools; and they are appointed as principals or principals based on their teaching qualifications and experiences (Morefield, 2004, as cited in Shoraku, 2006).

In reflection of the review of a growing body of literature, the role of school principal as an educational leader is, therefore, seen to be closely associated with a broad range of important expectations. For example, the principal as an instructional leader is expected to have a good understanding of the components of quality teaching and to be very knowledgeable about the curriculum to make sure that students are being provided with appropriate learning experience and knowledge (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). It is expected that principals are able to demonstrate their ability in leading and improving the teaching practices through his or her constructive feedback, or their professional competence of designing a system which enables other people in their institution to provide this support. Furthermore, it is anticipated that effective and successful educational leadership needs to be much more than what any one individual can or has to offer – it is supposed to have the potential to be greater than the sum of what each individual leader in an

organisation can or has to offer (Robertson, 2005). Studies on effective schools have identified five instructional leadership priorities of effective principals: (a) defining and communicating the educational mission of the school, (b) managing curriculum and instruction, (c) supporting and supervising teaching, (d) monitoring student progress, and (e) promoting a learning climate (Bateman & Bateman, 2001; Blasé, 1987; Blasé, Blasé, Anderson & Dungan, 1995; Blasé & Kirby, 1992, as cited in Di Paola & Walther-Thomas, 2003). Furthermore, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, and Orr (2007) also note in their executive summary report “*Preparing School Leaders for a Changing World: Lessons from Exemplary Leadership Development Programs*” that:

Contemporary school administrators play a daunting array of roles. They must be educational visionaries and change agents, instructional leaders, curriculum and assessment experts, budget analysts, facility managers, special program administrators, and community builders. New expectations for schools — that they successfully teach a broad range of students with different needs, while steadily improving achievement for all students — mean that schools typically must be redesigned rather than merely administered. It follows that principals also need a sophisticated understanding of organizations and organizational change. Further, as approaches to funding schools change, principals are expected to make sound resource allocations that are likely to improve achievement for students. (p. 1)

The literature makes apparent that the role of the school principal has undergone substantial changes in a recent reform environment and has become more complex and diverse. Therefore, school principals have to confront the challenges that come with these changes and the expansion of their new roles.

## **Challenges for the School Principal**

### *Intensified Workload*

As the principals face more role changes and increasing accountability, they are likely to encounter numerous challenges – both old and new – in their daily work. One of the challenges is the emphasis on the principals to take the lead role for teaching and learning, that contradicts with the concept of ‘self-management schools.’ The latter brings an intensified workload for the principals and other school leaders who are supposed to be more concerned with management and administrative tasks than leading teaching and learning (Bennett, 1994; Cardno & Collett, 2004; Fullan, 2008; Hodgen & Wylie, 2005). Based on the study conducted by Cardno and Collett (2004), this challenge is apparent for the principals. The principals, as reported in this New Zealand study, maintained that educational leadership is to be of high priority for school leaders, but in the meantime, curriculum leadership is to be regarded as their primary role too. Cardno and Collett argue that: “it was a challenge to maintain a clear focus on this professional role while at the same time carrying out the functions of a chief executive officer” (p.24). This argument is affirmed in Hodgen and Wylie’s (2005) research findings that fifty-nine percent of the New Zealand principals involved in their study mentioned that they experienced a lack of time to focus on teaching and learning.

### *Accountability and Compliance*

The next challenge for principals in the modern context of educational leadership is the ‘accountability’ issue. The challenge is that while the school principals or leaders are encouraged by the insights and concrete evidence for leading an

effective educational organisation through the distribution of their leadership authority; there are demands made by the central government, governing board and community to be accountable for all other school outcomes too (Southworth, 1995). To comply with the emergence of educational reforms, as pointed out by a growing body of research literature, principals are supposed to draw on both leadership and management skills and competencies which will eventually contribute to enhanced responsibilities and accountabilities for schools. This would mean that the challenge for principals tends to be heightened as there is a greater need to consult with the communities regarding decisions affecting their schools and ways of empowering other members through the delegation and sharing of leadership responsibilities. A study by Piggot-Irvine and Cardno (2005) states that: "The principal is accountable to the Board of Trustees as the chief executive of the board, and is responsible for the professional leadership of the school" (p. 85). Hodgen and Wylie (2005) also comment that:

The challenge is now to see if we can find some creative ways to provide more balance in the role of the principal, and to find ways to create common ground between the needs of individual schools and the government agencies that fund, support, and review them. (p. 65)

Moreover, school principals also have to deal with the 'people-centred tensions', which involves value differences and is no less complicated or problematic than any other challenges. This is sometimes and somehow believed to be even more difficult for the principals. Duignan and Collins (2003) associate this challenge with an ethical dilemma focusing on relational aspects in the leadership role of principal. This is addressed by Coles and Southworth (2005) who note that: "Learning communities are characterised by high levels of relational trust" (p. 163); and the

determinants of this relational trust are revealed by Robinson (2007) as the interpersonal respect, personal regard for others, role competence and personal integrity. Consequently, the principal's challenge is rooted in their effort to build relational trust, which they need to actively and effectively foster professional relationships with and between colleagues and across school community, including Board of Trustee members and parents (Odhiambo, 2007).

## **Leadership Development for School Principals**

### *Concept of Leadership Development*

In both the national and international context, leadership development tends to have been given a high priority for its contribution to positive change and improvement within the school. The concept of leadership development within schools is seen to have been broadly recognised for its pivotal role in bringing about organisational improvement. Bush (2008) agrees that there is a fast-growing international focus on leadership development as an important component of school improvement. For example, in the USA, good preparation is an important development of school leaders and is widely acknowledged for its significant contribution of bringing about a difference in the subsequent leadership practices of these leaders (Crow, 2006). It is anticipated that leaders would learn to perform their jobs well in order to bring about improvements and benefits to their schools and, eventually, to fulfil their role and duty in serving the needs of their learners.

The concept of leadership development has been perceived and defined with a range of varied understandings and explanations. Leadership development, according to Cardno (2012), is a form of professional development which is

specifically designed to develop the competencies and capabilities of leaders at all levels in an organisation to perform their leadership role effectively. Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) describe their perception of leadership development as the expansion of the collective capacity of members in an organisation in order to enable effective leadership roles and processes. Leadership development also implies the notion of capacity building and involvement of groups of people in an organisation to learn their way out of the problems that could not have been predicted (Dixon, 1993).

A broad discussion of the term 'leadership development' requires further examination and is to be taken into careful consideration. Reflecting on Bush's (2010) argument, leadership development should be context specific with the major focus on process rather than content; while West-Burnham's (2001) contention, with regard to leadership development, is that learning should be individualised, include participant's challenge and be based on intrinsic motivation. Rhodes and Brundrett (2009) appeal to the principals to take on an active role in the identification, development and succession of middle level leaders, advocating for a more explicit approach in building leadership capabilities at all levels of a school hierarchy. Concurring with this, Bush (2008) suggests that effective leadership development contributes to the progression from classroom to school leadership and becomes a moral obligation of education systems worldwide. According to Bush (2008), to be qualified for the role of a classroom teacher is no longer sufficient for the role of leadership; while Day and Antonakis (2012) comment that "leadership development is a complex construct that inherently involves change" (p. 108). Therefore, the notion of further examination and discussion of this 'leadership development' term should be deemed necessary.

## *Provision of Leadership Development*

Leadership and its development, more than ever before, have become serious issues for policymakers in education; and accordingly, research conducted on this topic has also grown. A review of international trends in the development of managers and leaders in business and education has been undertaken and has found that school leaders make a difference to the capacity of schools to implement reforms (Hallinger & Snidvongs, 2005). In relation to this, it has also been noted that: “Managers and leaders in education need to develop new skills and ways of working as a response to the pace of change and to be adaptable and responsive to localised circumstances” (Department of Education, 1996: pp. 13-14). The emphasis on leadership development and the importance of headship preparation are, therefore, seen to have increased considerably in the twenty-first century, and, given the increasing body of evidence that leadership does make a difference, the spotlight turns to focus on the preparation required for developing appropriate leadership behaviour (Bush, 2008).

Drawing on the review of literature, traditionally, leadership development is seen to have taken the form of graduate and post graduate programmes, on-job training and external mentoring or coaching (Bush, 2010; Cardno, 2005; Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). In this regard, Cardno and Youngs (2013), also share their contribution by sharing a number of key messages about effective leadership and management development programme for experienced principals in New Zealand. First, this form of development needs to be relevant for the principals and other participants; and a responsive design to meet the individual needs is particularly required. Second, effective development of this kind takes place over several months in various forms in order for learning to be reflective,

applied and sustained; therefore, providing sufficient duration is a critical effectiveness factor because time is used for identifying individual needs and making adjustments to meet those needs. Third, as captured in principals' views, this form of development is also found to be effective in terms of its links between their own development and development of others, thus achieving not only leader but also leadership development in the presence of some conditions.

