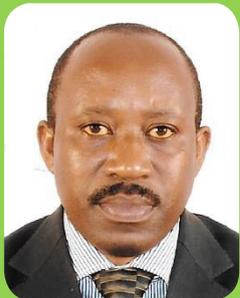


The book focuses on the professional capital dimension of educational leadership, which is a predictor of quality learner outcomes. Field observation shows that school leaders rarely consciously reflect the use of professional capital in their leadership, thus, necessitating a paradigm shift through action. The beneficiaries of this book are categorized in four folds. First, school heads and teachers, who are exposed to different praxis options and knowledge to engage the change process. Second, education policymakers who have a pathway for meaningful reforms in educational leadership, teacher training, and curriculum innovation. Third, students are exposed to enabling teaching-learning environments that promote creativity, critical thinking and shared repertoire of knowledge, provided by transformed school heads. Fourth, the community through added value from the education outcomes.

Although this study is contextualized in the Cameroon educational frame, it will serve as platform for deeper reflection by education stakeholders implicated with improving the quality of school leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa besides contributing to the global discourse on education. This book is unique for its greater leaning towards praxis, thereby facilitating comprehensively. The findings are valuable for education stakeholders and researchers alike, who yearn to improve the quality of education through leadership and teacher training in Cameroon and elsewhere.



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Samgwa'a, E.

Professional Capital in Schools



Brot
für die Welt

New Perspectives on Quality Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Edited by Christine Nyiramana, Tharcisse Gatwa,
Susanne Krogull, Annette Scheunpflug, and Penine Uwimbabazi

Professional Capital: Perspectives of Secondary School Principals in Cameroon

Essaw Samgwa'a

PIASS PUBLICATION SERIES N°24

Professional Capital: Perspectives of Principals

New Perspectives on Quality Education in Sub-Saharan Africa

Edited by Christine Nyiramana, Susanne Ress, Tharcisse Gatwa, Annette Scheunpflug, and Penine Uwimbabazi

Over recent decades, national and international policy actors together with teachers, parents, community leaders, and faith-based organizations have made great progress in providing access to education. Today around the world, more children are in school than ever before. Yet being in school is not enough. These exceptional improvements in expansion of access to schooling require a sustained effort to ensure the quality of education provided in schools. This series presents new findings on dimensions of quality education in the context of Sub-Saharan Africa. The authors in this series have conducted their research in the context of the *International Master Program of Educational Quality in Developing Countries* (IMPEQ) at the University of Bamberg in partnership with the Protestant University of Rwanda, the Free University of the Great Lakes Region in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the Evangelical University of Cameroon. The research has been made possible through the funding from Bread for the World – the Development and Relief Agency of the Protestant Churches in Germany. The monographs in this series highlight the importance of continuous teacher education and, most importantly, the centrality of efficient leadership for fostering educational policies and practices that meet the needs of all students.

This book is dedicated to all those who have taken the courageous step to start and sustain the change process especially in the direction of outcomes-oriented school leadership

Professional Capital: Perspectives of Secondary School Principals in Cameroon

Essaw Samgwa'a



Brot
für die Welt



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ABBREVIATIONS

CBA:	Competency Based Approach
CGCE:	Cameroon General Certificate of Examination
CRC:	Convention on the Rights of the Child
DD:	Divisional Delegate
EFA:	Education for All
ICT:	Information and Communication Technologies
IEA:	International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement
IMPEQ:	International Master Program of Educational Quality
NWR:	North West Region
OECD:	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
PEA:	Presbyterian Education Authority
PIRLS:	Progress in International Reading Literacy Study
PISA:	Programme for International Student Assessment
PPP:	PowerPoint Presentation
Q & A:	Questions and Answers
SDGs:	Sustainable Development Goals
SSA:	Sub-Saharan Africa
SWOT:	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats
SWR:	South West Region
TIMSS:	Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study

TPS: Think-Pair-Share

USAID: United States Agency for International
Development

UDHR: Universal Declaration of Human Rights

UN: United Nations

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the
Child

UNESCO: United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural
Organization

SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE

Beyond the fact that the completion of compulsory education has substantially improved over the past twenty years, achieving educational quality for all continues to be a major challenge in Sub-Saharan Africa where many children do not reach basic skills in reading and numeracy by the end of primary school (UNESCO, 2014). A focus on quality education is thus paramount to improve the overall performance of educational systems and to support students' academic achievement. High quality education requires high quality research that combines sophisticated knowledge of educational theories, adequate research methods, and contextualizing sensibilities for local realities as they intersect with global political, economic, social, and historical forces. Every educational dimension imaginable – school access, didactics and pedagogical approaches, academic content and competences – if approached with such a notion of high quality research presents itself as a challenge that poses many questions and few certain answers. To nonetheless forge pathways towards much needed answers requires a sturdy intellect, diligence, creativity, and a supportive community of scholars engaged in critical feedback. Monographs in this series carefully investigate educational concepts and theories as they pertain to quality education in Sub-Saharan Africa. They cover many topics ranging from leadership skills, competence-based and learner-centered pedagogies, cognitive activation, critical thinking skills, and socially responsive and inclusive approaches to teaching. The monographs go beyond theory in that they reflect on the practical implications of the research findings. The authors provide in-depth analyses grounded in a deep knowledge of and experiences in the context in which the research was

conducted. They articulate recommendations that touch on the macro-, meso-, and micro-levels of schooling. In this way, the series provides a collective space for emerging African scholars to discuss their research on education to impart lessons for mastering 21st century challenges in education everywhere.

The study of **Essaw Samgwa'a** projects a very important indicator of educational quality Development: Professional Capital of Schools Principals in Relation to Learner Outcomes. His targeting of such a sensitive quality indicator with his discourse indicates a yawning gap of a great need begging to be fill in the attempt of identifying quality tools for improvement.

Essaw begins his journey by contextualizing the educational system in Cameroon and creates an interlocking linkage by reflecting professional capital and learner outcomes through the building of a synergy between theory and practice and consciously does this by delving in his skills of experiential listening and inferring thereof. Essaw in an abstract manner expatiated on the scientific bases of professional capital of principals and creating an interconnectivity of it with the learner outcomes of students. He approached this discourse using the qualitative research design consisting of semi structured interviews with open-ended questions for data collection, purposeful sampling strategy, and descriptive data analysis. Content, process and praxis dimensions of the intervention were used to improve the professional capital of principals by increasing their knowledge, skills and competencies to start the change process. Essaw finds two things: Schools still follow a hierarchical decision-making process which can be seen as a result of Cameroon's colonial past. Furthermore, increasing the quality of education to encourage students in

achieving life skills and competencies is reflected in theory but barely in practice. As existing research concentrated on developed countries so far Essaw's findings are a valuable contribution to the international discourse on education quality.

AUTHORS' PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Research has shown that professional capital is an effective instrument in shaping school leadership for better learner achievements. This notwithstanding, the enhancement of professional capital is an evasive arena for school leaders in Cameroon and Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) although leadership orientation is an important predictor of quality learner outcomes. As a player in school leadership, I am conversant of the fact that principals are unaware of the importance of professional capital and, therefore, do not consciously reflect its use in their leadership. Consequently, I undertook this project as a modest contribution towards igniting the debate on the reflection of quality school leadership in Cameroon.

My interest in this topic as a school administrator is, therefore, rooted in the discourse on the normativity of educational quality. It is also embedded in the lack of educational research on the dimension of professional capital in the Cameroon educational landscape. Although this study is contextualized in the Cameroon educational frame, it is hoped that it offers an avenue for deeper reflection by all those implicated in the business of improving the quality of school leadership in Africa besides contributing to the global discourse on education.

This book is particularly unique for its greater leaning towards praxis than theory, thereby facilitating comprehensively. In this regard, principals from the North West Region (NWR) of Cameroon and education authorities from the private and public sectors met in a conclave to brainstorm on strategies to develop and effectively exploit professional capital for quality school leadership. This caucus gave principals and other stakeholders the opportunity to

exchange their experiences and enabled them to intersubjectively enhance their professional knowledge. Besides, new knowledge and competencies were gained to start the change process through the careful fusion of the dimensions of content, process, and praxis during the conclave.

It is evident that the findings in this book will make an invaluable contribution for readers, education stakeholders, and researchers who yearn to improve the quality of education, through quality leadership. This book is, therefore, highly recommended for exploitation by establishments whose primary focus is to prepare teachers and school administrators for leadership.

I unwaveringly recognize the initiator of this mustard seed christened *International Master's Programme of Educational Quality in Developing Countries* (IMPEQ) aimed at improving the quality of education, especially in SSA. This recognition is addressed to non-other than the indefatigable and shrewd Prof. Dr. Annette Scheunpflug, Chair of Foundations in Education whose steadfastness and fortitude has kept this program going from conception. Her easy and practical approach to the program, teaching methods, and methodologies enabled me to systematically develop reflective, problem-solving, critical thinking, interpersonal, social, communication, adaptability, decision-making, self-motivational, time management, and leadership skills. Words cannot adequately describe the wealth of assets I gained and her contributions towards fine tuning this book. I, therefore, owe her an immeasurable liability which I would never be able to pay. To Dr. Susanne Krogull, the first director of the IMPEQ program, I express my unreserved thanks for your contributions as a teacher,

mentor, and an architect of cohesion, living-together, and the pursuit of collective rather than individual success. I equally appreciate with inestimable thanks, the colossal contributions of Dr. Susanne Ress and Mr. Fondzenyuy Njobati Frederick, the new co-Directors of the IMPEQ program for discerning mentorship, editing, and publishing of this book.

For this work to meet the scientific standards in terms of computer layout and other technicalities, Mr. Ernest Claude Njoya played a titanic role. I say thank you, Papa Claude. The rest of IMPEQ staff and student aids on the Chair of Foundations in Education were influential either helping in travel arrangements, mentoring, or documentation. To you all, I express my unalloyed appreciation.

I continue to recognize my fellow cohorts of the third batch of IMPEQ for the high sense of collaboration, teamwork, and mutual assistance. The mutual posture we took vis-à-vis each other enabled me to overcome the challenges of Seminar papers and Portfolios, which were very strange to me. Thank you, particularly to the members of my learning community, Mercy Lemnyuy Fai, Frank Havyarimana, and Eyob Terefe Tsige. Your feedbacks either through the professional WhatsApp group or direct communication, gave me alternative perspectives, which were useful in shaping my *Seminar papers* and *Portfolios* and eventually guided the choice of topic for my study. Immense thanks also go to my wonderful family, especially my wife (Onorine) and kids (Nahvoma, Sobilla, Dayebga, Samgwa'a, and Nahbila) for staying close by me and for constant support through prayers and materially sacrifices. You are the inspiration that kept me moving.

I would not have been able to realize this outstanding

work without the authorization from the Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), to whom I say thank you. This study was conducted at a time when the Church had placed a moratorium on further studies. My final vote of thanks, go to Bread for the World (BftW), the development and relief agency of the protestant Churches in Germany, for providing me with a full scholarship, without which my dream to participate in the IMPEQ program would have remained a dream. I remain eternally grateful to BftW.

For this magnificent work to have been completed, I consulted many books, peer-reviewed scholarly journals articles, dissertations/theses, and educational research websites like Google Scholar, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Springer Link, Internet Library Sub-Saharan Africa (Ilissafrika), and African Education Research Database (ESSA). I do recognize the fact that full credence might not have been given to all the authors, due to human limitations. Besides, I take full responsibility overall judgmental and analytical lapses but for misprints. Enjoy reading!

Essaw Samgwa'a
Bamenda, September 2019

1

INTRODUCTION

This study is on the topic: “Professional capital: Perspectives of secondary school principals in Cameroon.” The topic of this study is situated within the leadership dimension of educational quality. This chapter presents the context and problem of the study (Chapter 1.1), the research questions (Chapter 1.2), and how the study is structured to give an answer to the research question (Chapter 1.3).

1.1 Context and problem

This study addresses the perspectives of principals of secondary schools in Cameroon on “professional capital” (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 2) and how it influences learner outcomes. The rationale of the study is to provide an empirical understanding of the role of professional capital in outcomes-oriented school leadership in the Cameroon education system, with a focus on secondary schools in the North West Region (NWR). The Cameroon educational systems is briefly introduced and the problem contextualized in three sections by reflecting professional capital in relation to the reality of praxis, discourse, and my personal context. This is done by making connectivity between discourse and praxis to identify the problems, which the answers to the research questions will address.

1.1.1 The educational systems of Cameroon

This study is contextualized in the Cameroon educational system. Cameroon is a bilingual country with French and English as the two official languages (Lange, 2016, p. 66; Cockburn, Hashemi, Noumi, Ritchie, Skead, 2017, p. 2). French is predominantly spoken in the majority eight Francophone regions (Adamawa, Centre, East, Extreme North, Littoral, North, South, and West) while English is predominantly spoken in the minority two Anglophone regions (North West and South West). The country is strategically located in both Central and West Africa and its neighbors are Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, and Equatorial Guinea (World Bank, 2012, p. 10). The country has an ethnically and linguistically diverse population spread across ten regions (ibid.). The world population prospects data of the United Nations (UN) puts the total population of Cameroon at 24,055,000 inhabitants (UN, 2017, p. 17), with over 250 linguistic and ethnic groups (World Bank, 2012, p. 10).

Cameroon gained independence from France (1960 for French Cameroon or *La République du Cameroun*) and from Great Britain (1961 for Southern Cameroons) (Anchimbe, 2012, p. 4; Ngalim, 2014, p. 335). The unification of the two Cameroons gave birth to the Federal Republic of Cameroon (or *République Fédérale du Cameroun*). The Federal Republic of Cameroon was transformed into the United Republic of Cameroon (or *République Unie du Cameroun*) on May 20, 1972. The united form of the state was finally transmuted to the Republic of Cameroon (or *La République du Cameroun*) after a decree issued by President Paul Biya on February 4, 1984 (Ngalim, 2014, p. 335). Since independence, two presidents have ruled

Cameroon – President Ahmadou Babatoura Ahidjo (1960–1982) and President Paul Biya (1982–date) (Lange, 2016, p. 66) under one party and two nomenclatures. This party is the Cameroonian National Union (CNU) or the *Union Nationale Camerounaise* (UNC), which was renamed Cameroon People’s Democratic Movement (CPDM) or *Rassemblement Democratique du Peuple Camerounais* (RDPC) in 1985.