Meanwhile, in relation to leadership development, five lessons to help boost the training of aspiring principals in the US to have strong leadership and succeed in their schools are outlined in a report by the Wallace Foundation (2012) as follows: (1) principal training program need to be more selective – probing process for choosing candidates for training is the essential first step in creating a more capable and diverse corps of future principals; (2) aspiring principals need training that prepares them to lead improved instruction and school change, not just manage buildings; (3) districts should do more to exercise their power to raise the quality of principal training, so that graduates better meet their needs; (4) states could make better use of their power to influence the quality of leadership training through standard-setting, program accreditation, principal certification and financial support for highly qualified candidates; and (5) principals – especially in their first years on the job – need high-quality mentoring and professional development tailored to individual and district needs.

In the New Zealand context, the provision of leadership development for first-time principals ran through four phases: (1) “Getting Started” provided an initial overview and an introduction to the strands of the programme; (2) “Leading Learning” focused on student learning, progress and achievement; (3) “School Organisation and Development” looked more closely at planning and reporting and (4) “Future

Directions” encouraged principals to develop futures thinking and plan ahead on both a school development and personal development level (MoE, 2001). This induction programme consisted of three main components: (1) three residential courses (of four days duration each); (2) mentoring and (3) new principals online – an online learning and professional development facility (MoE, 2001).

## **Summary**

In summary, the literature pinpoints three key themes related to the leadership role of school principals. These themes are: role changes of school principals; challenges for school principals; and provision of leadership development. A great deal of research literature has clearly demonstrated the changes in the role and responsibilities of the school principal. Being accountable and responsive to these changes, the principals are consequently seen to face and respond to the expectations resulting from their new additional roles and duties. Unavoidably, the changes in the principal’s role and their respective expectations become the challenges for them in performing their everyday duties and tasks in school. Therefore, the idea of developing leaders or leadership development is assumed to be the appropriate and effective solution or intervention for helping school principals to succeed in performing their role and duty in the context of change and high expectations.

This review of literature has shown the need for the research on leadership development opportunities in five Cambodian primary schools. The following chapter – Chapter Three – outlines the overview of the research methodology, the rationale for the interpretive approach and the qualitative approach adopted for the semi-structured interviews.

## CHAPTER THREE

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### **Introduction**

This chapter begins with an overview of the research methodology by providing the rationale for the adoption of the interpretive epistemological position for this study and consequently a qualitative approach to the methodology, data collection and analysis. Then, the research design and school sampling are explained and discussed, with a brief description of the data analysis framework. Next, the methods of data collection and analysis are examined and discussed. Finally, the discussion of validity, reliability and ethical considerations relevant to this study will conclude the chapter.

#### **Methodology (Overview)**

Research in the early stage of social sciences is seen to borrow heavily from the scientific approach of the natural sciences ascribing to the existence of an objective reality which exists independently of human intervention. Researchers are responsible for identifying and testing these natural laws or theories using scientific methods (Bryman, 2008; Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2007). This scientific conception and understanding of the world and its environment around human beings is known as the positivist paradigm, and was regarded by most social scientists during the mid-twentieth century to be the only means or approach of exploring and making sense of the social world (Cohen, et al., 2007; de Landsheere, 1997). Nevertheless, this ontological position or assumption was later on questioned and challenged by social scientists as inadequate for understanding

the social world. Social events occurring in the world such as war, economic crisis and poverty challenge scholars and academics to question whether human behaviour and other social phenomena could be understood in terms of immutable laws. Consequently, the anti-positivist movement took place and was led by remarkable theorists such as Kuhn (1970) who argued that positivism, being rather distinct from scientific reality, is a western cultural construct restricting and directing science to the concrete (Scott & Usher, 2004).

Emerging from this anti-positivist stance is the coexistence of the interpretive paradigm. Scott and Usher (2004) argue that “Interpretivism ... disputes the powerfully held view that the natural sciences provide both the sole model of rationality and the only way of finding truth” (p. 24). This paradigm, however, does not reject the scientific tradition totally but merely adopts a subjective approach in making sense or assumption of the social world. Interpretivists persistently attempt to apprehend reality or ultimate truth through the perspectives of the participants and seek to understand how individuals interpret the world around them (Cohen, et al., 2007). Bryman (2008) describes an interpretive epistemological position as “the understanding of the social world through an examination of the interpretation of that world by its participants” (p. 366). In other words, rather than simply observing people and the events that occur in their world, an interpretive approach attempts to understand why those events occur. Cohen et al. (2007) suggest that due to the “immense complexity of human nature and the elusive and intangible quality of social phenomena” (p. 11), an interpretive approach is likely to be more successful in a school context than a positivist approach. From the interpretive perspective, the purpose of a research is to understand the meanings of the social phenomena and interactions with the social actors within a specific context through a more subjective, qualitative approach (Cohen et al., 2007; Davidson & Tolich, 2003).

With an emphasis on understanding how participants create and maintain their social environments (Davidson & Tolich, 2003), the interpretive perspective was, therefore, the most appropriate and suitable for this research on leadership development needs of Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals. Accordingly, stemming from the adoption of an interpretive epistemological position was the choice of an appropriate research methodology. In compliance with the research problems and questions, the appropriate methodology for this study was identified to be one of a qualitative approach.

### *Rationale for Qualitative Approach*

With the interpretive paradigm, both qualitative and quantitative methodologies are possibly employed for conducting research. However, qualitative research tends to strongly emphasise the social relationships and situations (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This is clearly affirmed by Creswell's (2002) assertion that qualitative research methodology is primarily concerned with socially constructed experiences; and Denzin and Lincoln (1998) also argued that "qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them" (p. 3). In a similar sense, Davidson and Tolich (2003) assert that qualitative research methodology involves "... direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understanding how people create and understand their social world" (p. 26).

It is also pointed out by Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh (2002) that the goal of qualitative research is to demonstrate and simplify the complexities of the focus of a study in sufficient depth and detail so that the target readers or audiences will be able to understand it regardless of their experience. In addition, qualitative research

focuses on reflecting the quality of a phenomenon or an intervention, and the scope and depth within a qualitative study comes about through the researcher asking how a participant involved in a certain event felt rather than restricting the research to how many times the event may have occurred (Davidson and Tolich, 1999).

Based on my research topic and questions, it was essential to capture the individuals' perceptions about their role changes and challenges in leading primary schools, and their respective needs for leadership development. This was best achieved by adopting a qualitative method and analysis because, "quantitative researchers are seldom able to capture their subjects' perspectives because they have to rely on remote, inferential empirical methods and materials" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 12). These authors have confirmed that qualitative research provides rich descriptions of and the constraints of everyday life. The research questions explored in this study mainly focused on the constructed realities of principals and deputy principals in the context of primary school, their interactions with other actors, and their work challenges in the presence or absence of leadership development. These questions demanded a methodology which allowed the participants to express themselves and to be heard amid the associated complexity of interactions and perceptions (Guba & Lincoln, 2005).

## **Research Methods**

### *Semi-structured Interview*

Complying with the qualitative methodology adopted for this research, the nominated data collection method was a semi-structured interview (Appendix A). Ten semi-structured interviews were conducted with five principals and five deputy

principals of five Cambodian primary schools. Through these interviews, the intended target principals and deputy principals were the “key informants” (Davidson & Tolich, 1999, p.123) in this research, thereby providing data that had a “complexity of view” (Creswell, 2002, p. 8).

The semi-structured interview is a method of data-gathering chosen for this project due to its, “exploration of more complex and subtle phenomena,” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 174). More in-depth data required for answering the concerned research questions are to be collected through this type of interview (Hinds, 2000). The benefit of a qualitative interview, besides its achievement of in-depth data, is its flexibility as a research tool. The researchers have the opportunity to elicit and explore elaborate responses or answers from the participants to extract meaning, although it is these data that are often most revealing (Bryman, 2008; Denscombe, 2007; Scott & Usher, 2004). This type of interview with its flexibility provides the qualitative data with that personal dimension and enables the exploration of the participants’ world views which relate to their own experience, identification of emerging themes, and attainment of additional clarifying information from the participants (Bryman, 2004; Cohen et al., 2007).

### *Selection of Sample*

The sample size for the interviews was determined by the size of the project and limitations of time and access. Considering the amount of time required for transcribing the interviews from Khmer into English and analysing the data, a pragmatic decision was made limiting the number of interviews to ten participants which included five principals and five deputy principals from five selected primary

schools in Cambodia. The sampling for these interviews was conducted on the basis of both a purposive and convenience sampling method. It was purposive in that participants were selected according to their formal roles; and it was convenience-based in that their willingness to participate was ascertained through the approval of authorised institutions and the school principals and deputy principals themselves (Bryman, 2008).