Cameroon holds a specific context for educational endeavors, with two subsystems of education (French and English), inherited from its colonial history (Ashu, 2014, p. 12; Ngalim, 2014, p. 335; Lange, 2016, p. 66). Several attempts towards the conflation of the two educational subsystems in Cameroon have since failed as Anglophones have always interpreted it as an attempt to assimilate (Fonkeng, 2007, p. 299) the minority English subsystem of education. Each of the two systems has, therefore, maintained its institutions, structures, curricula, and examinations requirements, and even the bilingual primary and secondary schools, function as per the requirements of each subsystem (Cockburn et al., 2017, p. 2).

The Cameroon education system functions at four departmental levels, which are: basic education (for nursery and primary), secondary education (general and technical), vocational training, and higher education (World Bank, 2012, p. 11). These departments are headed by four ministerial departments namely: Ministry of Basic Education, Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC), Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, and Ministry of Higher Education (Cockburn et al., 2017, p. 2). The English system, which is the focus of this study,

functions in the Anglophone regions of the country, specifically, the NWR and South West Region (SWR), with a few operating in the Francophone regions. The system reflects a diversity of schools run by different institutions by their administrative status. These schools are categorized as public schools, private subsidized schools (confessional and lay-private), and private schools. The focus of this research is on private subsidized schools in the NWR. The NWR occupies an outstanding position in the Cameroon educational landscape, especially in terms of performance at the Cameroon General Certificate of Examination (CGCE) examinations. These examinations (for general and technical education subjects) are organized by the CGCE Board for Ordinary Level and Advanced Level candidates, who have gone through five years and two years of formal studies respectively (Ngalim, 2014, p. 337). Private candidates are also allowed the opportunity to register and sit in for these examinations as external candidates.

The reason for my choice in this study is rooted in evidence that private schools, including faith-based schools, provide better services and achieve better education outcomes than public schools (Hoxby, 1994, p. 32; Evans, & Schwab, 1995, p. 971; Altonji, Elder, & Taber, 2005, p. 819; Wodon, 2013, p. 3). Besides, faith-based and private secular schools offer vital services to about a fourth of primary and secondary school students in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) (Wodon, 2013, p. 3).

Quality educational outcomes are particularly crucial if Cameroon must reach the “Vision 2035” (i.e. becoming an industrialized economy by the year 2035) (Lyonga, 2018, p. 115). Thus, a renewed stance and paradigm shift from

output-oriented to outcomes-oriented school leadership becomes imperative. This brings into focus, the question of inadequate professional capital potentials of secondary school principals in Cameroon. The study, therefore, seeks out the perceptions of secondary school principals in Cameroon on professional capital. It also explores and exposes the gap between theory and praxis of professional capital, which offers a pathway for action by education policymakers and stakeholders in Cameroon.

1.1.2 Professional capital in praxis

The reality of professional capital is discussed in three dimensions. The first dimension is in regard to the Cameroon educational system, the second dimension discusses the topic in regard to secondary schools in the NWR, and the third dimension reflects my own reality.

Professional capital in Cameroon's educational system

The demands of the globalized world have placed high-quality education at the center of national policy agendas (Ashu, 2014, p. 3). However, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) stresses the lack of focus on quality teaching and learning in Cameroon's education policy and other countries of SSA (2015: 69). This lack of focus on quality is suggestive of the low quality of education in Cameroon. This, particularly as quality at the system level in Cameroon is understood in terms of student performance in certificate exams, with considerable attention given to syllabus coverage and classroom evaluations (World Bank, 2012, p. 43). This myopic view of quality is challenged by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) as it does not focus on lifelong competencies that are essential

for full participation in modern societies (2018b: 3). In addition, the provision of quality education is undermined by the fact that the schools lack the necessary facilities and infrastructure that can support learners to maximize the use of the different educational landscapes (Baguma & Aheisibwe, 2011, p. 25).

At the systemic level, the understanding of school leadership is hierarchical and bureaucratic and focuses on implementing standards, rules, regulations, and laid down processes (World Bank, 2012, p. 14; Obi, 2018, p. 112). The Cameroon education system, hence, sees school leadership more from the administrative lens than from the instructional perspective. This is mirrored by the job description of school principals in both private and public secondary schools in the country, where the functions of principals reflect administration. This is compounded by the perceived lack of credible and functional monitoring and quality control mechanism for the entire Cameroon school system (USAID, 2015, p. 75).

Besides the administrative orientation of school leadership in Cameroon, the education system does not give autonomy to school leaders over the curriculum. This autonomy would, most especially, give teachers more opportunities to adapt their teaching to students' needs and knowledge (OECD, 2018b, p. 13). This lack of autonomy contradicts empirical evidence, which suggests that teaching quality constitutes the most important variable for student learning and quality outcomes (Gauthier & Dembélé, 2004, p. 3; Marzano, 2007, p. 162; Hattie, 2009, p. 115; Hattie, 2015, p. 87). Cameroonian students, therefore, need well-rounded education to contribute as citizens in the democratic life of their country and to succeed in the global

economy (U.S. Department of Education, 2010: 4). The globalization of education has challenged schools and educational systems to review their strategies, structures, and competencies necessary for school leaders (Ashu, 2014, p. 3). In a visible response to this challenge, the Cameroon government introduced the Competency-Based Approach (CBA) to learning in its secondary schools in the 2012/2013 academic year (Nkwetisama, 2012, p. 519). The CBA considers educational goals in relations to “precise measurable descriptions of knowledge, skills and behaviors that students should possess at the end of a course of study” (ibid.). Nevertheless, the fact that its implementation has met with lots of resistance by teachers and principals alike, is suggestive of the direct effect of the top-down approach to educational management in Cameroon. Further, the implementation of the CBA is not receiving the intended attention presumably because principals, teachers, and students were not involved in the process of designing this strategy. Besides, it would be difficult to expect full implementation of a policy for which those charged with its implementation have not been trained. This is yet another reflection of the little autonomy given to principals and teachers on matters of decision-making, regarding the curriculum, course content, selection of textbooks, and teaching methods.

Professional capital in secondary schools in the NWR

The quality gap in professional capital capacities of school leaders (Johanson & Adams, 2004, pp. 3–4) poses a major challenge not only to secondary schools in the NWR but to Cameroon as a whole. This challenge is visible in the teaching and learning process that is lacking in terms of quality learner outcomes. This challenge emanates from

the lack of pre-training on leadership before new principals are appointed and lack of in-service training for principals who are already on the job (Wirba, 2015, p. 7). There are equally no credible induction programs to prepare principals for office (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008, p. 107) after their appointments. This justifies the perceived lack of requisite skills, experiences, and knowledge by most principals in Cameroon, though necessary for effective school leadership (Baguma & Aheisibwe 2011, p. 26; Wirba, 2015, p. 8). However, the findings of Wirba and field experience stands contrary to that of Ashu (2014, p. 4) who suggests the existence of leadership preparation and support in Cameroon through in-service leadership training and on-the-job instructional learning programs for both aspiring school heads and head teachers. In addition, Ashu identifies the existence of mentoring and coaching of aspiring principals in different aspects of educational administration (ibid., p. 5), which conflicts with field observation.

Another likely source of gap in professional capital aptitudes of principals in Cameroon can be attributed to the subjective way most of them are recruited. The point that no transparent and measurable criteria exist for such recruitments (Wirba, 2015, p. 7) calls to question the ability of principals to lead learning. Some of the recruitments are either based on congenial relationships (Fullan, 2016, p. 48) or shrouded by favoritism, nepotism, and political interference. At times, these considerations are fueled by regional or tribal interests and not based on professional competence (World Bank, 2012, p. 32; Wirba, 2015, p. 8). Besides the aforementioned, there are situations where the main consideration for the appointment is either longevity or being a vice principal, discipline personnel,

or having good teaching abilities (Wirba, 2015, p. 8). Relying on good teaching ability cannot be effective as this contradicts the evidence, which rather points to the insufficient instructional competencies in the Cameroon school system (Lange, 2016, p. 36).

This situation is made worse by the perceived indifference of decision-makers in Cameroon to the serious negative influence of the professional capital gap on learning achievements. Nonetheless, the effect of this deficiency is mitigated by a few training institutions like the Pedagogic In-Service Training Programme (ISTP) Cameroon.¹ Concerning the everyday practice in Cameroon, it is evident that the specification and better knowledge of this specific approach greatly influenced the quality of the formation for the principals and the learning outcomes in regard to the existing state of affairs.

Professional capital in regard to my own experience

Within the reality of my own experience, this study considers three main aspects. First, the weaknesses and strengths of the selected establishments in regard to the professional capital and leadership orientations of principals. Second, the available human resources provided by public or partner authorities for the improvement of the teaching and learning efficacy in the classrooms. Third, the conditions in which principals and teachers are trained and supervised in their work by the proprietors and the authorities.

¹This professional development programme, which functions within the framework of schools of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC) and the Cameroon Baptist Convention (CBC) is supported by the German Development Cooperation – initially by the German Development Service (Deutscher Entwicklungsdienst – DED) and later by the Protestant Development Service (formerly Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst – EED – today Bread for the World – Brot für die Welt/) (Lange, 2016, pp. 67–68).

The weaknesses as per my own experiences are radiated by research, which shows that deficiency in professional capital skills of principals is responsible for irrational decision-making, poor public relations, and leadership that produces middling teacher and learner outcomes (Pont et al., 2008, p. 110). With this deficiency, school principals are unable to effectively connect the learners with the different educational landscapes (Fjørtoft, 2004, p. 22; Garner, Hayes, & Eilks, 2014; OECD, 2018a, p. 338). This connection is imperative as the ever-changing and challenging world require that students surpass the stage of knowledge construction to building their higher-order skills in critical thinking, decision-making, and problem-solving including communication, social, and emotional skills (Boud, Cohen, & Sampson, 1999, p. 415; Miri, David & Uri, 2007, p. 354; Didham & Ofei-Manu, 2018, p. 108; OECD, 2018b, p. 17).

My observation in the field points to little awareness by principals on the importance of professional capital in leading the teaching-learning process. The low quality of human resources available in the Cameroon school system reflects the lack of training and measured criteria in the recruitment of school leaders as already discussed above. From my experience, therefore, administrative and hierarchical prerogatives are usually the driving force behind decision-making. The principal's relationship with teachers and parents is more hierarchical than professional. This ignores the reality, which holds that the globalization of education requires a rethinking of pedagogies, methodologies, curricula as well as the method of imparting knowledge both at the system and school levels (Traoré & Fonkeng, 2011, p. 556). The impact of globalized education points to the importance of instructional effectiveness,

whose key dimensions according to USAID are, “teacher characteristics and classroom-level inputs, teacher professionalism and conduct, student learning outcomes, and teaching practice” (2015: 14).

The concept of the professional capital of secondary school principals assessed in this study is, therefore, grounded on developing competencies as part of leadership professionalism (Pont et al., 2008, p. 19). Regarding educational quality, school leadership is pivotal as the principal can make a big difference in student outcomes by creating a learning setting that is innovative, powerful, and effective (OECD, 2013, p. 25). This innovative environment supports and encourages teachers to improve classroom practice and student learning (Pont et al., 2008, p. 42). Thus, the need to align education with the global trend brings to focus, the invaluable role that the principal can play as the one at the helm of school leadership. Nevertheless, most principals of secondary schools in Cameroon lack the knowledge and ability to do this. They do not make adequate and conscious use of networking, which when rationally engaged, can improve their knowledge and skills.

In addition, the sheer lack of mission and vision in most of the secondary schools suggests that cooperation, shared norms/values, and interpersonal relationships, all necessary for the realization of the school’s mission and vision are absent. Besides, education authorities are not sensitive in making the training of school leaders and prioritizing competence in recruitment a key education policy issue. Field observations show inadequate and ineffective conditions in which principals and teachers are trained and supervised in their work by the proprietors and

education authorities. Within the framework of my own reality, I will reflect the successes and shortcomings, which I have noticed during school visits and by observations. In addition, the leadership situations and their influences on learner outcomes will be analyzed. This analysis equally includes the results of large-scale assessments done by the international community, such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA),² Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS), and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS),³ and independent researchers in regard to the topic chosen for my study. The focus of the assessment is not to ascertain whether students can reproduce knowledge, but it also examines how well students can extrapolate from what they have learned and are able to apply that knowledge in challenging situations, both in and outside of school (Mullis, 2017, p. 3).

1.1.3 Discourse on professional capital

The topic of this study, which centers on the perceptions of secondary school principals in Cameroon on professional capital is linked to the reflection of leadership quality as a dimension of educational outcomes. Consequently, this

² OECD in a response to the question of what is important for citizens to know and to be able to do as well as the need for internationally comparable evidence on student performance launched the triennial survey of 15-year-old students around the world known as PISA. PISA assesses the extent to which 15-year-old students have acquired key knowledge and skills that are essential for full participation in modern societies (Eacott & Asuga, 2014, p. 929; OECD, 2018b, p. 3; Reimer et al., 2018, p. 12)

³ This is an evaluation of the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement (IEA), which conducts an international study of reading literacy achievement of young students in their fourth year of schooling known as PIRLS (Mullis, Martin, & Sainsbury, 2016, p. 11) and the international program designed to assess trends in student achievement in mathematics and science at the primary (grade 4) and lower secondary (grade 8) levels known as TIMSS (Eacott & Asuga, 2014, p. 929; Mullis, 2017, p. 3; Reimer et al., 2018, pp. 11-12)

topic is embedded in the discourse on quality education. This section first summarizes the ongoing discourse on professional capital, and then, the discourse on its importance in quality education. The last part introduces its link to the Education for All (EFA) perspective.