The questions included in this semi-structured interview (See Appendix A) were grouped according to the research questions in order to simplify the analysis of data which was one of the critical parts of the research. Then, the interview schedule was piloted with a primary school principal or deputy principal to test the interview tool and adjust the errors or mistakes accordingly. This process allowed the interviewer or researcher to learn about issues such as timing, interviewer inexperience and the possibility of asking leading questions and to alleviate any of these issues if found problematic (Bryman, 2008; Denscombe, 2007; Scott & Usher, 2004). These interviews were conducted on a one-to-one basis in order to provide the participants with freedom and confidentiality to enable thoughtful and in-depth expression of their opinions free from fear of contradiction (Denscombe, 2007; Hinds, 2000). In addition, the interviews varied in length ranging from 25 to 55 minutes, although 35 minutes should have been regarded as the average length; and were recorded with audio equipment because, “audio recordings offered a permanent record and one that was fairly complete in terms of the speech that occurred,” (Denscombe, 2007, p. 195). Above all, the interviews were then transcribed and sent to the participants for individual ‘member check’ giving them the opportunity to review and withdraw any data that was misunderstood or in error (Hinds, 2000).

## **Data analysis**

The analysis of qualitative research data needs a comprehensive, systematic and explicit approach. Lofland, Snow, Anderson and Lofland (2006) succinctly assert that data analysis involves “a transformative process in which raw data are turned into findings or results” (p. 36). The use of predefined categories is also encouraged in the process of this form of analysis, but with the allowance of those categories being refined or the new ones to be generated. This approach is known as “a recursive and reflexive movement between concept development – sampling-data, collection-data, coding-data, and analysis-interpretation” (Altheide, 1996, as cited in Bryman, 2004, p.393); while Miles and Huberman (1994) pragmatically describe data analysis as consisting of three interrelated processes: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Neuman (2003) views data analysis as being “examining, sorting, categorizing, evaluating, comparing, synthesizing, and contemplating the coded data as well as reviewing the raw and recorded data” (p. 448).

### ***Analysis - Semi-structured Interview***

Thematic coding was used to analyse the data collected and transcribed from the semi-structured interviews in this research. Thematic coding is identified as a central strategy by Denscombe (2007), Neuman (2003) and Lofland et al. (2006) for the identification and analysis of common themes. However, prior to this stage, the data gathered from the ten semi-structured interviews with the five principals and five deputy principals from five selected Cambodian primary schools were identified and transformed into categories. According to Bryman (2008), Cohen et al. (2011), Neuman (2003), and Lofland et al. (2006), qualitative analysis essentially begins

with a series of codes and the essence of coding is the process of sorting data into various categories. Following that the common elements were identified as the basis of the coding system and were applied to all interview data so that they reflected the purpose of the research (Hannay & Ross, 1999). Next, the numerical and coloured coding of participants in the interview was also employed, for example, from SM1 to SM5 allowing for ease of administration and assisting the analysis facilitation.

## **Validity and Triangulation**

### *Validity*

The strength and quality of a piece of research tends to be based significantly on the researcher's ability to demonstrate its rigour. This rigour is associated with concepts of validity and reliability. However, in the context of this research, only the concept of validity is relevant and needs to be discussed. Validity, according to Cohen et al. (2007), is most probably perceived as the measure of whether "a particular instrument measures what it claims to measure" (p.133). In Davidson and Tolich's (2003) perception, validity is viewed as "the extent to which a question or variable accurately reflects the concept the researcher is actually looking for" (p. 31). Similarly, validity, in a more complicated sense, is regarded as an issue that requires the researcher asking whether the questions employed truly measure the concept being researched (Bryman, 2008; Leedy, 1997).

Validity is viewed as a key factor in determining and conducting effective research, so it is important to ensure the validity of both data collection and data analysis. Validity, according to Bryman (2008) and Lincoln and Guba (2005), can be

addressed via authenticity, credibility, trustworthiness and integrity; and validity may be improved through careful sampling, appropriate instrumentation and appropriate statistical treatments of the data too (Bryman, 2008). Therefore, a researcher has to be apparently confident in the elements of the research plan, data acquisition, data processing analysis, interpretation and its ensuing judgment.

For instance, in this research, in order to ensure the responses from the interviews, the interviewer provided appropriate guiding direction while eliciting answers from the participants. In addition, the interviewer also assisted the participants in giving the responses which aligned and linked to the research aims and questions. It should also be noticed that all the interviews were recorded and transcribed in order to provide participants with the opportunity to check for accuracy. This process is believed to enhance the validity or credibility of the research.

### *Triangulation*

In addition, another possible approach frequently used to strengthen the credibility and validity of a research is triangulation – the comparison of sources of evidence in order to determine the accuracy of information or phenomena. It is basically adopted for improving the validity of the research by means of cross-checking the data (Bush, 2002). Triangulation is essential for ensuring the validity of qualitative research (Bryman, 2008; Cardno, 2003; Cohen et al. 2011). It is a sensible and proper approach to enhance the credibility of a study, especially one which adopts multiple methods or sources of information to generate data as a validation procedure (Bryman, 2008; Cohen et al., 2011). Based on these multiple methods or sources, the data are carefully checked or verified to prove the validity (Cohen et al., 2011). As pointed out by Davidson and Tolich (1999), triangulation is the use or

employment of multiple sources of data to collect evidence. In this research, the methodological triangulation was the collection of data from the primary school principals and triangulated it with that of their deputy principals using the semi-structured interviews.

## **Ethical Issues**

Ethical issues in research need to be taken into serious consideration. Bryman (2008) asserts that “Ethical issues cannot be ignored as they relate directly to the integrity of a piece of research and of the disciplines that are involved” (p. 113). Fontana and Frey (2005), also addressing this ethical consideration in research, contend that since people are the objects of inquiry “extreme care must be taken to avoid any harm to them” (p. 715). This important fact is also raised by Cardno (2003) that the main aim of research ethics is to protect people taking part in research from any possible harm – whether it is physical, mental, emotional or financial – in the research process. Several other writers also reveal that participants must be informed about the aims and their roles being involved in the research (Bryman, 2008; Cardno, 2003; Davidson & Tolich, 1999). This is related to what Bouma (1998), Bryman (2008) and Cohen et al (2007) elaborate further that the participants in research should be voluntary and their identity should be kept confidential. To sum up, Davidson and Tolich (1999) suggest five key principles of ethical considerations as follows: (1) do no harm; (2) voluntary participation; (3) informed consent; (4) avoid deceit; and (5) ensure confidentiality and anonymity.

Drawing on the brief review above, one aspect of the main ethical issues was chosen for further consideration in this research: ‘informed consent’. It is well recognised and agreed among prominent writers (such as Bryman, 2008; Fontana

& Frey, 2005; Wilkinson, 2001) that the 'informed consent' from the participants is one of the key principles of research ethics. Simply put, the basic idea behind informed consent is that if you want to do research with people, you should ask for their permission first (Wilkinson, 2001, p. 16). Additionally, the principle of informed consent is more than just obtaining the participants' consent for interviewing or inquiring any information from them. Research ethics is assumed to be that the participants will be well informed; and therefore, they are able to make informed decisions as to whether they wish to be involved in the research (Bryman, 2008). Participants are supposed to be entitled to the provision of all relevant information pertaining to the research in which they are to be involved. This includes what is to be asked of them and any possible burdens that they may encounter (Wilkinson, 2001). More importantly, it is the duty or obligation of the researcher to disclose this information to the participants, regardless of their requests. Thus, in this research, the information sheet (Appendix B) and consent form (Appendix C) are provided.

In this research, all participants were voluntary and they could withdraw at any time from the research (semi-structured) interviews. They were assured that the data and the identity of their schools (in this research – they are all primary schools in Cambodia) would be kept confidential. Privacy was guaranteed by ensuring that all data was kept in a secure place and that access is limited to those who have been disclosed as having access (Bouma, 1998; Cohen et al., 2007). All this information was provided in an information letter attached to another letter seeking for the permission from them and those who are in authority over them just for the sake of keeping them well-informed of what is to take place. However, the process of informing the participants about the research ethics was undertaken again at the time of the actual interviews with all and each individual participants.

Another key ethical consideration for conducting this research was to gain entry and access to the research sites in which the five primary schools in Cambodia were located. In the case of this research, the key contact persons were the school principals who were also the participants in the research, and they were contacted for their permission at the outset of the interview process. The communication forms involved telephone, and social media network, namely Facebook, as the researcher had communication network with some of them and education officers who assisted the researcher in communicating with them to seek their permission.

### **Limitations of Research**

There were some limitations on the nature of the research which are worth taking into consideration. One of the most significant limitations is the gap in the available literature related to changes in the role of senior school leaders, the challenges and, especially, leadership development within the Cambodian context. The search for relevant literature in this context was particularly challenging and required a review of relevant literature in other parts of the world.

In addition, this research also has its limitation in terms of its sample selection of just five principals and five deputy principals in five Cambodian primary schools. The findings from this research, therefore, cannot be used to generalize or reveal the reality of leadership work, the role and the challenges of senior leaders in the context of Cambodian primary schools as a whole. There is still a lot more underlying truth to be discovered in this broad field of primary education. However, this research can shed light on or pave the way for further research on leadership development needs within the Cambodian primary school context.

## **Summary**

This chapter has described the methodology and qualitative research method used in this research project. A justification has been provided to explain the selection of an interpretive epistemological position and a qualitative study approach. Then, the selection of the semi-structured interview for collecting the data has also been explained and justified. Next, the description of criteria used to ensure the validity and reliability of data has been detailed, along with the examination of any ethical considerations and issues. Finally, the limitations of research have been outlined. In the chapter to follow, the findings from the semi-structured interviews with the primary school principals and deputy principals are discussed in detail.

## **CHAPTER FOUR**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS**

#### **Introduction**

In this chapter, the data collected from the ten semi-structured interviews are presented. The purpose of the interviews was to collect the perceptions of five principals and five deputy principals from five selected Cambodian primary schools in relation to leadership development. The interview questions are included in Appendix A. Two interviews were conducted in each of the five selected schools – one with the principal and one with the deputy principal; and the data collected were aggregated separately for the principals and deputy principals.

The chapter begins by presenting a brief overview of the interview participants from the five selected schools. The questions used for the interviews provide the headings for the presentation of the data. The tables are used to highlight the frequency of specific sub-themes that emerged from the data; and the key sub-themes are then grouped into major themes.

#### **The Research Participants**

##### *The Interview Participants*

The pseudonyms “School A”, “School B”, “School C”, “School D”, and “School E” have been used in order to protect the identity of the research sites. For the purpose of this thesis, the ten interview participants – the principals and deputy principals – will be referred to as ‘she’. Almost all of these educational leaders are very experienced and have been in their positions as principal or deputy principal at their respective schools for a sufficient period of time, certainly long enough to be familiar with the duties and tasks of school leadership and management.

## Findings

### Question One: What is your role as a principal or deputy principal?

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.1 below. Four key sub-themes emerged from the responses to this question: leadership and management duties; responsibility for overall school operation; accountability for teaching and learning quality; and heavy workload.

*Table 4.1 Key roles and responsibilities of the principals and deputy principals*

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Leadership and management duties	✓	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	5/10
Responsibility for overall school operation	X	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	6/10
Accountability for teaching and learning quality	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	5/10
Heavy workload	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	3/10

Three principals and two deputy principals were able to succinctly outline that they are mainly in charge of ‘leadership and management duties or tasks’ in their roles:

*Principal School A: My role as a principal is mainly focused on the management and leadership tasks.*

*Principal School C: Simply put, leadership is to do with people and is meant to take initiative, to lead, to direct or guide people. Generally speaking, we need to have initiative as the main thing for leadership work; while we refer to the material or physical tasks such as managing statistics and school physical infrastructure and facilities, preparing and writing reports, and developing plans etc. as management work.*

They identified 'leadership tasks' as the kind of work to deal with people such as their staff members and teachers; while 'management tasks' were identified as the duties which are related to physical facilities or infrastructure and technical routines.

Three principals and three deputy principals were able to point out that they are largely and primarily responsible for the overall operation of their schools:

*Principal School B: A principal can be a permanent education inspector, a technical advisor, an education counsellor etc. Overall, everything that is related to school is also related to the principal, who is supposed to be held accountable for both the rights and wrongs.*

*Principal School D: In general, my present role is responsible for the overall school management which includes supervising students, teachers and staff, and managing state properties and all other facilities in school. Our role is very broad, as I already mentioned. It includes the management of both teachers and students in the class and we are responsible for everything.*

They identified that as a school principal or deputy principal they perform a range of tasks and duties to ensure the smooth everyday operation of their schools.

One principal and four deputy principals were able to outline their understanding of their roles of being accountable for the 'quality of teaching and learning' occurring in their schools.

*Principal School E: My role as a principal is to improve the quality of the school such as the quality of teaching; and in order to ensure this quality, we need to oversee our teachers and staff members. We check if they have enough teaching documents and aids to promote the quality of students' learning.*

*Deputy Principal School B: As a deputy principal of a primary school I have the role and responsibility as a technical officer in charge of*

*teachers' teaching and students' learning from grade one to six. In addition, I also communicate regularly with the teachers in each class to assist and correct them in the case that they have made any mistakes in their teaching.*

They considered themselves as having a critical role in ensuring the quality of teaching and learning in their respective schools.

Three of the five principals were able to outline that there is a heavy workload in their schools for them to carry out every day.

*Principal School A: In general, it is claimed that there is a broad range of tasks in any sectors or any institutions, but for schools in particular we think that the flow of a wide range of tasks is due to the delegation or designation of work by the different fields, sections and departments in MoEYS to the institutions under their supervision or direction.*

They mentioned that in addition to the roles set by the MoEYS in the official reference documents they are supposed to take on more roles delegated or designated by the central or provincial education authorities as well as other relevant institutions or local authorities in their local areas.

**Question Two: What is your job description based on?**

**Does it accurately reflect your role?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.2 below. Four key sub-themes also emerged from the responses to this question: reference document with set rules and principles; flexibility, creativity and initiative; following the rules or principles set in the reference documents; and heavy workload.

Table 4.2 Role and Job Description of Principals and Deputy Principals

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Reference document with set rules and principles	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10/10
Following the rules or principles set in the reference documents	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	10/10
Flexibility, creativity and initiative	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	✓	5/10
Heavy workload	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	5/10

All of the five principals and five deputy principals were able to outline that their job description is based on the official reference documents issued by the MoEYS.

*Principal School D: This reference document is published as reference manual and provides the details about the role and responsibility of the principal, deputy principal, secretary and librarian etc. There are also sub-decrees, informing letters, or announcements from MoEYS stating the role and responsibility of principal and deputy principal.*

*Deputy Principal School A: MoEYS developed a clear role and responsibility criteria for the principals and deputy principals. Then, MoEYS published a manual with detailed description of these roles and responsibilities and distributed this publication to schools to be used as the official reference documents.*

They identified that these documents had been developed into a reference manual used for the training of principals in primary schools.

All of the five principals and five deputy principals also maintained that they just follow or have to follow the rules or instructions which are set by the MoEYS.

*Principal School A: Exactly, it must reflect. There is no difference between the description and the practical implementation. We just follow what has been described and stated by MoEYS.*

*Deputy Principal School E: Overall, there is no difference between what is stated in the document and what we implement practically.*

They mentioned that what is stated in the reference documents is not different from the actual practice or implementation.

However, two of the five principals and three of the five deputy principals were able to describe themselves sometimes having to be creative and flexible adopting their own initiatives to operate their schools:

*Deputy Principal School B: It is mainly based on the reference documents, but in reality it is based on both the reference document and our own adjustment or personal initiatives. Sometimes we follow exactly what is actually stated in the documents and at other times we just have to invent and follow our new initiatives.*

*Deputy Principal School D: But in addition to that, we also add more work that we experience in practical implementation.*

Two of the five principals and three of the five deputy principals mentioned their school duties and the heavy workload they have to deal with that:

*Principal School B: The reference document reflects our roles and responsibilities but it is just too much for us as the local education authority to carry out.*

*Deputy Principal School A: But the problem in primary school is the overload of work. There is really too much work to do – for example, cooperation work with the health sector, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), civil society, environment work, etc. So it becomes the burden for the primary school.*

**Question Three: What do you see as the key expectations of your role?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.3 below. Three key sub-themes emerged from the responses to this question: attainment of quality teaching and learning; recognition of school (role efficacy/efficiency); and external work relations and parent connections.

*Table 4.3 Expectations of Principals' and Deputy Principals' Roles*

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Attainment of quality teaching and learning	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	9/10
Recognition of school (role efficacy and efficiency)	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	4/10
External work relations and parent connections	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	X	3/10

All of the five principals and four of the five deputy principals were able to point out the expectation of their role in relation to the education outcomes for students. They demonstrated as follows:

*Principal School D: One more expectation is that school principals can work with their teachers to provide quality learning for their students and to achieve 100% or 95% promotion rate as set by MoEYS.*

*Deputy Principal School D: The key expectation is that if we undertake our duties effectively, our school will progress well, our school staff and teachers will do their job productively, and our student will be well-educated in the future.*

One of the five principals and three of the five deputy principals were able to outline that the expectations for their roles in their schools are to be recognised by their school community and MoEYS:

*Principal School E: We want our school to be recognised by the community – when a school is not recognised by its community it will be difficult. We also hope that our school can become a child-friendly school to be aligned with the MoEYS policy that all schools are child-friendly schools in the future.*

*Deputy Principal School B: MoEYS and the Provincial Department of Education (PoE) expect to see that the school leaders perform their job well to serve their country and society.*

Three of the five principals were able to identify one expectation of their role is related to work cooperation and communication with the environment outside of the school such as local authority and students' parents:

*Principal School A: So these days, school principals do not just perform their work inside schools but also the outside environment, particularly having to meet with students' parents.*

*Principal School D: It is expected that the principals are good at communicating. It is because by the means of communication that they can get support from different relevant stakeholders, particularly NGOs in order to improve and develop their schools.*

#### **Question Four: How has your role as a principal or deputy principal changed?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.4 below. Two key sub-themes emerged from the interview responses: no significant changes and increasing workload.