The concepts of professional capital

As the discourse on leadership quality shows, professional capital is one of the indicators of quality leadership, which is required to reach higher competency levels among students (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013, p. 37; Fullan, Rincon-Gallardo, & Hargreaves, 2015, p. 8; Henderson & Trede, 2017, p. 4). The 2015 PISA report reveals that students score higher in science in education systems where principals show higher levels of educational leadership and exercise greater autonomy over resources, curriculum, and other school policies (OECD, 2018b, p. 13). Principals with greater professional capital capacities and autonomy are able to provide learning environments that facilitate collaborative problem solving among students (*ibid.*, p. 24). This collaboration according to the 2015 PISA results is positively related to performance in the core PISA subjects (science, reading, and mathematics) (*ibid.*). Thus, collaborative learning can improve the level of collective success, which is reflected by the quality of the learning outcomes.

The influence of professional capital as ascertain by discourse notwithstanding, experience suggests that there is a dichotomy between theory and praxis as the actions of some principals in the field does not square up with their perceived understanding of the theory and vice versa. Hence, school leadership that promotes quality teaching and learning for quality educational outcomes is

still a big challenge in Cameroon (Wirba, 2015, p. 2). Such is the case in most of SSA due to lack of or inadequate professional capital aptitudes of principals. From my professional experience, this challenge is rooted in the lack of adequate competencies by principals, which are necessary for outcomes-based leadership. In my bid to focus on learner outcomes, I would like to confront the experiences of secondary school principals on professional school leadership and student achievements. The connection to this global reference will enable me to develop a more precise idea of what my efforts mean in the general context of the global world.

Professional capital and the quality of education

According to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), quality in education is visible when the system identifies learners' cognitive development as its major explicit objective (2004, p. 17). Further, emphasis is laid on education's role in promoting values and attitudes of responsible citizenship and nurturing creative and emotional development of students (ibid.). This is reflected by universal participation; whose attainment is dependent upon the quality of education available (ibid., p. 28). Still, UNESCO goes further to assert that, "education should allow children to reach their fullest potential in terms of cognitive, emotional and creative capacities" (ibid., p. 30). For learners to reach their full potentials, the child-centered approach to teaching and learning is necessary. This is the focus of Article 29 (1) of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) also known as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) (ibid., p. 31). There is growing public interest in improving the access to and quality of schooling

in all nations across the globe (Eacott & Asuga, 2014, p. 929). Quality education equips students with the capability to interpret things rightly and apply the knowledge and skills in real-life situations (Thangeda, Baratiseng, & Mompati, 2016, p. 9). It is vital to a sustainable economy of any nation (ibid., p. 10) as it inspires societal creativity and innovation (ibid., p. 11). However, the provision of quality education in Cameroon faces challenges such as inadequate resources, cost, time, and devotion (ibid., p. 9). Additionally, there is little awareness of the importance of offering quality education (ibid., p. 10) as the Cameroon education system is more exams-oriented than skills-leaning. As a consequent, entrepreneurship, creativity, innovation and employability (ibid., p. 11) is lacking in the products of the school system.

The question, then of how quality in education can be attained in SSA, suggests the important role of leadership as the teaching-learning process takes place in school. School leadership, therefore, is fundamental in interpreting the abstractions of policy ideas into contextualized practices for quality outcomes (Huber, 2004, p. 670; Ball, Maguire, & Braun, 2012, p. 586). This is essential in ensuring a learning environment where students can “move from knowing to doing” (Dean, Hubbell, Pitter, & Stone, 2012: 167). In this regard, the literature on school leadership highlights the important role that principals are expected to play to ensure quality outcomes.

Examples of such role include improving learning outcomes, managing resources, connecting stakeholders, development and orchestrating teamwork and collaborative learning, setting goals, and monitoring and evaluating progress (OECD, 2009, p. 12; Bolanle,

2013, p. 27; Rutkauskas & Stasytyte, 2013, p. 56; Ata & Güçlü, 2018, p. 1139). This role is, thus, fundamental in articulating the vision of the school and providing direction that is necessary for enhancing the achievement of students (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 2; Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004, p. 20; Ashu, 2014, p. 23).

Professional capital and the Education for All (EFA)

The EFA vision is consistent with the fourth Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is to “ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” (OECD, 2017, p. 27). Education is a basic human right as enshrined in the 1948 UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Article 26 (1), which states, “Everyone has the right to education...” (UN, 2015, p. 54). This presupposes that the EFA dream cannot be achieved without improving quality (UNESCO, 2004, p. 17). Consequently, the achievement of universal participation in education greatly depends on the quality of education available (ibid., p. 28). Since the beginning of the third millennium and in reference to the Jomtien Declaration in 1990⁴ and the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000, the quality of education is recognized as a prime determinant for achieving EFA (UNESCO, 2004, p. 29; Traoré & Fonkeng, 2011, p. 553). This action was taken in the World Forum on Education, organized

⁴ The World Conference on EFA that gave birth to the Jomtien Declaration was jointly convened by UNESCO, UNICEF, World Bank, UN Development Programme, and UN Population Fund in Jomtien (Thailand). In the Conference, a groundbreaking recommendation was made on the universality and availability of education. The Declaration also identified quality as a prerequisite for achieving the fundamental goal of equity, with emphasis accordingly placed on assuring an increase in children’s cognitive development by improving the quality of their education (UNESCO, 2004, p. 29; Traoré & Fonkeng, 2011, p. 553).

by UNESCO, which declared access to quality education as the right of every child, thus, affirming that quality is at the core of education (UNESCO, 2004, p. 29; Traoré & Fonkeng, 2011, p. 553). It is, therefore, imperative that school leaders are equipped with adequate professional capital to understand and promote quality, equality, and equity for all in the school system.

However, the EFA is still a global challenge as the gap between the number of students graduating from schools and those among them who have gained a minimum set of cognitive and problem-solving skills in many parts of the world (Cameroon inclusive), remains wide (UNESCO, 2004, p. 23). The lack of political will and external factors like huge debt burden and internal conflicts are impeding the ability of SSA countries to achieve the EFA goal (Hallak, 1991, p. 3). Another impediment is inertia and resistance to change regarding emerging praxis options for educational leadership and policies (ibid., p. 16).

1.1.4 Professional capital in relation to my personal context

This topic is relevant to my professional life in the sense that I am working in the secondary school system where the enhancement of professional capital, though essential is not the focus of school leaders. Thus, my interest in this topic as an actor in school leadership is engrained in the discourse on the leadership dimension of educational quality. This is entrenched in the fact that research on principal preparation policy (Glanz, Shaked, Rabinowitz, Shenhav, & Zaretsky, 2017, p. 138) in Cameroon, with a focus on professional capital, is practically nonexistent. The present study is energized by the lack of research in Cameroon on the influence of principals' professional

capital on the quality of educational outcomes. As far as I know, no previous research in Cameroon has investigated the influence of professional capital as a predictor of leadership direction and learner outcomes. Nonetheless, the few researches that have been conducted focus on teacher leadership practices (Obi, 2018), head teachers' instructional supervision practices (Lyonga, 2018), the effectiveness of school leadership practices and management development (Ashu, 2014), and leadership style (Wirba, 2015). In all these studies, none focuses on the professional capital dimension. My work on this topic is, therefore, important because it adds to the limited literature related to how principals develop their professional capital for professional leadership (Brabham, 2017, p. 93). I, therefore, want to make this aspect visible in the field. Moreover, I am trying to show how the first steps taken in the field have started to modify the point of departure.

In relation to my personal context, which is the Presbyterian Education Authority (PEA) in particular and Cameroon in general, the effect of the lack of professional capital by principals is visible. This lack of professional capital reflected by the secondary school principals in my context attests to the lack of quality in Cameroon secondary school. Also, field experience opines to the fact that principals of secondary schools in Cameroon do not lead in professionally oriented ways. As a consequence, decision-making is not consistent with the need to improve learner outcomes. This increasing appetite for administrative-leaning leadership style is suggestive of the respect of their duties as elaborated in documents outlining their functions (CBC, 2015, p. 62; MINESEC, 2015, p. 14; "PEA Job Description," pp. 3-4). In these documents, no mention is made of the requisite competencies for principalship,

the need to prepare principals for leadership, the need for professional development, and the need for improved learning outcomes. Evidently, leadership objective targets the implementation of administrative instruction rather than targeting the teaching-learning process. A paradigm shift can be a tool to reverse this perceived work-to-rule trend in school leadership from administrative to teaching and learning (Ashu, 2014, p. 50). This, then, requires that principals develop skills in enhancing their professional capital.

1.2 Research question

Considering the facts stated, the topic developed above, and the conception which it is based, the following question is discussed: What is the understanding of secondary school principals of professional capital? My research interest is articulated with the following sub-questions: (a) How do principals describe their leading? (b) How do principals perceive their knowledge, skills, and experiences as capital? (c) How do principals describe their collaboration with teachers, parents, and the community? (d) How do principals reflect their decisions making?

1.3 Structure of the study

This research is presented in seven chapters. In chapter two, my research question is contextualized by reflecting the continuing research, which constitutes the bedrock on which this current empirical study relies. Chapter 2 reviews the literature related to professional capital, starting with the argumentation of the intersubjectivity of the different reflections on professional capital and leadership, which are discussed in two main dimensions. The concepts of professional capital and learner outcomes (Chapter 2.1)

and the concept and enhancement of school leadership (Chapter 2.2). Furthermore, the connection is made between professional capital and learner outcomes (Chapter 2.3). By knowing what has already been done in research, the methodology of the intervention (Chapter 3.1) and the methodology of the research (Chapter 3.2) are discussed. The intervention is described in Chapter 4. The objectives of the training (Chapter 4.1), the didactical plan (Chapter 4.2), and the development of the training workshop (Chapter 4.3). The results of the findings are explained in Chapter 5. First, the description of the data (Chapter 5.1) and secondly, the summary of the results (Chapter 5.2). The discussion part is presented in Chapter 6, starting with the results of the intervention (Chapter 6.1) and then the important results of the research (Chapter 6.2). In the concluding part of this chapter, a connection is made between professional capital and school leadership and the results. The conclusion chapter (Chapter 7) summarizes the major aspects of the previous chapters (Chapter 7.1), presents answers to the research question, which has been explained in Chapter 1.2 in the finalizing part (Chapter 7.2). Finally, regarding the background of the context presented, implications for praxis and for educational science (Chapter 7.3) are given.

Generally, it is expected that the study provides the first empirical evaluation of the role that professional capital plays in efforts towards providing quality education in Cameroon.

2

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

This review of the literature bases on principals' perceptions of professional capital and contextualizes my research question in line with the research, which is already ongoing. The different literature includes theoretical literature and empirical literature about past research used to contextualize my findings as well as methodological literature about how the research is done and how the chosen methods are used (Hart,1998, p. 13; Flick, 2009, p. 48).

The scientific problem behind the literature review stems from the perceived gap between the theory of professional capital and praxis in the Cameroon education system (cf. Chapter 1.1). Thus, in regard to the scientific problem behind the literature review, the research question is: What is the relationship between professional capital and students' achievements? This literature review enables me to outline and assess the existing literature concerning the research question of the literature review. The purpose is to assemble the relevant bulk of knowledge that is already in existence (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003, p. 208). With this review, the contribution of each research work to the understanding of the research problem being studied is appraised. Accordingly, the areas of previous studies are identified to avert duplication, due recognition

is accorded to other researchers, any gaps in the existing knowledge are exposed, and areas for further research are formulated (Webster & Watson, 2002, p. xiii; Levy & Ellis, 2006, pp. 182–183).

This review helps me to situate my own research within the framework of positivists, who postulate the creation of cumulative knowledge, where each study seeks to build on earlier studies and guarantees an incremental contribution to the literature. Further, the literature shows how the results and conclusions of this study squares-up within the established work of others. In this regard, the literature selected comprises published books, chapters in edited books, peer-reviewed scholarly journals articles, dissertations/theses, ERIC database material, and other web documents. These sources of literature are authoritative in nature as primary, secondary or tertiary sources and are corroborated, archived, and referenced (Cook, Mulrow, & Haynes, 1997, p. 377). The conscious choice of these materials is meant not only to portray cumulative knowledge as earlier mentioned but intersubjective knowledge as well (Fugelli, 2010, p. 9).

The systematic approach used in this review minimizes biases and errors through extensive literature searches and the use of an audit trail to justify my decisions, procedures, and conclusions (Cook et al., 1997, p. 377; Webster & Watson, 2002, p. xvi; Levy & Ellis, 2006, p. 182).

Therefore, the chapter is divided into four sections: Professional capital (Chapter 2.1), school leadership (Chapter 2.2), professional capital and learning outcomes (Chapter 2.3), and the answer to the research question from the perspective of the literature review is given in the concluding part (Chapter 2.4). The meaning of the

results of the review, the implications from a practical and theoretical perspective and possible leads to new research are equally given at the conclusion.

2.1 Professional capital

In this section, professional capital is situated within the framework of international discourse with a bias towards my research questions (cf. Chapter 1.2). Precisely, this section discusses the different types of professional capital bringing out their benefits. The concluding part of this section reflects the strategies to develop professional capital for better learning achievements.

2.1.1 Understanding the concept of professional capital

According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2013), capital is “something that adds value to net worth” suggesting that additional investments are needed to enhance the capital potentials for more returns to be realized (p. 36). In education, these returns are reflected in students’ achievement. Rather than considering capital as something that adds value, Lin (2001) goes beyond and cogitates capital as “investment of resources with expected returns in the marketplace” (p. 3). Regarding education, these returns are reflected by the skills and competencies acquired by learners, which can be put into productive use. Capital, consequently, becomes resources when they are invested and mobilized in the direction of profit (ibid.), which, in the teaching-learning process is the individual and societal benefits. Capital, therefore, is an asset in every profession with a defined vision. In the frame of quality discourse, Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) define professional capital as “the resources, investments, and assets that make up and

develop a profession and its practice” (p. 92). Professional capital requires attention not only to political and societal investments in education but also to leadership actions and educator needs, contributions, and career stages (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013, p. 36). The literature review suggests that professional capital potentials are necessary for the proper execution of leadership functions for the attainment of the envisaged goals of a school. In this study, professional capital is conceptualized as a function of the interactive connectivity of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 88; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013, p. 37; Fullan, 2016, p. 44). How effective these components of professional capital interact determines the quality of learner outcomes. These components of professional capital and their influence on learner outcomes are discussed below.

Human capital

Human capital represents the knowledge, skills, and experiences that an individual has and acquired through formal education and professional training programs, which adds value to a company (Lin, 2001, p. 24). Human capital is reinforced by the individual’s talent attained through the development of such skills and knowledge, which enables them to act in new ways (Coleman, 2000, p. 100). These, however, do not address the question of the influence of educational attainment on outcomes. A step in this direction is taken by Leana (2011, p. 32), who, in an educational study in New York City with a sample of 130 elementary schools, found that educational attainment of the instructor shows little effect on improving student achievement without continuous professional development. Schleicher (2014, p. 31) corroborates this more generally and argues

that to get the best returns on investment in skills, it is necessary to assess the quality and quantity of the skills available in the population. Schleicher further articulates the necessity to determine and anticipate the skills that the job market wants, and effectively develop and make use of those skills in better jobs that lead to better lives.

In the school milieu, therefore, human capital allows principals and teachers to better handle their responsibilities as well as know their students and understand how they learn (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 89). Human capital can be complemented by cognitive capital (Kodila-Tedika, Rindermann, & Christainsen, 2014, p. 2; Samson, 2016, p. 4; Noble et al., 2017, p. 153; Rozhdestvenskaya, 2017, p. 616). How students learn is particularly important in building cognitive capital potentials. Therefore, the teaching-learning process is important in determining what cognitive skills, knowledge, and information they will eventually bring as talents to the production field and which translates achievement of human potential (Samson, 2016, p. 4). This results in improved health and well-being, educational outcomes, employment, and quality of life (Noble et al., 2017, p. 154). Cognitive capital is cultivated from childhood education through adulthood (Kodila-Tedika et al., 2014, p. 2; Samson, 2016, p. 4; Noble et al., 2017, p. 153; Rozhdestvenskaya, 2017, p. 616).

Social capital

The role of human capital in leadership performance though important, social capital makes an even greater contribution (Leana, 2010, p. 17; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013, p. 37). Social capital according to Lin (2001) is an investment in social relations whose returns are expected to be visible in terms of collaboration and networking (p.

19). It is the real or potential resources, which are rooted in social relations, and social structures that are mutually beneficial (Lin, 2001, p. 24; Leana, 2011, p. 32). Thus, social capital embodies some aggregation of valued resources such as economic, political, cultural, social connections, and networking (Lin, 2001, p. 26).

In the school setting, when social connections and networking are characterized by high trust and frequent interaction/shared repertoire of knowledge, there is greater students' achievement (ibid., p. 33). In this regard, many authors summarize social capital as the resources and expertise that individuals can access through the quality and quantity of interactions and relationships with others (e.g. Coleman, 1990, p. 302; Coleman, 2000, p. 101; Penuel, Riel, Krause, & Frank, 2009, p. 129; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 90; Fullan, 2016, p. 44). However, Kronley and Ucelli-Kashyap (2010) go beyond these interactions and consider social capital as "the assets that are created from productive relationships within a school, between educators and students' families and caregivers, and between schools and communities" (p. 63). These relationships also extend to education policymakers, pedagogic inspectors, and politicians. As Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) postulate, "learning is the work and social capital is the fuel. If social capital is weak, all else is destined for failure" (p. 92).

Social capital enhances human capital as social capital is embedded in relationships and interactions that are educative (Smylie & Hart, 1999, p. 424). That is, the development of knowledge, skills, and other individual capacities for productive activity is both a function of planned, structured learning opportunities and a function

of interactions among the members of a group (ibid.). The elements of social capital can be summarized as social trust, networking, channels of new information, norms, expectations, and sanctions (Coleman, 1990, p. 321; Smylie & Hart, 1999, p. 423). The context of social trust here concerns confidence in the reliability and integrity of individuals and social relations (Smylie & Hart, 1999, p. 423). Trust can also be a function of mutual understandings or reciprocity among members of a group (ibid.). Therefore, an effective school leader does not only guide teaching and learning to improve learning outcomes, manage resources, set measurable goals, and lead but also collaborates beyond school level (OECD, 2009, p. 19). For human and social capital to be effective, they need to be integrated into the decision-making process of the principal. Thus, literature holds that a good human and social capital aptitude enhances decisional capital, as discussed below.

Decisional capital

Human and social capital from empirical evidence is not enough to make a considerable impact on school leadership and learner outcomes without adequate decisional capital potentials (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 93). Decisional capital refers to the wealth of knowledge, intelligence, and energy necessary to put human and social capital to effective use, where rational judgments about learners are made (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, pp. 93–94; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013, p. 37; Fullan, 2016, p. 47). These judgments, which are aided by experiences that have been cultivated over the years, are reflected in the direction of the teaching-learning process. For this to be effective, school principals, need to learn how to judge and the possibility to practice.

This is sharpened when decisional capital is mediated by social capital, that is, through interactions with colleagues (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 96). Regarding learner outcomes, the decisional capital of teachers and school leaders play a major role (Fullan, 2018, p. 86). Educational leaders make discretionary decisions in order to respond to the challenges they face in the execution of their functions (Fullan, 2016, p. 47; Fullan, 2018, p. 83). The ability to make effective decisions can be boosted by the leader's psychological capital abilities, which Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007) consider as an individual's positive psychological state of development (p. 3). This positive psychological state is characterized by self-confidence and resilience toward goals even when plagued by problems and adversity (ibid.).

2.1.2 Importance of professional capital

According to Hargreaves and Fullan (2012: 146), the main principles that draw on and develop professional capital in schools are the same as those that enhance professional capital through an entire education system. They are about developing one's commitments and capabilities, pushing and pulling his/her peers, carrying out responsibilities that are collective together, and collaborating with competitors throughout the entire system for the benefit of everyone (ibid.). Consequently, rather than investing in the "wrong drivers" (Fullan, 2011: 1) in educational reforms, much attention is needed in the leadership dimension as effective school leaders are central to large-scale, sustainable education reform (Fullan, 2002: 16). Hence, the key to effective school systems resides in "the development of collaborative forms of professionalism focused on building professional capital of school leaders and collective

ownership over student success” (Osmond-Johnson, 2017: 39). This then, suggests that school principals relate interactively with teachers as they are at the center of the teaching-learning process. Thus, in a school where there is strong social capital, teachers’ access to knowledge and information and their senses of expectation, obligation, and trust, as well as their commitment to work together for a common goal, is positively affected (Fullan, 2016: 44). This suggests that the mutual interplay of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital in school leadership is likely to yield quality educational outcomes. Hence, the development of professional capital is imperative to build leadership skills and competencies in school principals, required for them to orientate their leadership towards instructional activities (Fullan, 2002, p. 16). Focusing on instructional activities is, therefore, critical for the school system to accompany learners in the acquisition of problem-solving and creative-thinking skills. This requires that the potentials of principals be developed through strategies reminiscent to those discussed in Chapter 2.2.3 below.

2.1.3 Developing professional capital

Having ascertained the importance of professional capital in effective school leadership above, the question of enhancing each component of professional capital becomes imperative. The subsequent sections, therefore, discusses the strategies of enhancing human capital, social capital, and decisional capital for the purpose of achieving better learning outcomes.

Enhancing Human capital

Effective leaders focus on what to do to empower themselves and those around them to take actions that produce a positive impact on the students (Fullan, 2018, p. 11). Research has shown that the development of human capital improves knowledge and skills of individuals, and consequently, improves their productivity, facilitates their absorption into the economy and improves their job mobility (Johanson & Adams, 2004, pp. 15 - 16). The human capital of principals can be reinforced through investment in formal education, professional courses, and on-the-job experiences (Goldin, 2001, p. 265; Lin, 2001, p. 24; Leana, 2011, p. 32; Sosale & Majgaard, 2016, p. 73). These strategies, if properly engaged, can have a positive influence on their efficiency and output, which is mirrored in the students' achievement.

Enhancing social capital

Hargreaves and Fullan (2012: 89) argue that human capital cannot be enhanced by focusing on it in isolation without employing other strategies like social capital. Education can promote social cohesion, help construct social capital, and put in place a smooth foundation for responsible citizenship (Verspoor, 2008, p. 90). Hence, embedding resources in social networks and interpersonal relationships enhance outcomes (Lin, 2001, pp. 19, 25). Many authors have arrived a common conclusion that social capital can be enhanced through collegial learning networks that offer communities of practice such as teamwork, cooperative learning within and between schools, social and communication networks, study groups, mentoring, peer tutoring, and collaboration (Burt, 2000, p. 347; Early, Collarbone, Evans, Gold, & Halpin,

2002, p. 9; Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007, p. 146; Pont et al., 2008, p. 133; Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 89; Reddy, Kettler, & Kurz, 2015, p. 102; Henderson & Trede, 2017, p. 76). These studies provide a realistic context for socialization into the profession (Hollins, 2011, p. 402) and can produce better learning outcomes provided the communities of practice are fully imbibed and promoted by school principals. The findings of a study by Sart (2014, p. 73) further points to the important role of intensive collaboration within and beyond the school especially concerning learner-centered instructional practices (Harris & Lowery, 2004, p. 171).

Where the community of practice is established, there is a joint enterprise, mutual engagement and shared repertoire of knowledge (Lewis & Murphy, 2008, p. 139; Penuel et al., 2009; p. 126; Henderson & Trede, 2017, p. 77). This is strengthened through professional learning communities (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010, p. 36) and guarantees both individual development and cooperative construction of knowledge (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999, p. 272). In a call to action around professional learning, Fullan and Hargreaves (2016) opine that an investment must be made (in terms of networking) for a return to be realized (p. 1). Thus, when a considerable amount of time is devoted to build, improve, and invest in relationships, which must be professionally supportive, honest, and consciously developed, cooperative learning is strengthened (Rieg & Marcoline, 2008, pp. 3 - 5). In addition, the digital technology has created avenues for the development of social capital through online networking and communities of virtual contacts and has proven to be a vital tool for enhancing the acquisition and sharing of knowledge and experiences (Resta & Laferrière, 2007, p. 66).

Nonetheless, developing social capital is not as simple as “collaboration” and bonding, as it most effectively exists in kinds of collaboration that fosters “co-learning, co-development, and joint work for educators” (Osmond-Johnson, 2017, p. 38). Rather, as Hargreaves and Fullan (2012) argue:

Collaborative cultures do require attention to the structures and formal organization of school life, but their underlying sources of strength are informal in relationships, conversation, expression of interest, provision of support, and ultimately the mobilization of collective expertise and commitment to improve the lives and life chances of students. It requires talking together, planning together, working together—that’s the simple key. (p. 114)

Leana (2010: 18) also identifies positive relationships and collaboration as being at the center of what makes a school extraordinary where leaders build environments of mutual trust, respect, professionalism, empathy, teamwork, and shared norms. Smylie and Hart (1999) on their part, view the interactional dimension of school leadership as one that fosters social and human capital development including “managing teachers’ work, fostering social trust, establishing channels for new information, communicating and enforcing norms and expectations, and balancing internal and external ties” (p. 428). Accordingly, the services of consultants can also help school leaders to develop further effective collaboration, communication, and leadership skills (Reddy et al., 2015, p. 102).

Enhancing decisional capital

Decisional capital can be enhanced by drawing from the insights and experiences from colleagues in forming judgments over varied situations (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 98) and from everyday reflective practices (ibid., pp. 95-96). The reflective practices can either be situations of “reflecting in action” (the ability to walk around a problem while you are right in the middle of it) or situations of “reflecting on action” (reviewing an instance, once the practice is ended) (ibid.).

As principals’ professional capital aptitudes are necessary in outcomes-driven leadership, that of teachers are even more important in determining learning achievements. Evidence shows that the teacher effect in terms of value-added has a significant impact on the academic performance of students (Gauthier & Dembélé, 2004, p. 6; Hattie, 2009, p. 236, 2015, p. 87; Marzano, 2007, p. 162). Thus, principals and education authorities need to allocate adequate resources towards teacher training and equally ensure that they are well equipped and adequately motivated.

2.1.4 Challenges in developing and using professional capital

The possibilities of enhancing professional capital as discussed above notwithstanding, the major challenge faced by school principals are bureaucracy, lack of resources, resistance to change by the teachers in their teaching practices, and lack of in-service training (Sincar, 2013, p. 1273). This is immersed in the growing complexity regarding the principal’s role combined with the transmuting societal needs and educational reform

dynamics that pose serious challenges to even the most experienced educational leaders (Northfield, 2013, p. 170). This challenge is visible in their limited ability to manage staff and students' heterogeneity, make rational decisions, solve complex problems, build teams, and ensure school accountability (Greany, 2015, p. 138). Moreover, carrying out bureaucratic and management tasks tend to reduce principals' ability to be instructional leaders (ibid., p. 170). The development and use of professional capital in school leadership as a response to the growing challenges is in itself a big challenge in Cameroon and the rest of SSA. This challenge is reflected by limited funding (Greany, 2015, p. 125) and the lack of continuous professional development (Sincar, 2013, p. 1275). In addition, the lack of support from hierarchy, lack of incentives, and fragile collaboration of stakeholders (Dea & Basha, 2014, p. 59) are making the development of professional capital difficult. Another challenge is dealing with teachers that stonewall on issues of change (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2013, p. 38) as they resist innovation, especially in the teaching-learning process. This group of teachers prefers to remain in the sheath of their old habits, thus, sticking to the behaviorist understanding of quality education (UNESCO, 2004, p. 32).