Table 4.4 Changes in Principals' and Deputy Principals' Role

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
No significant changes	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	4/10
Increasing workload	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	5/10

Two of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals were able to identify that there are no significant changes in their role as the principal or deputy principal. They outlined this, particularly in the context set by MoEYS, as follows:

*Principal School A: But if we refer to the roles of primary school principals which are set by MoEYS, there seems to be no difference from what is stated in the reference document. To sum up, there are not any significant changes in our roles and responsibilities that make it impossible for us to run our school well.*

*Deputy Principal School E: Besides this, there does not seem to be any significant changes related to the principal's or deputy principal's role.*

Three of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals were able to mention that changes seem to be very few in relation to their role as the principals and deputy principals. However, they were able to notify that there is an increased workload for them to carry out in their schools:

*Principal School A: Anyway, when we look at our school work plan in details, we are really busy – there is a lot of work to do throughout the year and we almost have no free time.*

*Principal School C: With regard to role changes, I think that the school principal more than their teachers and staff members are really very busy with loads of work coming into school.*

**Question Five: What do you think has caused these changes?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.5 below. Two key sub-themes emerged from the responses to this question: order or direction from MoEYS and increasing workload.

*Table 4.5 Cause of Changes in Principals' and Deputy Principals' Roles*

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Order/direction from MoEYS	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	4/10
Increasing workload	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	4/10

Two of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals were able to mention that MoEYS is the main determining agent to direct or make changes to the role and duty of the school principals and deputy principals:

*Principal School A: But for schools in particular we think that the flow of a wide range of tasks is due to the delegation or designation from the different divisions and departments in MoEYS to the institutions under their supervision or direction.*

*Deputy Principal School B: The changes of the principal's roles, I think, are set by MoEYS and, therefore, are due to occur. If this is from MoEYS, the educational institutions under its authority would not dare do anything without the instructions or notifications from MoEYS.*

Two of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals were able to point out the issues of increasing workload that they have to deal with. They stated that:

*Principal School A: In general, in any sectors or at any institutions it is claimed that there exists a lot of work, but for schools in particular we think there is a wide range of tasks to be implemented.*

**Question Six: What are the difficulties or constraints in carrying out your daily tasks as a principal or deputy principal?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.6 below. Two key sub-themes emerged from the interview responses: relation with students' parents and community; and leading and managing teachers and staff members.

*Table 4.6 Identified Constraints and Difficulties of Principals and Deputy Principals*

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Connection & relation with students' parents and community	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	6/10
Leading & managing teachers and staff	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	✓	X	5/10

Four of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals were able to discuss some of their challenges in relating and communicating with certain students' parents and their community. For example, they stated that:

*Principal School A: Some parents are not well-educated or do not give or see the value of their children's education so they just send their children to school but they do not encourage their children to come to school regularly or they do not help them with their study at home. They just do not care about their children's education. Instead, they sometimes blame our teachers for the failure of their children's learning.*

In reflection of their responses, they intended to demonstrate the consequences of the relational constraint or challenge with parents being the problems of school enrolments, students' attendance and drop-out, and the quality of their studies.

Two of the five principals and three of the five deputy principals stated that they have some difficulties leading and managing some of their staff members and teachers in their schools. They commented that:

*Principal School C: There is a challenge we face. It is the salary of our primary school teachers which is very low. This is a huge challenge for us to encourage them to perform their duties responsibly.*

*Deputy Principal School A: We face some challenges such as with our teachers' neglect of their duties when we asked them to prepare their lesson plans and they failed to do that when we inspect their teaching.*

**Question Seven: Why have these difficulties or constraints occurred?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.7 below. Two key sub-themes emerged from the responses to this question: lack of education and understanding of students' parents; and low salary/wage of teachers and staff.

*Table 4.7 Reasons and Causes of the Identified Constraints and Difficulties*

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Lack of education and understanding of students' parents	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	5/10
Low salary/wage of teachers and staff	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	4/10

Three of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals were able to identify the causes of the problems they encountered in carrying out their roles:

*Principal School A: Some parents are not well-educated themselves and do not give or see the value of their children's education. So they may*

*just send their children to school but they do not encourage them to come to school regularly or they do not help them with their study at home. They just do not care about their children's education.*

*Principal School C: Another challenge for us is the poor living condition of people in our community and this is also related to our educating duty.*

They pointed out that their constraints are due or related to the lack of education and understanding of students' parents which leads them to underestimate the value of their children's education.

Two of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals were able to point out that their challenge of leading and managing their teachers and staff members is closely linked to the issue of a very low salary.

*Principal School A: An important factor which makes it difficult in leading our teachers is their poor living conditions. We want to restrict their work but when we think of their poor living conditions we just cannot do that.*

*Deputy Principal School A: The reason behind this issue is clearly known, for instance, the living condition factor. When their salary is not enough for survival, they have to look for extra work out of school time. As a consequence, their neglect of school work becomes the challenge or burden for school leaders.*

**Question Eight: How have you responded to these problems?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.8 below. Three key sub-themes emerged from the responses to this question: connection or cooperation with local authority and community; following up and assisting teachers with their difficulties; and supporting students and communicating with their parents.

Table 4.8 Response to the Identified Constraints and Difficulties

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Cooperation with local authority & community	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	4/10
Following up and assisting teachers with their difficulties	X	✓	✓	X	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	4/10
Communication with students' parents and supporting school children	X	✓	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	3/10

Four of the five principals were able to identify the solution for dealing with their difficulties by communicating and cooperating with local authority and community:

*Principal School A: We inform and cooperate with the local authority, particularly the village chief, to reach out to the children in the families with problems and they help intervene these problems.*

*Principal School E: With regard to the difficult problems, as the leader of a school, I try to meet with students' parents and talk to them about their children's study. I have to obtain enough information from my teachers about students' absences and to obtain it on time. I try to meet with the representative of our school community regularly – once a month – and I also bring this information to share in the commune council meeting.*

Two of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals were able to express their responses to the challenge of leading and managing their staff and teachers by discussing and assisting them with their difficulties. They pointed out that:

*Principal School B: So in response to the problem I have with the teacher I just mentioned earlier, I discussed with him about how I can help him with his teaching such as developing teaching aids and lesson planning.*

*Deputy Principal School A: We monitor and follow up their work at school and sometime we also put some pressure on them so that they will at least try to perform their duty as a teacher. We also allow our teachers some free time from school to have extra job outside school.*

One of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals mentioned about their efforts in reaching out to students' parents in order to find out about the real living condition of the children and their family and try to figure out a suitable and possible solution to bring the children back to school. They demonstrated that:

*Deputy Principal School B: With regard to our students, we often go to their homes to find out about their family living status and try to help them by providing study materials and school uniform to encourage them to come to school. We explain to the family about the value of their children's education and their future, and encourage those parents to send their children to school.*

**Question Nine: What are the current leadership development programmes available for primary school principals?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.9 below. Two key sub-themes emerged from the responses to this question: training on school leadership and management; and heard about but never attended such trainings.

*Table 4.9 Availability of Leadership Development Programme*

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Training on school leadership and management	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	X	X	X	X	X	4/10
Heard about but never attended such trainings	X	X	X	X	X	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5/10

Four of the five principals were able to describe that they knew about such trainings and they themselves had attended the trainings on leadership and management for primary school principals. They pointed out that:

*Principal School C: MoEYS used to organise trainings on school leadership and management for the principals, often by cooperating with NGOs and development partners.*

*Principal School E: With regard to this, there used to be short training workshops on this topic of leadership. It is about training new principals or refresher training for old principals. These training were sometimes conducted at the PoE or cluster schools and organised by MoEYS.*

All of the five deputy principals said that they had heard about such training programmes related to leadership development, but they had never attended them:

*Principal School B: The leadership development programmes were conducted before, many years ago, but I forgot about them. There were also reference documents on this leadership development but I did not have a chance to read them thoroughly.*

*Principal School C: I just know that my school principal used to join such training program on leadership and he shared when he learned with me and other school staff and teachers. But I myself never attended one.*

They commented that usually it was their principals who attended these trainings because these were supposedly organised only for the school principals.