Furthermore, information and communication technologies (ICT) can help foster education by increasing accountability through the provision of feedback and greater efficiency in information management as well as increasing transparency and reducing corruption (Baker, 2005, p. 29; Salatin & Fallah, 2014, p. 251). Technology can as well enhance the quality of school governance and the process of decision-making based on accurate data (Magno & Serafica, 2001, p.1; Salatin & Fallah, 2014, p.

255). However, the low rate of access to, and effective use of ICT tools has kept most secondary school principals away from exploiting its benefits in school leadership. This is compounded by the observable lack of or inadequate computer skills of school principals in Cameroon about how to manage necessary technological facilities added to the high cost of access (Sincar, 2013, p. 1275). Further, the refusal by some school leaders to embrace the new technologies in their leadership can be justified by inertia, lack of computers and digital tools, and the high cost of Internet connections. These limitations are impeding the digitalization of school leadership through the effective use of Internet tools (e.g. the World Wide Web or www and e-mails) and multimedia applications (e.g. Skype, YouTube, and WhatsApp) that are revolutionizing ways of teaching and learning (Beldarrain, 2006, p. 143, Attwell, 2007, p. 4; Mazer, Murphy, & Simonds, 2007, p. 14; Anderson, 2008, p. 347; McGreal & Elliott, 2008, pp. 143, 149; Lumby, 2013, p. 17).

Professional capital of principals as discussed above has a connection to their leading style. It is also evident that principals' leadership style can change their reflection on how they look at professional capital. This connectivity necessitates the review of principals' leadership styles (Chapter 2.3).

2.2 School leadership

It is more likely that the professional capital of principals has some influence on the school leadership styles. This section presents a review of the literature on the different ideal leadership styles of principals. It ends with a discussion on what professional leadership entails and what the possible learner outcomes are.

2.2.1 Leadership styles of principals

There is a vast amount of research on leadership with several definitions. However, Owens and Valesky (2011, p. 201) summarizes leadership as a group function (it occurs only when two or more people interact) and intentionally seek to influence the behavior of others. Leadership involves influencing others (Neumann & Neumann, 1999, p. 73). This can be done by sharing a common vision for the institution and arousing the personal commitment of collaborators to the common vision, and easing the work that followers need to do to transform the vision into reality (Owens & Valesky, 2011, p. 206).

In addition, leadership style may be conceptualized as the art of influencing others towards the direction of a shared vision (Neumann & Neumann, 1999, p. 73). Strategically, leadership style is the combination of three different individual skills and abilities: “visioning, focusing, and implementing” (Neumann & Neumann, 1999, p. 74).

In education, the central source of school leadership is the principal (The Wallace Foundation, 2013, p. 3). In addition, he/she is responsible for directing a vision of academic success for all students (ibid., p. 6). This presupposes that the focus is on instructional practices that promote quality teaching and learning, providing conducive learning climate and managing staff, data, and processes to foster school improvement (ibid.). Furthermore, Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014, p. 57) view leadership as a process of social influence wherein the voluntary participation of subordinates is sought by the leader towards the realization of the organization’s goals. Goal setting and pursuance is a very strong leadership tool in the pursuit of improving student outcomes since it signals to staff that though

everything is important, some activities and outcomes are more important than others (Robinson, Lloyd, & Rowe, 2008, p. 666).

The review of research, therefore, summarizes school leadership as providing direction and exercising influence (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 2; Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 20; Leithwood, Day, Sammons, Harris, & Hopkins, 2006, p. 8; Tatlah & Iqbal, 2012, p. 791). Thus, leadership recognizes the coexistence between leaders and their followers through a mutually beneficial, cooperative, and symbiotic relationship (Tatlah & Iqbal, 2012, p. 791; Rutkauskas & Stasytyte, 2013, p. 53). Further, evidence from research on leadership styles and school effectiveness by Tatlah and Iqbal (2012, p. 790) show that the degree to which school leaders are participative and adopt the selling leadership style is a significant factor responsible for affecting the achievement of the school. This is imperative, as the contemporary educational setting has created a need for leadership styles that encourage positive change and improvement (Sart, 2014, p. 73; Summerfield, 2014, p. 252; Brabham, 2017, p. 92).

Several leadership styles exist depending on the focus of the leader. For the purpose of this study, I will focus on the following ideal types: transformational leadership, administrative leadership, and instructional leadership.

Administrative leadership

The “administrative leadership” style is one in which the leader concentrates on bureaucratic tasks and on implementing administrative decisions (Huber, 2004, p. 673; Jenkins, 2009, p. 37). Here, the relationship between the principal and teachers on the one hand and between

the principal and authorities/community on the other is hierarchical. Decisions making is by the principal calling to administrative aspects. This, however, should be done with caution as this leadership style may render ineffective even the best school program, the most adequate resources, and the most motivated staff and students (Nwankwo, 1982, p. 71).

Transformational leadership

Huber (2004) describes transformational leadership as leadership that seeks to inspire and motivate others and build a more cordial and harmonious relationship with teachers (pp. 672-673). Transformational leaders, thus, inspire teachers to new levels of energy and commitment towards a common mission. Pursuant to this vision, the school's capacity to work together to overcome challenges and reach ambitious goals are developed and the teachers have time to conduct their teaching (Harris & Lowery, 2004, p. 174; Hussin & Abri, 2015, p. 93). This leadership style has the features of individual influence, spiritual encouragement, and intellectual stimulation (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014, p. 57; Wirba, 2015, p. 3). Effective transformational leaders motivate their staff by raising awareness and acceptance of the purposes and mission of the group. They also stimulate their staff to prioritize collective interest rather than self-interest (Bass, 1990, p. 21). They are charismatic and have considerable power and influence over the staff, where goals are reached with a high degree of mutual trust and confidence (Bass, 1990, p. 27; Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014, p. 57).

Instructional leadership

The focus on improving the teaching-learning process is nested in a conception of instructional leadership (UCEA, 2012, p. 2). Literature summarizes instructional leadership as conscious efforts to improve best practices in teaching and learning so that students achieve academic success (Beyer, 2009, p. 7; Jenkins, 2009, p. 36; Mercer, 2016, p. 8; Glanz et al., 2017, p. 132). The instructional leader is, therefore, expected to direct the teaching and learning process, create productive working conditions for teachers, provide teaching support, monitor school activity and avoid distractions (Leithwood, Harris, & Hopkins, 2008, p. 30).

Improving best practices is achieved by effectively addressing the challenges of diversity, guiding teaching and learning, and crafting instructional programs that meet the learning needs of students and promote staff professional growth (Hale & Moorman, 2003, p. 7; Harris & Lowery, 2004, p. 174; Beyer, 2009, p. 8; Brazer & Bauer, 2013, p. 650; Prytula, Noonan, & Hellsten, 2013, p. 1; Hussin & Abri, 2015, pp. 94-95; Mercer, 2016, p. 8). Instructional leadership, therefore, lays emphasis not on bureaucratic tasks, but on improving the learning performance of students (Daresh & Liu, 1985, p. 5; Huber, 2004, p. 673).

According to Leithwood and Jantzi (2006), there is a substantial gap between classroom practices that are “changed” and practices that actually lead to greater student learning (p. 223). Thus, the power of leadership in improving student learning depends on the specific classroom practices that leaders stimulate, encourage, and promote (*ibid.*). Although principals serve in various capacities in their schools, their role as instructional leaders is considered among the most important (Niqab,

Sharma, Ali, & Mubarik, 2015, p. 31; Brabham, 2017, p. 6). As instructional leaders, principals are expected to lead outcomes-driven innovations (Fullan, 2002, p. 16). This suggests that emphasis be laid on teaching and learning in a way that ensures and articulates the subject matter, content, principles of learning, and teaching processes (Sergiovanni & Starratt, 2007, p. 284). Ensuring quality instruction is likely to influence positively the opportunity for every student to learn and advance academically (Beyer, 2009, p. 9). In this regard, disruptions to learning are minimized, high expectations for the teachers and students are formulated, classroom practices are supervised, and students' progress is monitored (Witziers, Bosker, & Krüger, 2003, p. 401; Harris & Lowery, 2004, p. 174; Marzano, 2007, p. 162). It is imperative that monitoring and evaluation go with formative feedback to staff and students (Harris & Lowery, 2004, p. 182; Mercer, 2016, p. 8).

The goal of a school is to realize better learning achievement for the students. For this reason, principals who are goal-oriented put greater efforts on relating with the stakeholders of the school (teachers, students, parents, community, and authorities) professionally.

2.2.2 Professional leadership in schools

The quality of learning outcomes can be an indicator of professional leadership. School leadership makes a huge difference to student outcomes when it creates the conducive environment for teachers to improve classroom practice and student learning (OECD, 2009, p. 14; Ata & Güçlü, 2018, p. 1138). This suggests that, for leaders to adopt the leadership style to meet the “demands of the environment”, they must have the personal flexibility and

variety of skills necessary to vary their own behaviors (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988, p. 169).

One of the variations mentioned above is towards reinforcing the teachers' role. This brings into focus the question of the central role of the teacher in realizing better learner outcomes (UNESCO, 2004, p. 36). Teacher quality has been found to be the key to improved schools (Hanushek, 2002, p. 11) and evidence point to instructional leadership and supervision as having measured impacts on teaching, learning, and student academic achievement (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 70; Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 28; Robinson et al., 2008, p. 665; Tshabalala, 2013, p. 31; Lyonga, 2018, p. 117, 123). Besides, parental support (UNESCO, 2004, p. 36) and good community involvement in school governance (p. 37) have an influence on the learning achievements of students and should be given conscious attention by school leaders.

The focus on improving student outcomes, therefore, has led to increased attention to the role of quality school leadership in advancing effective educational programming and developing the teaching capacity of schools (Steele, 2009, p. 185; Gedik & Bellibas, 2015, p. 102; Glanz et al., 2017, p. 134). Hence, the ability to influence the staff in the desired manner to achieve the goals of the school is a sign of effective leadership (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014, p. 57). This requires adequate depth and breadth of knowledge and skills (Mercer, 2016, p. 8).

Evidence holds that the leadership dimension that is most strongly associated with positive learner outcomes is that of promoting and participating in teacher learning and development (Robinson, Lloyd, Rowe, 2008, p. 667). The 21st century school leadership, then, requires a

renewed stance to meet the demands of the contemporary educational world (Gage & Smith, 2016, p. 1). This posture is made manifest by Hale and Moorman (2003), who emphasize that:

Principals of today's schools must be able to lead instruction, shape an organization that demands and supports excellent instruction and dedicated learning by students and staff, and connect the outside world and its resources to the school and its work. (pp. 7-8)

The extent to which the principal focuses on the teaching and learning process sends a signal to the staff about its importance (Glanz et al., 2017, p. 134). Thus, principals and their teams are expected to lead intelligently and effectively (Gage & Smith, 2016, p. 6). The intelligent and effective school leadership from research is driven by knowledge, competences, and necessary dispositions to lead in a way that harnesses the factors required to attain quality student achievement (Rieg & Marcoline, 2008, pp. 1–2; Nurkolis & Sulisworo, 2018, p. 246; Olorunsola & Belo, 2018, p. 49). However, the tenets of successful school leaders have to be considered with caution, as much of the educational leadership literature does not focus on actual leadership practices (Leithwood et al., 2006, p. 8). It is mostly about the values, beliefs, skills or knowledge that is thought of as what leaders need to be effective (*ibid.*). This may be inferred by observing leadership practice or reputed as contributing to leadership effectiveness by those that experience leadership (*ibid.*).

The discussions above show that leadership can be influenced by professional capital potentials, which in turn influences outcome quality. Since professional leadership is seen from leadership influence on outcomes, there is,

therefore, need to connect professional capital and learner outcomes as reflected in Chapter 2.3.

2.3 Professional capital and learner outcomes

In this section, a connection is first made between professional capital and learner outcomes and then between professional capital and school quality. This is done by using literature from empirical evidence. In consequence thereof, research has documented the influence of principals' professional capital potentials on school leadership, learner outcomes, and school quality (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 2).

Learner outcomes are contextualized as student outcomes in terms of literacy, numeracy and life skills, creative and emotional skills, values, and social benefits emanating from the teaching-learning process (UNESCO, 2004, p. 36). These outcomes also include success in the labor market and societal benefits (*ibid.*, p. 37). This suggests that the teaching and learning process be closely nested within the support system of inputs and other contextual factors (*ibid.*).

Successful school leadership depends, *inter alia*, on the constructs of professional capital, which are variables that predict educational outcomes such as relevant knowledge and skills (Niqab et al., 2015, p. 29). Robinson et al. (2008, p. 667) provide evidence on the significant relationship between effective school leadership and learner outcomes in their meta-analysis of the impact of leadership on student outcomes. This meta-analysis of the different leadership dimensions on learner outcomes found different effect sizes ranging from moderate to large. The dimension of establishing goals and expectations

yielded an average effect size of 0.42 standard deviations (ibid., p. 659). The dimension of planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum showed the same average effect size of 0.42 (ibid., pp. 661-662). The results of these two dimensions showed a moderate impact on student outcomes. However, the dimension of promoting and participating in teacher learning and development as a leadership dimension showed an average effect size of 0.84 (ibid., p. 663). This large effect size provides some empirical justification for calls to school leaders to be actively involved with their teachers as the “leading learners” of their school (ibid.). This result points to teachers’ role as the main driving force behind the realization of quality learner outcomes as they are at the center of the school’s instructional activity (Friedkin & Slater, 1994, p. 140; Gauthier & Dembélé, 2004, p. 6; Marzano, 2007, p. 162; Hattie, 2009, pp. 22 & 115; Hattie, 2015, p. 87).

Effective principals are fortified with professional capital that enables them to be visionary with regard to the achievement of their students, and they engage teachers, students, parents, and the community to make the vision a reality (Mendez-Morse, 1991, p. 2; Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 31). An array of research has shown that leaders who identify and formulate visions, create high-performance expectations, monitor performance, and encourage effective communication and collaboration realize quality educational outcomes (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, pp. 3–5; Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 24). Consequently, effective school leadership is visible when there is frequent personal monitoring and evaluation of school achievements, investment of much time and energy on activities geared at school improvement, supporting teachers, and sourcing

additional resources for the school (Mortimore, 1993, p. 11; OECD, 2009, pp.14–15). An evaluation by a school head should provide reliable and valuable information where the lessons learned are integrated into the decision-making process of the leader for better results (Scheunpflug & McDonnell, 2008, p. 14). Such an evaluation would be effective when it measures both process and results (ibid., p.19).

Learning and performance need to be assessed to ascertain whether students have reached the requisite learning outcomes (Henderson & Trede, 2017, p. 76). It is worth noting that monitoring and evaluation can go beyond the school to the system level, regulating the level of educational outcomes, and holding the education system accountable for its functioning and performance (Scheerens, Glas, Thomas, & Thomas, 2003, pp. 4-6). Accountability improves the present and shapes the future while helping to circulate professional capital throughout the system (Fullan et al., 2015, p. 15). Attaining this would more likely require that principals are equipped with professional capital aptitudes, which enables them to focus their relationships, work, and learning on the core business of teaching and learning (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 636).

The guiding principle under which an effective school operates is that every student is supported to reach his or her full potentials (Early et al., 2002, p. 136). An effective school requires an effective principal as a necessary precondition (Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005, p. 5). From the evidence of a research report on “Successful school leadership: What it is and how it influences pupil learning,” Leithwood et al. (2006, p. 14) found that

effective leadership has very significant effects on the quality of the school organization and on student learning. Thus, adequate aptitudes in professional capital reinforce leadership, teamwork, and collaboration, and produces better learning outcomes and quality school (Early et al., 2002, p. 141; Rieg & Marcoline, 2008, p. 12). With complementary skills, the results would even be better. The importance of complementary skills has been highlighted in a study by Reddy et al. (2015) on school-wide educator evaluation for improving school capacity and student achievement in high-poverty schools (p. 105). They conclude that the use of complementary skills that forge an effective leadership team enhances school capacity and students' achievement. This is corroborated by another study by Robinson et al. (2007) on "School leadership and student outcomes", which reveals that leadership in higher-performing schools according to teachers' perception is significantly more successful compared to the leadership of lower-performing schools (p. 18).

These outcomes point to the qualities of successful leaders whose professional skills make an invaluable and sustainable contribution to the quality growth of schools. In this regard, Davies (2007) emphasizes that "sustainable leadership is made up of the key factors that underpin long-term school development" (p. 2). Further evidence shows that talented leaders are able to turn troubled schools into sustainable success stories (Leithwood et al., 2004, p. 17). It is therefore, inevitable that such leaders have high expectations for teachers and student performance, supervise teachers, coordinate the curriculum, build the individual and collective capacity of teachers, and monitor student progress (Witziers et al., 2003, p. 401).

2.4 Conclusion

Based on the review of the literature and the evidence therein, there is documentary evidence that professional capital influences the path of leadership. Leana (2011) found that schools with high social capital showed higher achievement outcomes by learners as teachers' social capital was a significant predictor of student achievement gains above teacher experience or ability in the classroom (p. 33). The findings of Leana points to the conclusion that there is a positive relationship between professional capital and students' achievements. This finding of Leana has provided an answer to the research question of this literature review, which sought to know what the relationship between professional capital and student achievements was.

The combined effect of human capital and social capital gives even better results as students whose teachers were more able (high human capital) and also had stronger ties with their peers (strong social capital) showed the highest gains in math achievement (Leana, 2011, pp. 33–34). It is, therefore, possible that with a strong human and social capital, the leadership orientation of the principal can be skewed towards decision-making regarding the instructional processes that produce better student achievements. This is supported by compelling empirical evidence, which reveals the impact of instructional leadership on student outcomes to be three to four times that of transformational leadership (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 665).

From the review of the literature, it becomes pertinent that building and upgrading the human capital potentials through professional development as well as building strong social capital through collaboration, peer

exchanges, learning communities, and networking within is effective in improving learner outcomes. This need not remain at the level of theoretical mastery but become the *modus operandi* of principals and teachers. Thus, a paradigm shift in practice from spending more time on administrative matters and less time on enhancing the quality of instructional activities, building social capital is necessary if better learner outcomes are to be achieved (Leana, 2011, p. 35).

This study is meant to engage the change process in the Cameroon education system, and it is hoped that policymakers will embrace the change process. The question however is, what does the evidence from the literature tell us about effective education policy? The evidence suggests that the focus on enhancing human capital through certification cannot produce the quality staff that is required to produce quality educational outcomes (Hanushek, 2002, p. 2; Harris & Sass, 2008, p. 30) in a rapidly evolving global educational landscape. This then, suggests that policymakers in both public and private education sectors in Cameroon also invest in strategies to improve collaboration and information sharing among principals.

This strategy needs the involvement of teachers but not in the dimension of the famous phenomenon “Teacher of the Year” (the reward of excellence in teaching) (Leana, 2011, p. 35). This is because, besides having a demotivating effect on others, it is likely to be counterproductive in the realization of quality through collaboration, teamwork, shared knowledge and experiences that require the contribution of everyone. It is not, then, the fruit of isolated individual inputs. In the Cameroon context, the “Teacher of

the Year” award is a regular phenomenon but for the lack of measurable criteria as experience shows that it focuses on aspects of assiduity, punctuality, and other school activities and not on quality teaching. It is, thus, necessary that principals on their part spend more time in building strong professional capital by networking with people and organizations beyond the school as this has been found to deliver gains to both teachers and students (Leana, 2011, p. 35).

This review of the literature points to the positive influence of professional capital on quality educational outcomes. Nevertheless, the literature review alone cannot cover all the aspects of my research question, as there is no literature on the perceptions of professional capital in the Cameroon education system. From the literature review, the answers and evidence hinge on situations in developed countries. To deepen the understanding of professional capital, therefore, there is missing information due to the lack of evidence on the influence of professional capital on learning outcomes in Cameroon.

Summarily, evidence from the literature review has revealed a visible gap between theory and practice of professional capital in the Cameroon education system, which the present study will contribute towards abridging. Since all education stakeholders, and not only principals, are fully implicated, further research will be useful to provide answers to the following questions: (a) What are the perceptions of education policymakers on strategies to enhance the professional capital of school principals and teachers? (b) What are teachers’ perceptions of their professional capital? (c) What leadership practices are consistent with greater student achievements? (d)

What is the understanding of secondary school principals of professional capital? The last question is my main research question, whose answer necessitates a research process to be engaged. The methodology of this research is discussed in the following chapter, starting with the methodology of the training intervention, which I did with selected secondary school principals.

3

METHODOLOGY

After stating, the problem behind this research in Chapter 1 and reviewing the literature to give it a theoretical foundation, this chapter, discusses the methods used in the study. For the purpose of intersubjectivity, I am establishing two methods, which are the intervention as a method and intervention as a research method. Since the research question of this study is connected to the understanding of processes of quality improvement, the study is conceptualized as a controlled intervention followed by small research. The methodology of the intervention and justification are described (Chapter 3.1) and the research design and justification are explained (Chapter 3.2).

3.1 Intervention: Training seminar on “Enhancing professional capital for quality educational outcomes”

As an intervention, I decided to conduct a training workshop for principals of selected secondary schools in the NWR of Cameroon that focused on strategies to enhance their professional capital for quality educational outcomes. In this section, my intervention is described as a method (Chapter 3.1.1), followed by a discussion on the topic of my intervention and a brief description of its objectives (Chapter 3.1.2). The main decisions

are explained, including the reason for the choice of participants and the didactical plan of the training (Chapter 3.1.3). In the concluding paragraph, the type of knowledge my intervention permits is described.

3.1.1 Intervention as a method

The idea of conducting an intervention is embedding aspects of participants' practice in their reflections. As an intervention, I decided to carry out a training seminar for selected secondary school principals in the NWR of Cameroon on the theme: Enhancing professional capital for quality educational outcomes. This training was carried out amidst heightening insecurity due to the burgeoning crisis plaguing the two Anglophone regions of Cameroon at the time of this research. Through this training, the school leaders learned how to proceed to effect and sustain school change and how to model, dialogue, and collaborate (Prytula, Noonan, & Hellsten, 2013, p. 26).

As established in Chapter 1, the understanding and use of professional capital by secondary school principals in Cameroon is still a major challenge. It is necessary for school principals to be given the opportunity to reflect on their professional capital and its connectivity to quality education. As this reflection is done within the framework of training, they are better equipped to focus their leadership towards monitoring and evaluating the teaching-learning process and improving the teachers' roles (Knight, 2002; Pont et al., 2008; OECD, 2009). Consequently, this intervention serves as a modest contribution towards alleviating the visible deficiency of professional capital potentials of secondary school principals and improving the low educational quality in Cameroon and SSA (Hanushek & Woessmann, 2008; Traore & Fonkeng, 2011; Schleicher,

2014). It is hoped that through this intervention, the principals' cognitive skills in critical thinking and problem-solving including socio-behavioral skills in creativity and curiosity are bolstered (World Bank Group, 2019, p. 70). In this way, the process of bringing change in their schools can be started. The rationale of this training, therefore, is rooted in the discourse on the influence of professional capital on effective school leadership (Rieg & Marcoline, 2008; Goldin, 2014; Gage & Smith, 2016). The training is also supported by the outcomes of sustained professional development practices, which is seen through the building of a collective pedagogical repertoire (Knight, 2002, p. 238). With my intervention, I want to give an example of how this challenge could be addressed. This intervention has three dimensions: the content dimension (comprising the elements of the training), the process dimension (comprising the planning, methods, and execution), and the praxis dimension (activities during the training and afterward).

The content dimension of the intervention

The intervention encompasses different content areas designed as a response to the problem identified in Chapter 1. An aspect of the intervention covered the theoretical background of educational quality, professional capital, and leadership while highlighting the connection between professional capital and quality education. Another facet of the intervention focused on reflecting the impact of professional capital on quality outcomes (school perspective). Furthermore, reflection on the strategies to develop and effectively make use of professional capital for quality outcomes constituted another content area that was given considerable attention. The need to assess the extent to which the content of the training intervention

was covered meant that evaluation and feedback were invaluable, and this made up the last part of the training. The execution of the content itself reflected the use of professional capital.

The process dimension of the intervention

The understanding of quality is not only on content but process, which is why the training workshop used the *Paideia* approach comprising *techne* and *episteme* (Magrini, 2012, p. 9). This was manifested by reflections, observation, brainstorming, intellectual exchanges, and collaborative learning. Since the training had the participants' learning at the center (Qablan, 2018, p. 140), the methods and methodology helped to develop their skills in the acquisition of professional capital. As empirical evidence suggests, there is no unique way in which people learn and so, the different methods used in the training was a conscious response to the learning orientations of visual, auditory, and kinesthetic participants (Felder & Silverman, 1988, p. 676; Mulalic, Ahmad, & Mohd, 2009, p. 13). This explains the proactive steps that were taken to design the training content to address these different learning styles (Mulalic et al., 2009, p. 14). This design included graphics, pictures, charts, and symbols, which were used at different instances of the training to enhance visual learning. The process dimension, therefore, comprised of four methods used in the planning and execution, which helped participants to develop their human, social, and decisional capital capabilities. The process of adapting the methods in the training in regard to the training objectives are discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

First, the introductory communication used the exposition method through a PowerPoint Presentation (PPP) to let participants gain an understanding of the theoretical background of professional capital as a dimension of educational quality. The PPP was interspersed with individual reflections, pair work, and questions and answers (Q & A). Also, the Think-Pair-Share (TPS) method was very useful in ensuring greater learner participation in the training and provided an opportunity for participants not only to reflect but to learn from one another (Sampsel, 2013, p. 13). With this method, question prompts and short tasks were used to offer cognitive and metacognitive support for the participants (BCIT, 2010, p. 9; Mäeots et al., 2016, pp. 1893–1894; Alfares, 2017, p. 248; Pangaribuan & Manik, 2017, p. 167). The individual reflections and pair/plenary sharing were prioritized at this stage as it supports deeper learning. Besides, it is a process where the learners learn from experiences through individual inquiry and collaboration with others (Mäeots et al., 2016, p. 1892).

Second, buzz groupings as a method were used in the training to reinforce peer learning as research shows that some students learn better in peers (Beldarrain, 2006, p. 145; Boud et al., 1999, p. 415; Didham & Ofei-Manu, 2018, p. 90). The peer learning in the different group work sessions helped the participants to build competencies in collaboration, critical-thinking, self-awareness, integrated problem solving, reflection, communication, and learning how to learn (King, 1993, p. 34; Boud et al., 1999, p. 415; Didham & Ofei-Manu, 2018, p. 108; Rieckman, 2018, p. pp. 44-45). Additionally, the brainstorming, collaborative learning, and the pooling of knowledge aided the realization of the output objectives (cf. Chapter 4.1.2) (Roschelle & Teasley, 1995, p. 70; McInerney & Robert, 2004, p. 205;

Sajedi, 2014, p. 1651; Pangaribuan & Manik, 2017, pp. 165, 178). Moreover, the use of this method enhanced communication, democratic, social, emotional, and interpersonal skills (OECD, 2015, p. 53) of the participants, which are critical in effective school leadership. In addition, the autonomy given to participants allowed them to assume ownership of their own learning (Sajedi, 2014, p. 1651; Alfares, 2017, p. 248). In the same vein, giving special attention to the group size (four members per group) and group demographics promoted deeper reflection and full participation as well as stimulated the process of group dynamics (Alfares, 2017, p. 248).