**Question Ten: What is your perception of leadership development?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.10 below. Two key sub-themes emerged from the responses to this question: helping leaders to develop their own initiatives, skills or knowledge; and development of leaders' integrity, maturity and dignity.

Table 4.10 Viewpoints on the Concept of Leadership Development

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Helping leaders to develop their own initiatives, skills or knowledge	✓	✓	✓	✓	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	6/10
Development of leaders' integrity, maturity and dignity	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	✓	3/10

Four of the five principals and two of the five deputy principals were able to share their understandings and viewpoints on the concept of leadership development:

*Principal School A: From my point of view, leadership development is to develop our spirit, as stated in the training document, to have courage in performing our work, to initiate new ideas for the school.*

*Principal School B: In my personal point of view, leadership development is to enhance our knowledge or to be knowledgeable so that the principal is competent in talking and communicating with his/her teachers and staff members.*

They elaborated that leadership development is about the development of leaders to have their own initiatives, skills and knowledge so that they are capable of leading their institutions and staff members.

Three of the five deputy principals were also able to point out their understanding of leadership development. They perceived this concept as the development of leaders' integrity, maturity and dignity for the sake of leading their schools or institutions well. They explained as follows:

*Deputy Principal School A: Simply put, leadership is intended to mean that leaders are transparent and have dignity, and to not put pressure on their staff – it is meant to lead in a democratic way. Leadership means that the leaders should have the wisdom. So leadership development means developing the wisdom of leaders to lead in a highly educated and democratic ways.*

*Deputy Principal School E: It is believed that the leaders are supposed to be very patient and tolerant in their work. Leaders should be capable of re-directing the negative or bad things into positive or good things. Leaders should be thoughtful, open-minded and patient.*

**Question Eleven: What skills and abilities do you identify or consider as being the most important for leadership development?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.11 below. Three key sub-themes emerged from the responses to this question: skills and ability to communicate and facilitate; skills in computer technology and ability to use a foreign language; and skills and ability for teaching methodology and technique.

*Table 4.11 Skills and Abilities for Leadership Development*

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Skills and ability to communicate and facilitate	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	✓	X	X	X	3/10
Skills in computer technology and ability to use a foreign language	✓	X	✓	X	✓	X	X	X	X	X	3/10
Skills and ability for teaching methodologies and techniques	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	X	✓	2/10

Two of the five principals and one of the five deputy principals were able to identify the skills or abilities in communication and facilitation as the most important for leadership development. They explained that:

*Principal School B: It is important for leaders to have the skill in receiving information and feedbacks from their concerned stakeholders and the skill in facilitating and coordinating any issues in their workplace. For example, when we observe the teaching our teachers we see their mistakes or weaknesses, we as the principal need to be clever or skillful in giving comments or feedbacks so that they are happy and satisfied to accept their mistakes and change their ways of teaching next time.*

Three of the five principals stated that to make leadership development possible leaders should be competent in using the computer and speaking English language as they lead their institutions. They commented that:

*Principal School A: So I think it is important that we have good computer skills and good command of English language. Without these important skills and knowledge we experience difficulties in performing our daily tasks in school.*

Two of the deputy principals raised the idea of technical skills and ability in teaching if the principals or deputy principals are to be capable of leading and managing their educational institutions:

*Deputy Principal School E: From my understanding, leadership, if we have high capacity and good vision, then we are capable of leading. Leaders need to have particular skills and high capacity to become successful leaders. For example, school principal and deputy principal need to be knowledgeable about the teaching techniques that their teachers are applying.*

**Question Twelve: How do you think leadership development should be planned for and supported in a primary school?**

The responses of the ten interview participants are shown in Table 4.12 below. Three key sub-themes emerged from the interview responses: provision of more trainings; orientation and succession planning; and exchange of experience.

*Table 4.12 Planning and Support for Developing Leaders*

Response Data	Principals					Deputy Principals					Total
	A	B	C	D	E	A	B	C	D	E	
Provision of more trainings	✓	X	X	✓	✓	✓	X	✓	✓	✓	7/10
Orientation and succession planning	X	✓	✓	X	X	X	✓	X	X	X	3/10
Exchange of experience and lessons learnt	X	X	X	X	X	X	✓	X	✓	X	2/10

Three of the five principals and four of the five deputy principals were able to point out that there should be more training programmes for the new principals and refresher courses for the senior principals. They elaborated that:

*Principal School D: It would also be better, if the principals had the opportunity to attend a longer training on leadership, and were able to learn more. As I already mentioned earlier, the training session on leadership was a bit too short, so it was not sufficient for us to gain any concrete knowledge.*

*Deputy Principal School D: For better development, MoEYS should organize frequent training and refresher training. Compared with our neighboring countries, we need to compete with them in terms of leadership and management. I think the way we lead and manage is a bit too old and without any improvement. We need to change and update it.*

Two of the five principals and one of the five deputy principals were able to share their comments on how leadership development should be planned and supported through the preparation of orientation and succession planning:

*Principal School B: I think it should not be like what is going on at the present. I feel that a leader of an institution should be left unattended like me. It was very difficult for me before I could come this far leading my school. I want someone to guide me, lead me or at least send me to any refresher training courses for school leaders. I just feel that I should have been trained, oriented and supported at least one year before being appointed as the principal.*

*Deputy Principal School B: There needs to be planned preparation in order to assist the ongoing leadership practice to be successful and more effective. If there is no plan or preparation, the leadership operation will likely be challenging. In addition, there should be support from the Provincial and District Office of Education in order to achieve our leadership role and duties.*

Two of the five deputy principals were able to suggest that experience and lessons learnt should be shared or exchanged among school leaders, particularly from experienced senior principals to their inexperienced colleagues:

*Deputy Principal School B: Senior school leaders can share and transfer their experience, guidance and direction to help the new leaders to get ready when they come to lead other people in an institution.*

*Deputy Principal School D: In addition, the principals themselves should learn and exchange knowledge and experience with other principals or colleagues about the success and failure from their leadership practice in their local school areas in order to enhance their own capacity.*

## **Summary**

The data collected through the ten semi-structured interviews on leadership development needs of Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals has led to the emergence of two main themes worth discussing in the following chapter. These two themes are: 1) intensified workload and 2) need for leadership development. By analysing each of the two dominant themes further, a number of sub-themes are then identified. For instance, covered under the “intensified workload” theme are the sub-themes such as non-significant change in the job description; increasing accountability; and changing expectations; while the “needs for leadership development” theme comes with the sub-themes: ‘perspectives on the concept of leadership development’ and ‘provision and availability of leadership development programme and training’. The next chapter will explore in more detail the discussion and conclusion of these main and sub themes drawn from the findings in this chapter and examine the links with the literature presented in Chapter Two.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### Introduction

This chapter discusses the significant findings presented in Chapter Four in relation to the literature reviewed in Chapter Two. The key findings are discussed under the following themes: intensified workload and need for leadership development. In this research, the interview participants, the principals and deputy principals of five primary schools in Cambodia, identified several challenges in relation to their roles and responsibilities and their needs in terms of leadership development. This chapter draws some conclusions, provides recommendations to a number of relevant and concerned educational stakeholders and makes recommendations for future research.

#### Conclusions

##### *Intensified Workload*

In general, the data gathered from the interviews with the school principals and deputy principals showed that they are mainly in charge of the duties or tasks related to school leadership and management. From the perspectives of these principals and deputy principals, leadership is about working and dealing with the relevant stakeholders; taking the initiative, leading and directing these people to achieve the set goals for development and progress in their schools. While, management is perceived as the tasks related to: (1) technical routines such as school statistics organisation, report writing, and development of action plans; and

(2) physical infrastructure and facilities such as school building and environment, desks, chairs, whiteboards and textbooks etc. One principal shared her idea regarding this as: *“Simply put, leadership is to do with people and is meant to take initiative, to lead, to direct or guide people. Generally speaking, we need to have initiative as the main thing for leadership work; while we refer to the material or physical tasks such as managing statistics and school physical infrastructure and facilities, preparing and writing reports, and developing plans etc., as management work”* (School C).

In relation to this finding, one of the outstanding challenges revealed in the findings of this research is the heavy workload undertaken by Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals. Although, these principals and deputy principals pointed out that there had not been any significant changes in their role as senior school leaders, the majority of them emphasised being designated or delegated with an increasing amount of tasks for them to implement in school every day from MoEYS, relevant education partners and other concerned stakeholders. As one principal indicated: *“In general, it is claimed that there is a broad range of tasks in any sectors or any institutions, but for schools in particular we think that the flow of a wide range of tasks is due to the delegation or designation of work by the different fields and departments in MoEYS to the institutions under their supervision or direction”*; while the deputy principal of this same school stressed that: *“But the problem in primary school is the overload of work. There is really too much work to do, for example, cooperation work with the health sector, NGOs, civil society, environment work, etc. So it becomes the burden for the primary school”* (School A). This links with the literature review which illustrates that competent school principals are generally expected to have a litany of characteristics such as building

partnerships; creating collaborative networks and alliances; setting directions; consulting widely; empowering and mobilising others; understanding complexity; demonstrating integrity; translating strategy into action and facilitating capability building (Davies & Davies, 2006; Lambert, 2007).

### *Non-significant Change in the Job Description*

The findings reveal the perspectives of the principals and deputy principals regarding their role changes. These senior school leaders emphasised that there were no significant changes in their roles and responsibilities which are clearly stated in the official job description document of MoEYS. For instance, one of the principals was able to point out that: *“But if we refer to the roles of primary school principals which are set by the Ministry (of Education), there seems to be no difference from what is stated in the reference document. To sum up, there are not any significant changes in our roles and responsibilities that make it impossible for us to run our school properly” (School A)*. In general, their comments are that they just followed the Ministry’s rules, regulations, guidance or instructions by integrating with minor adjustments and initiatives of their own to make it flexible and practical for the actual circumstances. One of the deputy principals stated that: *“It is mainly based on the reference documents, but in reality it is based on both the reference document and our own adjustment or personal initiatives. Sometimes we follow exactly what is actually stated in the documents and at other times we just have to invent and follow our new initiatives” (School B)*.

However, the majority of these senior leaders commented that, in reality, they had to manage the ever-increasing workload and duties related to their schools which

they had to perform every day. They mentioned that there is a broad range of different tasks from various relevant sectors being mainstreamed or integrated into primary education. The principal of School C stated: *“These days, there are also a lot of NGOs working in the education sector aiming to improve the quality of education ... they have various work projects for us to implement in cooperation with them ... our schools end up having to carry out these loads of work”*.

### *Increasing Accountability*

As reviewed in the literature, adding to the responsibilities already imposed on school principals, they are experiencing immense and growing accountability pressures since a range of concerned stakeholders such as government, parents and general public, expect schools to fulfil a great deal of outcomes through the principals (Bush, 2008). In reflection, the findings of this research show that Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals are supposed to fulfil a range of roles and duties in response to the expectations and demands of different stakeholders and education partners such as parents, community and MoEYS. One of the principals elaborated that: *“We want our school to be recognised by the community – when a school is not recognised by its community it will be difficult. We also hope that our school can become a child-friendly school to be aligned with the Ministry’s policy that all schools are child-friendly schools in the future”* (School E). In addition, the attainment of education access and provision of quality teaching and learning is another important expectation as revealed in the finding. The principal of School B stated that: *“I think what I expect from my role as the principal is that all children in the community or area around this school could come to school. I expect to collect all the children into school and give them the opportunity*

*to be in school and receive their education”* and the principal of School D mentioned that: *“One more expectation is that school principals can work with their teachers to provide quality learning for their students and to achieve 100% or 95% promotion rate as set by the Ministry”*. This finding is supported by the literature that a principal as an instructional leader is expected to have a good understanding of the components of quality teaching and to be very knowledgeable about the curriculum to make sure their students are provided with appropriate learning experience and knowledge (Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008).

### *Changing Expectations*

The findings confirm that school principals are expected to be able to demonstrate the efficacy and efficiency of their role performance. For example, the deputy principal of School D noted that: *“The key expectation is that if we undertake our duties effectively, our school will progress well, our school staff and teachers will do their job productively, and our students will be well-educated in the future.”*; while the deputy principal of School A stated that: *“Simply put, the expectation is that we perform our work and duty regularly, on time, effectively, fairly and with transparency.”* The findings of this study also point out that school principals or deputy principals should be proficient in connecting, communicating and cooperating with the environment outside school such as parents, school community, local authority and civil society. There is an expectation that school principals do not just perform their work inside their schools but also have to work in the outside environment, particularly with NGOs that are funded to improve the quality of education. This reflects the will of the current Cambodian government to accept international support and funding from various stakeholders such as NGOs.

### *Workload versus Job Description*

In my findings, there is a contradiction in the responses from the participants where they kept mentioning that there is no significant changes in their roles and responsibilities as stipulated in the job-description document of the Ministry of Education. But at other times, they kept complaining or commenting that there is so much work for them or an increasing workload for them as the school leaders. On the surface, it looks like everything is just the same as before and at the present, but deep down in reality there has actually been a dramatic change in the roles and responsibilities of these school leaders. These changes occurred in the form of intensified workload, increasing accountabilities and changing expectations of not only MoEYS but also the wider community.

### ***Need for Leadership Development***

The findings show that the principals and deputy principals have only limited knowledge and understanding of the concepts of educational leadership and leadership development. This was not surprising as there is no formal training offered to prepare them for their senior leadership role. They were able to outline just a few ideas or comments to demonstrate their understanding about these concepts and often referred to or based their comments on a few documents they obtained from MoEYS in Cambodia. For example, they described the concept of leadership development as the development of leaders to have their own initiatives, skills and knowledge so that they are capable of leading their institutions and staff members. One of the principals noted: *"In my personal point of view, leadership development is to enhance our knowledge or to be knowledgeable so that the*

*principal is competent in talking and communicating with his/her teachers and staff members*” (School B). Leadership development was also understood in another way that leaders are supposed to be willing and committed to learning new skills or knowledge, improving and developing themselves to obtain the capacity to lead other people and the organisation. The deputy principal of School B stated like this: *“We must be willing to perform our role and duty as leaders. We need to study more by ourselves to improve and enhance our skills and knowledge to become competent and successful with our leadership in school.”* These findings showed that despite the lack of leadership development opportunities, these senior school leaders were keen to enhance their leadership with professional learning.

This is supported by Cardno (2012) who views leadership development as a form of professional development specifically designed to develop the competencies and capabilities of leaders at all levels in an organisation for the sake of the effective performance in their leadership role. Similarly, Van Velsor and McCauley (2004) perceive leadership development as the expansion of collective capacity of members in an organisation to enable effective leadership roles and processes. In relation to the literature, the principals and deputy principals also shared their views on the skills and knowledge considered to be most important for leadership development such as communication skills and facilitation and coordination abilities. The principal of School B elaborated that: *“It is important for leaders to have the skill in receiving information and feedbacks from their concerned stakeholders and the skill in facilitating and coordinating any issues in their workplace”*. These senior school leaders also identified technical skills and abilities in teaching and learning methodology as important for the educational leaders to lead and manage their schools effectively and successfully.

### *Provision and Availability of Leadership Development Programme and Training*

The findings indicated that the principals and deputy principals rely on the government agency in charge of the education sector – namely the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport – to develop the program on leadership development and organise trainings or refresher training for the principals, both old and new. In general, the findings identified the need for more regular and long-term leadership trainings, especially for the newly appointed principals; while succession planning should also be put in place to assist and orient the potential future school leaders. One of the principals commented as follows: *“I think it should not be like what is going on at the present. I feel that a leader of an institution should not be left unattended like me. It was very difficult for me before I could come this far leading my school. I want someone to guide me, lead me or at least send me to any refresher training courses for school leaders. I just feel that I should have been trained, oriented and supported at least one year before being appointed as the principal”* (School B). In addition, it is also suggested that there should be an opportunity created for experienced senior school leaders and inexperienced new leaders to share and exchange their insights on leadership practice. The deputy Principal of School D mentioned that: *“In addition, the principals themselves should learn and exchange knowledge and experience with other principals or colleagues about the success and failure from their leadership practice in their local school areas in order to enhance their own capacity.”*

These findings showed that the principals needed to network and share knowledge on their leadership practice and this is supported in the literature: “Managers and leaders in education need to develop new skills and ways of working as a response

to the pace of change and to be adaptable and responsive to localised circumstances” (Department of Education, 1996: 13-14). Several authors noted that leadership development has taken the form of graduate and post graduate programmes, on-the-job training and external mentoring or coaching (Bush, 2010; Cardno, 2005; Cardno & Fitzgerald, 2005; Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009). The findings confirmed that there was a limited access for principals to participate in these formal programmes.

The findings of the research indicated the insufficient provision of training programmes on leadership development for Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals. Such programmes were provided in the past only for the principals but not for the deputy principals or aspiring principals (teachers). In addition, the training programme provided during that time was not sufficient enough – it was too short in terms of time and length, irregular and unprofessional, and contained poor and irrelevant content. The principal of School D noted that: *“It would also be better, if the principals had the opportunity to attend a longer training on leadership, and would be able to learn more. As I mentioned earlier, the training session on leadership was a bit too short, so it was not sufficient for us to gain any concrete knowledge.”*, and the deputy principal of this school also commented that: *“For better development, the Ministry should organize frequent training and refresher training. In comparison with our neighboring countries, we need to compete with them in terms of leadership and management. I think the way we lead and manage is a bit too old and without any improvement, so we need to change and update it.”* In relation to this, the deputy principal commented further: *“There needs to be planned preparation in order to assist the ongoing leadership practice to be successful and more effective. If there is no plan or preparation, the*

*leadership practice will likely be challenging. In addition, there should be support from the Provincial and District Office of Education in order to carry out our leadership roles and duties” (School B).* The findings confirmed that there was a need to provide for senior school leaders regular training on leadership. This is supported by Bush (2008) who comments on the significance and importance of leadership development with a reliance on careful preparation for developing appropriate leadership behavior.