Third, the observation task on the connectivity between the different components of professional capital and the influence of each on learner outcomes, allowed participants to engage in meta reflections. From the plenary discussions, a few participants dwelled on social capital, suggesting that their reflections have started moving in a direction similar to what empirical evidence holds (cf. Chapter 2.4).

Fourth, the carousel method employed in the intervention, strengthened reciprocal teaching, learning in pairs, cooperative learning (Hattie, 2009, p. 236; BCIT, 2010, p. 10; Akkuzu, 2014, p. 38), and peer feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007, p. 102). Taking turns to explain to their partners the new knowledge and competencies they gained in the training and highlighting the aspect they will implement in their schools, is suggestive of the commitment towards change. In all, 72.9% of the total workshop time was used by the process and praxis components of the training through reflections, observation, group work, carousel, and feedback.

The use of these methods, which are all linked to the objectives of the training (cf. Chapter 4.1), is a tacit response to the differences in the learning orientations of the participants. The demonstration of teamwork and collaboration by the participants as well as the cooperative presentation of group work results suggests that the collaborative facilitation of the entire training had a positive influence on the participants. This influence was not only observed during the intervention but there is a likelihood of manifestation afterward. That is, the understanding of professionalism and the role model posture of facilitators reflected professional capital in action and showcased the practice of democracy, freedom, gender sensitivity, tolerance, cooperation, and collaboration (Knight, 2002, p. 237; Hattie, 2009, p. 236; Maussen & Bader, 2012, p. 22). These elements were visible during group work exercises and collaborative presentations. The intervention, therefore, is a suitable method for the initiation of change. In addition, the process of the intervention itself is documented in Chapter 4 for greater transparency and to allow for an added value for the conceptual discourse.

The understanding of professional capital as discussed in Chapter 2 is an important dimension of improving leadership and learner outcomes. The goal of the intervention is, therefore, to contribute to the improvement of quality irrespective of how meager this contribution is in the overall quality context. Nevertheless, the great theme of quality is operationalized into smaller steps in order to strategically reach this goal. Chapter 4 portrays how a small intervention as this one can be included in a systematic approach. For this to be achieved, the concept of learning has to change so that principals start viewing leadership from the perspective of teaching and learning and not the

completion of routine administrative duties. Consequently, this intervention confronts the participants' daily practices with evidence to show the space that needs to be closed for better outcomes to be achieved. Thus, they were made to perceive the alternatives demonstrated in the training and to predict the changes in educational quality linked with the acquired knowledge and new techniques in regard to the objective of improving the teaching quality in Cameroon.

The praxis dimension of the intervention

Since the understanding of quality in training is on content, process, and practice, both the methodology of the training and visible steps taken in the training had both implicit and explicit implications for praxis in the training and afterward. The praxis dimension of the intervention includes, *inter alia*, the following:

First, there was a common seat for everyone, arranged in a semi-circular form and so there was no high table. Thus, the facilitators were at the same level as the participants, which made interactions and communication to be symmetrical and effective.

Second, the democratic formation of groups taking gender into considering demonstrates the significance of democratic practices and gender sensitivity in school leadership and in the teaching-learning process. Democracy was practiced during group work sessions as participants democratically shared responsibilities in their different groups, from deliberations to the presentation. Moreover, working collaboratively during the group work activities and the cooperative presentations by participants, which considered the gender configuration, was a practical

reflection of the collaborative facilitation. Besides, this helped participants to develop their social and decisional capital potentials, which are useful for practice in the field. Further, the collaborative facilitation shows the importance of cooperation and networking in school leadership and student learning. Third, the facilitators gave constructive content feedback after each group work presentation and equally gave the participants the opportunity to give feedback during and at the end of the training. The feedback given by participants at the end of the training with the use of card-question and questionnaire was a high moment in the training. Their assessment exposed the strengths and weaknesses of the whole training process and constitute a bedrock for improvement towards future planning and execution of similar training. The outcomes of the training feedback point to the efficacy of this method. It also provides avenues to assess the strengths; weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) in the evaluation of the training performance (UNESCO, 2013, p. 50). The feedback for me as well serves as a means to improve my own teaching and leadership performance (Akkuzu, 2014, p. 39). Further, participants were given the opportunity to give peer feedback during the carousel exchange. This helped to enhance their communications skills, which is vital in leadership and teaching and equally allowed for a critical exchange of received knowledge (O'Donoghue, Taylor, & Venter, 2018, p. 119).

Finally, the facilitators did not only use exposition but gave participants opening to use this method in the presentation of the different group work results. This skill is useful in the communication of acquired knowledge.

3.1.2 Brief description of objectives and topic as a process in the intervention

The topic of the intervention is “Training workshop for selected secondary school principals in the North West Region of Cameroon on the theme: Enhancing professional capital for quality educational outcomes.” This section describes the objectives of the intervention in brief and then the topic as a process in the intervention.

Brief description of the objectives of the intervention

The understanding of the objectives of the intervention is in two dimensions: the outcome objectives and the output objectives. The outcome objectives are summarized as follows: Principals are relating with students, teachers, parents, and the community professionally. Moreover, they lead with a greater focus on student learning and students are gaining better outcomes. In addition, capacity development plans are functional and sustainable in schools. In addition to the outcome objectives, the training was guided by the output objectives. These output objectives are: Participants gain a basic understanding of the meaning of professional capital and quality education as well as the impact of professional capital on effective school leadership. Moreover, the participants gain competencies on how to enhance and effectively make use of professional capital.

The topic as a process in the intervention

The topic is not only presented as a topic of the training but is also unswervingly implemented as a method of the intervention. The sensitization, planning, and execution of the training made use of professional capital through

discussions and interactions with mentors, networking with graduates of the *International Master Program of Educational Quality* (IMPEQ), and consultations and liaising with principals and authorities. Professional capital was equally manifested through collaborative facilitation (taping from the human capital potentials of co-facilitators), taking decisions of when/where the training takes place, who takes part in the training and which methods to be used to realize the training objectives. Thus, the entire process of sensitization, planning, and execution of the intervention reveals the power of collaboration, networking, knowledge and skills, and decision-making, which are all components of professional capital.

3.1.3 The main decisions

In my position as Vice Principal and in agreement with the Divisional Delegate (DD) for secondary education in Mezam (who is responsible for ensuring that government's policy on education is implemented by both public and private schools in the Division), I decided to bring together selected principals of secondary schools and education authorities in the NWR of Cameroon for a one-day training workshop. The purpose was to expose principals and authorities to the deficit in the leadership and teaching quality, its causes, and the means to change this situation by engaging strategies that are universally efficient. This, in a bid to improving the conditions and the outcomes in my professional environment.

This intervention involved the training of twelve principals (8 males, 4 females) from Protestant and other public non-state secondary schools and three education authorities in the NWR of Cameroon. The choice of principals was guided by security concerns, difficulties of traveling from distant

places, and financial constraints. Therefore, the principals came from around Bamenda, purposefully chosen as a cost-reducing strategy. Additionally, the principals' selection was based on longevity as well as gender equality and justice, which is an important dimension of school quality (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003, p. 6).

This mix of principals and their participation in the training enabled me to gain a better understanding of the perception of leadership performance in terms of their abilities to transmit the acquired skills for quality educational outcomes. Also, this number of participants (12) allowed for deeper reflections to take place and effective participation by all. The direct targets of this training were principals, but since the goal of this training is that schools are managed professionally and effectively for better learner outcomes, teachers and students were the indirect targets. Teachers are the major actors in the teaching-learning process, who through their teaching, can either bring about quality or take quality away from the school system. Students equally are indirectly involved, and their role depends on the teacher who can transform them from the objects of education to the subjects of quality education. When a school is professionally and effectively managed, the enabling environment is created for active and participatory teaching and learning. Thus, this training indirectly targets five thousand four hundred students and four hundred and eighty teachers of the participating schools.

The facilitation of the training content was done collaboratively by three resource persons, who are either past laureates or current students of IMPEQ. These resource persons were selected because they are experts

on issues of quality education and are ISTP Multipliers with considerable breadth of knowledge and experiences in teacher training on different dimensions of educational quality. Therefore, involving these resource persons was to highlight an important quality dimension regarding networking, cooperation, and collaboration, which are vectors of quality leadership and quality teaching. The collegial learning network created serves as a medium for mentoring or peer coaching and offers communities of practice and sources of continuous support for problem-solving (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 146). For the participating principals, this is reinforced by the professional WhatsApp group, created to support network learning after the intervention and to assist the efforts to bring change in the schools (O'Donoghue et al., 2018, p. 119). Besides, this is a practical implementation of the theoretical concept of professional capital.

The framework of the training is presented in the didactical plan (cf. Appendix III). This plan shows the different activities that were carried out in the training from the introductory communication and reflections to the group work activities and evaluation. The one-day training workshop took place on December 15, 2018, at the PNS Early Childhood Education Center, Presbyterian Church Center Mankon, Bamenda. The limited duration is justified by the high rate of insecurity in the NWR at the period of the training. Added to the insecurity are the limited resources and the limited time frame between planning, execution, and reporting.

Since the intervention integrates theory, process, and practice, participants' professional knowledge potentials were enhanced (Bratland, 2017, p. 167). This enhancement was based on knowledge practices informed by specialized

knowledge (ibid., p. 168), which were interpreted by using concepts (ibid., p. 174). Thus, in order for the principals to bring about change, they were given access to specialized knowledge (through the intervention), which is a prerequisite for embedding theoretically informed action in praxis (Clarke & Winch, 2004, p. 511). This intervention is, therefore, rooted in the constructivist views that knowledge is both personal and social construction (Mushaandja, 2013, p. 47). This was buttressed in the exchange and application of knowledge, techniques, and skills by the participants and facilitators. Besides, my conviction that this process of reflection enhances the leadership quality of the participants is supported by the appreciations expressed by participants, who reported (through the feedback process) having gained new perspectives on their learning and leadership. Hence, the intervention enabled participants to gain competencies in reflection, interpersonal relationships, communication, collaborative problem solving, and peer tutorship (Samson, 2016, p. 4).

This is the first step towards bringing change, as the competencies are relevant in the change process. Therefore, the intervention has been used as a method to show how change can be introduced in the school system. Furthermore, the intervention through research (Chapter 3.2) is equally in line with the efforts to bring change in the school system in a bid to improving the quality of education. As mentioned earlier, the second part of my intervention is research, whose method and methodology are described in Chapter 3.2 below.

3.2 Research methods

Besides the intervention discussed in Chapter 3.1, which focuses on the training of principals on enhancing professional capital for quality educational outcomes, this section discusses the perceptions of secondary school principals of their professional capital (cf. Chapter 1.2, my research questions). This subchapter describes the methodology of the research through the research design, which provides a context for the collection and analysis of data (Ngozwana, 2018, p. 20). Reviewing the process by which the research is conducted, is critical in ensuring that the outcomes are evidence-based and epistemologically valid (Ashworth & Lucas 2000, p. 296). The “outcome space” of the phenomenon concept in this study is then created from the ordered set of categories of description (Marton, 1994, p. 4424). The research design, therefore, consist of a description of the approach, the method used, and the method of data analysis (Flick, 2004, p. 146).

In regard to the perceptions of school principals on professional capital in the Cameroon context, no research has been conducted to the best of my knowledge as earlier observed in the first two chapters. As such, this research has chosen the qualitative approach in order to generate hypotheses on this subject. My decision to do research with the qualitative method, the reason for my choice, and how this method is put in place is described (Chapter 3.2.1). The method of data collection, the process, and the quality of the data (Chapter 3.2.2), the study sample (Chapter 3.2.3), the data preparation (Chapter 3.2.4), the methods and process of data analysis (Chapter 3.2.5), the problems encountered and limits of the data (Chapter 3.2.6) are explained. The kind of knowledge that this research allows for, is reflected in the last paragraph.

3.2.1 The qualitative method

This researcher uses the qualitative approach to conduct the research and his responsibility is seeking an understanding of human knowledge and experience (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 5; Taylor, Bogdan, & DeVault, 2015, p. 4; Obi, 2018, p. 61) since the social world is more complex than the natural world. The qualitative research method enables me to have varied perceptions of the research subject (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 150; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 88), which is the perspectives of secondary school principals of professional capital. It equally allows for a reflection on the role of the respondents in the research process, which is incorporated into their analysis (Scheunpflug, Krogull, & Franz, 2016, p. 8). The contributions of this qualitative research towards a better understanding and interpretation of social realities and phenomena and drawing attention to processes, patterns, and structural features proves to be invaluable (Flick, von Kardorff, & Steinke, 2004, p. 3; Bashir, Afzal, & Azeem, 2008, p. 43).

This researcher's use of the qualitative research method is also justified by its great alignment to everyday events and/or knowledge of those interviewed (Flick et al., 2004, p. 9). The research questions leading to the adoption of qualitative data collection and analysis are open-ended and more exploratory (Renner & Taylor-Powell, 2003, p. 2; Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 149). This enables the participants to elaborate on their perspectives. This is also supported by the fact that the inquiry is flexible and adapted to the phenomenon and experiences of the interviewees including their ability to communicate those experiences (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 150). The qualitative approach,

therefore, enables this researcher to describe and explore a wider perspective of the influence of professional capital on school leadership and learner achievements.

Qualitative research requires the collection of data from a small number of individuals (Obi, 2018, p. 61) and the research process is more flexible (ibid., p. 62). Thus, this researcher chooses the qualitative research design since the sample size of the research is small (in this case, four principals). Further, the qualitative method is the ideal approach for this study since little is known about the concept of professional capital development in the context of Cameroon secondary education, and this study provides detailed knowledge of the central phenomenon (ibid., pp. 62-63). However, Kvale (2006, p. 484) questions the veracity of this approach due to its hierarchical relationship with an asymmetrical power distribution of interviewer and interviewee. This is evident as the interviewer upholds a monopoly of posing the questions (unidirectional) and interpreting the interviewee's statements. Moreover, since the research project and knowledge interest set the agenda and command the conversation (ibid.), it may be interpreted as a form of interviewee suppression.