### *Need for Suitable, Practical and Effective Leadership Development Programmes*

As reported in the findings of the research, a formal and professional leadership development programme and training is not available for school leaders and aspiring leaders of Cambodian primary school principals. Meanwhile, the school leaders themselves indicated that they had a desire and a need for leadership training to develop their skills and capacities to lead their schools. However, only insufficient and irregular training had been provided for some of them in the past (40%) and others had never participated in such trainings before (60%). The findings showed that these senior school leaders are in need of a proper leadership development programme and training in order to enhance their capabilities and competence as educational leaders in Cambodian primary schools. This is supported by Cardno and Youngs (2013) who provide some key messages about an effective leadership and management development programme for experienced principals in New Zealand as follows:

First, this form of development has to be highly relevant for the participants and this requires the design to be responsive to individual needs. Second, effective development of this kind, spread over several

months in a variety of forms, required sufficient duration for the learning to be reflective, applied and sustained. Third, effective development for experienced principals can be a conduit for extending development to others thus achieving not only leader, but also leadership development if certain conditions are present (p. 267)

## **Recommendations**

Through the course of this research the need for leadership development by senior school leaders, particularly the principals and deputy principals in the context of this research, has become more apparent. A recommendation is that Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals are provided with opportunities for leadership development through formal, professional and appropriate training provided by the education authorities in charge, particularly MoEYS as the guardian of school principals and deputy principals. The recommendations resulting from the research are targeted for three specific audiences: MoEYS in Cambodia, higher education institutions and senior primary school leaders.

### ***Senior Primary School Leaders***

The important recommendation to the primary school principals and deputy principals is that they continue to improve and enhance their skills and capacity to be more competent and capable in performing their leadership roles and responsibilities. In addition, these senior school leaders should advocate the provision of formal and professional leadership development programmes and make their needs for this development heard by all concerned stakeholders, particularly MoEYS as the guardian authority.

This research and the literature indicate that senior school leaders, particularly the principals, face the challenge of heavy workload and increasing accountability as well as expectations (Davies & Davies, 2006; Di Paola & Walther-Thomas, 2003; Lambert, 2007; Wahlstrom & Louis, 2008). Senior school leaders should, therefore, attempt to manage their work and duties through delegation to allow themselves sufficient time and energy for performing their leadership role and practice.

### ***The Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport***

It is timely for MoEYS in Cambodia to seriously plan and organise formal and professional leadership training for senior school leaders in the primary education sector. Succession planning for the aspiring principals within the staff to become senior leaders should be taken into consideration. These teachers need to be given the required professional development to build and develop their knowledge, skills, experience and qualifications to qualify for a leadership position in the Cambodian school system in the future.

### ***Higher Education Institutions***

It is recommended that higher education institutions in Cambodia, particularly those running programmes related to educational leadership, management and planning, take into serious consideration the issue of leadership development and the need of the primary school leaders for this development by means of integrating or mainstreaming into their curriculum the lessons and studies on educational leadership and leadership development. In addition, with their critical role in the education sector, these higher education institutions can advocate educational leadership and leadership development by appealing, proposing and consulting with the government agencies in charge of education sector, particularly MoEYS.

## **Recommendation for Future Research**

It is strongly recommended that there is potential for further research on this topic by increasing the scope of the research. Future research regarding this topic should involve more participants including the primary school leaders themselves as well as other concerned stakeholders such as local education authority (Provincial Department of Education) and the national education authority (Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport) to explore the needs for leadership development in primary schools in Cambodia.

It is also recommended that more extensive research is conducted through a large-scale survey with Cambodian primary schools in order to obtain more reliable and valid information about the actual status of educational leadership and leadership development.

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## APPENDIX A



### Leadership Development Needs of Cambodian Primary School Principals and Deputy Principals

#### Outline of questions for the semi-structured interviews

- 1- What is your role as a principal or deputy principal? (Please describe the whole scope of your role as a principal or deputy principal).
- 2- What is your job description based on? Does it accurately reflect your role?
- 3- What do you see as the key expectations of your role?
- 4- How has your role as a principal or deputy principal changed?
- 5- What do you think has caused these changes?
- 6- What are the difficulties or constraints in carrying out your everyday tasks as a principal or deputy principal?
- 7- Why do you think these difficulties or constraints have occurred?
- 8- How have you responded to these problems?
- 9- What are the current leadership development programmes available for primary school principals?
- 10- What is your perception of leadership development?
- 11- What skills and abilities do you identify or consider as being the most important for leadership development?
- 12- In terms of leadership development what types of activities would be important to include and why?

## APPENDIX B



### INFORMATION SHEET

#### **Title of Thesis: “Leadership Development Needs of Cambodian Primary School Principals and Deputy Principals”**

My name is Nilroath Long. I am currently enrolled in the Master of Educational Leadership and Management degree in the Department of Education at Unitec Institute of Technology. I am seeking your help in meeting the requirements of research for a thesis course which forms a substantial part of this degree.

The aim of my project is to examine and identify the leadership development needs of the principals and deputy principals in the context of five Cambodian primary schools. I am particularly interested in examining the leadership development of Cambodian primary school principals and deputy principals. Meanwhile, I would also like to identify the challenges and issues encountered by these school principals and deputy principals in their leadership practices. Ultimately, I wish to identify the leadership development needs of these school principals and deputy principals.

I would like to request your participation in the following way. I will be collecting data using an (semi-structured) interview schedule and would appreciate being able to interview you at a time that is mutually suitable. This interview will take approximately 45 minutes. Participation would be completely voluntary. You will be able to withdraw, should you choose to, at any time prior to the discussion of the preliminary findings of the research project. I will also be asking you to sign a consent form regarding this event.

Neither you nor your organisation will be identified in the Thesis. I will be recording your contribution and will provide a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for you to check before data analysis is undertaken. You will have 10 days from receiving the transcript to edit and/or withdraw your data.

I would be happy to share a summary of the final report with schools that participate. I do hope that you will agree to take part and that you will find this participation of interest. Should you have any queries about this research project, you may contact my supervisor at Unitec Institute of Technology.

My supervisor is Dr Jo Howse and may be contacted by email or phone.  
Phone: (09) 815 4321 extension 8348; Email: [jhowse@unitec.ac.nz](mailto:jhowse@unitec.ac.nz)

Yours Sincerely

Nilroath Long

#### **UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2014-1031)**

**This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (date) to (date). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.**

## APPENDIX C



### CONSENT FORM

**Research Event: Semi-structured Interview**

**Project Researcher: Nilroath Long**

**Programme: Master of Educational Leadership and Management**

**Thesis Title: Leadership Development Needs of Cambodian Primary School  
Principals and Deputy Principals**

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research and I have had an opportunity to ask questions and have had them answered. I understand that neither my name nor the name of my organisation will be used in any public reports.

I understand that everything I say will be kept confidential and none of the information I give will identify me and that the only persons who have access will be the researcher and his supervisor. I also understand that all the information that I give will be stored securely on my personal computer for a period of five years.

I understand that my interview with the researcher will be taped and transcribed with the opportunities to verify the transcription.

I also understand that I will be provided with a transcript (or summary of findings if appropriate) for checking before data analysis is started in late July and I am aware that I may withdraw myself or any information that has been provided for this project two weeks after receiving the transcript of the interview.

**I agree to take part in this project.**

**Signed:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**UREC REGISTRATION NUMBER: (2014-1031)**

**This study has been approved by the Unitec Research Ethics Committee from (date) to (date). If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the Committee through the UREC Secretary (ph: 09 815-4321 ext 6162). Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.**

## **APPENDIX D**

**(Gaining Access to Research Sites)**

**Kingdom of Cambodia  
Nation Religion King**

\_\_\_\_\_ **Primary School**

Date \_\_\_\_\_

TO: Mr Nilroath Long

REFERENCE: Master of Educational Leadership and Management

THESIS TITLE: Leadership Development Needs of Cambodian Primary School  
Principals and Deputy Principals

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

I have been given and have understood an explanation of this research project. Therefore, I agree to give permission for this research to be conducted in my school. In the meantime, I understand that the name of my organisation will not be used in any public reports.

(Signature)

(Name of signatory)

(Title of signatory)