However, qualitative research remains valuable as an approach to understanding the perspectives of different individuals on the same subject. To gather the data needed for this study, the semi-structured interview method is used.

3.2.2 Semi-structured interview as a method of data collection

The study uses semi-structured interviews as a method of data collection in this qualitative study. The study was

conducted between January 2019 and March 2019 with a sample of four principals (2 females and 2 males). These principals had already received training on professional capital, meaning that I am not testing the original perceptions. That is, by my interview, I am not working on the very primary perceptions but rather, I want to check how the participants reflect the theme even in their responses to the questions after conducting the training with them. Again, the use of semi-structured interview as a method of data collection is justified by its flexibility and because it is an influential tool to capture the way people make situational meanings of their experiences (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 150; Rabionet, 2011, p. 563; Wirba, 2015, p. 3). Besides, it is a tool for collecting self-interpretations in a differentiated and open way, with the possibility of discursive understanding through interpretations (Hopf, 2004, p. 203). Furthermore, it provides reliable and comparable qualitative data (Flick et al., 2004, p. 9; Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, p. 2; Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 359). It equally allows for a broader perspective of respondents on the topic, which focuses on professional capital as a dimension in improving educational outcomes. The interview takes the form of a conversation between the researcher and the interviewees, in which the former asks questions and the latter give their perceptions (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 357). Consequently, the semi-structured interview enables this researcher to profoundly probe into the participants' experiences (ibid., p. 358).

For the sake of a consistent flow of the interview, a guide to open-ended questions (cf. Appendix I) and question prompts are used and this helps the interviewer to keep the interview focused (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 150; Rabionet, 2011, p. 564; Taylor et al., 2015, pp. 122-123). A

set of ten semi-structured interview stimulation questions are posed to each participant and audio-recorded (with their permission). The questions that had been reviewed and edited are clear and explicit and void of ambiguity and so, perceptions that can deviate from the focus of the research are limited (Flick, 2004, p. 149). With this, the best use of the interview time is achieved (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 359). My role is to assist the participants in exploring and elucidating their understanding of the concepts through the questions. Moreover, the respondents take ownership of their own ideas while my own authority is limited to guiding the interview towards relevant aspects (Dortins, 2002, p. 209). Thus, the interview protocol is not respected *sensu stricto*, as follow-up prompting questions are asked based on the respondents' feedback (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, p. 359). Moreover, the respondents enjoy a high degree of autonomy and are able to elaborate on important features of the phenomenon, as they perceive and by so doing, becoming co-researchers (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 151).

Summarily, the questions from which data is collected are varied in type and purpose. The interview protocol includes questions about participants' experiences in leadership; questions about their job challenges; reflective questions on participant's understanding and practice of networking. Circular questions on meta-thinking about principal's perception of the views of teachers, parents, and community of their role; reflective questions on participant's perspectives about their work; and comparative question to enable participants to put their own experiences in perspective. There are also follow up questions to enable participants to elaborate certain perspectives further. All the four interviews are conducted by this researcher, with three in the offices of the participants and one at the participants' home.

The respondents are equally encouraged to reveal aspects of their experiences that might not have been expected by the researcher (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 151). The research data is gathered with the use of a tape recorder and later transcribed in preparation for the analysis (ibid., p. 152). The tape recording is necessary as there are moments where discussions deviate from the interview guide (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006, p. 1; Rabionet, 2011, p. 565). This aside, there is need to capture the entire content of the discussions, which might not have been possible if I relied solely on my own memory (Taylor et al., 2015, p. 130).

3.2.3 The sample, sampling strategy, and anonymization

Sampling in qualitative research is focused on the application of findings beyond the research sample (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 147). It equally considers the fact that results are not to be used as the basis for generalization (Obi, 2018, p. 62). Identifying the location and the persons to take part in this study is done by sampling (Ngozwana, 2018, p. 21). In this section, the following are explained: the sample and the reason for the choice, the sampling strategy, anonymization, and ethical consideration.

Sample and criteria

Understanding the principals' perceptions of professional capital and its influence on student achievement is the focal point of this research. As such, the choice of sample is embedded in the need to have different perceptions of professional capital and eventually, its influence on educational outcomes. The research sample consists of four principals, two males and two females, all of whom lead mixed-sex schools. They also participated in the

training that is reported in Chapter 3.1 and Chapter 6.1. This sample constitutes a manageable number of people that are rationally engaged with at locations and within a timeframe that allows for the generation of adequate data (Ngozwana, 2018, p. 21). The sample is purposely selected based on pre-determined criteria of longevity, experience, gender, and because of the qualities that each participant possesses (Tongco, 2007, p. 147). Some of the principals are more experienced and some are not. Also taken into consideration are the status of the school, location, and the perceived affluence of the educational public towards the consumption of their services. In addition, the respondents' experience of the central phenomenon (Creswell, 2009, p. 217) guides the choice of sample. These pre-determined criteria are used since the study set to portray the fundamental, important, and significant aspects of the investigated phenomenon (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 152; Scheunpflug et al., 2016, p. 12).

The sample is balanced along gender lines, with two males and two females (in each category, one more experienced and one less experienced). The balanced demographic characteristics of principals are rooted in my deep belief in gender equality. This is my little effort in the direction of ameliorating the slow progress towards achieving gender parity in the Cameroon education system (Majgaard & Mingat, 2012, p. 6; UNESCO, 2014, p. 77).

The respondents are identified by the anonymous names: Apple, Ackee, Durian, and Cherry. Apple is a female principal of a boarding school, which is located in an urban area and has experience of being principal within the interval of 10 to 12 years. She has additional in-service training in school leadership and quality teaching. Ackee is

a male principal of a boarding school, which is located in a semi-urban area and his experience as principal lies within the interval of 13 to 15 years. Additionally, Ackee has in-service training in school leadership and quality teaching. Durian is a male Principal of a school that is located in an urban area. The school offers only day facilities to the students. His experience in principalship lies within an interval of 10 to 12 years and has additional training in school leadership and quality teaching. Cherry is a female principal of a school located in a semi-urban area and which admits both day students and boarders (students who stay in the school dormitory). She has experience as a principal of fewer than 10 years and has no additional training in school leadership. The characteristics of these respondents have been summarized in the sampling table below (Table 1).

Table 1: Sampling table

Respondent	Gender	Status of school	Years of experience as Principal	Additional training	Location of school
Apple	Female	Boarding	Between 10 and 12	Yes	Urban
Ackee	Male	Boarding	Between 13 and 15	Yes	Semi-urban
Durian	Male	Day	Between 10 and 12	Yes	Urban
Cherry	Female	Boarding & Day	Less than 10	No	Semi-urban

Source: Author

Sampling strategy

The sampling strategy in this qualitative research is the purposeful sampling, with a criterion that is pre-determined (Scheunpflug et al., 2016, p. 12) as mentioned in the

sample criteria. The purposeful sampling technique is the deliberate choice of participants due to the qualities they possess (Tongco, 2007, p. 147). This strategy is supported by the experience of the central phenomenon by the participants (Creswell, 2009, p. 217). The researcher's use of purposeful sampling strategy is because the study aims to portray the important aspects of the investigated phenomenon (Elliott & Timulak, 2005, p. 152).

Anonymization and ethical considerations

Any research in a social context is founded on thorough ethical principles. The commonly recognized ethical principles include, "minimizing harm, respecting autonomy, protecting privacy, offering reciprocity, and treating people equitably" (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012, pp. 2-3). This is to avoid doing any harm to the participants, including not invading their privacy and not deceiving them about the purpose of research (Hopf, 2004, p. 337; Flick, 2009, p. 41). Thus, the dignity and rights of participants are safeguarded (Allmark, 2002, p. 13) as no principal nor school is named in this study.

The processes and procedures involved in the data collection and the analysis of data are done in a transparent, confidential, and anonymous manner (Duncan & Watson, 2010, p. 50; Macfarlane, 2010, p. 21; Wirba, 2015, p. 3; Obi, 2018, p. 68). Another important ethical consideration of this research is seeking participants' consent (Hammersley & Traianou, 2012, p. 9). Enough efforts are made to respect the research codes of ethics regarding the informed consent of participants (Hopf, 2004, pp. 335-336; Duncan & Watson, 2010, p. 54).

The emphasis on ethics reflects the shift from viewing participants as samples or representatives of the population to seeing them as individuals that need some “dignity and respect” (Thomas, & Denton, 2006, p. 2). This process of anonymizing the data is implemented in the chapter of findings (Chapter 5).

3.2.4 Data preparation

The process of preparing the data starts with audiotaping the responses of the interviewees and then listening to the tape of the discussions and making a full transcript verbatim (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018, p. 6). This is followed by identifying the main themes including the emerging ones. Thus, the analytical themes are assembled by relating particular passages in the text of the interview to one theme, in the form that best fits these textual passages (Schmidt, 2004, p. 255). In transcribing, therefore, the rules of transcription are respected, by assigning codes to each interviewee and the interviewer. The codes, which are imaginary names are meant to ensure that the data remain anonymous. After coding, the data is then converted into a line structure, where segments are selected to apply to the different thematic framework. The line structure is also necessary as it allows for, in-text citations to be appropriately incorporated.

3.2.5 Data analysis by the method of descriptive analysis

This researcher uses the descriptive analysis to analyze the data in a detailed and comprehensive manner (Dey, 2003, p. 32; Thompson, 2009, p. 59; Loeb et al., 2017, p. 2). The situations are described as they are perceived by the different respondents (Dey, 2003, p. 37; Taylor et al., 2015, p. 4). After the description, the data is then classified

based on commonalities, disparities, and peculiarities (Dey, 2003, p. 48).

The application of descriptive analysis as a scientific method advances knowledge through observing phenomena and, subsequently, identifying research questions and generating hypotheses through the results of the findings (Loeb et al., 2017, p. 2). This is essential for the causal understanding of perceptions of the secondary school principals of their professional capital (*ibid.*, p. 4) and its influence on student achievements. Quality description of the context and conditions of this study influences the interpretation of research findings (cf. Chapter 5) and promotes the scientific method and continuous discovery (*ibid.*, p. 5). The relevance of this descriptive research is reflected by the identification of trends in data that gives very useful information (*ibid.*, p. 9).

Since this qualitative data consists of words and observations, not numbers, understanding is reached by doing analysis and interpretation in a creative, logical, and systematic manner (Savin-Baden & Major, 2013, pp. 450-451). Through this, the perspectives of the principals regarding professional capital and by extension, quality teaching and learning are assembled.

The quantity of information is abstracted at this stage of the analysis so that the cases are compared with regard to dominant tendencies (Schmidt, 2004, p. 256). Thus, the abstraction is tilted towards the aspects that give relevant information for a better understanding of the material transcribed. After the transcription, the data is organized, this time, not according to the questions but according to the different thematic contexts (Dickson, 2007, p. 15). This is then followed by a close examination of the

respondents' perceptions to identify the main similarities and differences (Schmidt, 2004, p. 254). Accordingly, with the respondents' matrix (cf. Appendix II), I assess and classify each interview and apply to the material according to the thematic framework that was established from the material in the earlier stage of the analysis (ibid., p. 256). The analysis of the data is done in the chapter on findings (Chapter 5), according to the different thematic frames and with respect to the research questions of the study. Research work like this one cannot be problem-free. The problems and limits of the data are eventually discussed in Chapter 3.2.6 below.

3.2.6 Problems encountered and limits of the data

The problem encountered while doing the research remains the high level of insecurity in the anglophone regions at the time of the research. This has rendered school heads, teachers, and students, soft targets for abductions, maiming, and killings. It was because of this situation that I conducted one of the interviews out of the principal's school.

The study is limited by the fact that the data are collected from a survey instrument designed to collect general information regarding principals' perceptions of professional capital. Therefore, the research questions used to capture these perceptions are narrow in scope and there is the possibility that the principals may have employed other practices to address a leadership responsibility. Furthermore, the indicators of evidence gathered from the practices of the principals through their responses (which are subjective in nature) may also be narrow in scope, suggesting a possibility that it may have influenced the results related to the likely predictability of principals' perceptions regarding learner outcomes.

Nevertheless, this study is credited for the fact that it transcends theories of professional capital and leadership to praxis as it begins to examine certain aspects of principals' behaviors and actions. This process starts with the reflection from the line of questioning and the perceptions sought during the interviews (Dortins, 2002, p. 212). Hence, subsequent to my asking each respondent a key question follows some extended negotiation of shared meaning (Kvale, 2006, p. 487).

The study also exposes the extent to which principals engage in evidence-based leadership behaviors and practices as per their perceptions, which reveals their professional capital potentials. In addition, the study shows whether principals' engagement in the practices as captured in their perceptions can be used to predict learner outcomes. Finally, this study allows for scientific knowledge as it uses the scientific method in terms of the epistemology, methodology, and method (Carey & Smith, 1993, p. 241). Precisely, the research design comprises the qualitative approach, semi-structured interview method, and descriptive data analysis method.

4

TRAINING ON PROFESSIONAL CAPITAL

After describing the intervention as a method in Chapter 3.1, this chapter focuses on the process of the intervention. This intervention is training for selected secondary school principals on the theme: “Enhancing professional capital for quality educational outcomes.” The training workshop took place on December 15, 2018, at the PNS Early Childhood Education Center, Presbyterian Church Center Mankon, Bamenda Cameroon. Participants were selected from secondary school in the NWR of Cameroon. The training registered full participation by twelve principals and additionally, three education authorities.

In this chapter, the intervention on enhancing professional capital for quality educational outcomes is described. The objectives of the training (Chapter 4.1) are explained with a connection of the topic to Chapter 2 and linking the objectives to the problems described in Chapter 1. The didactics of the training are then referred to the content with an explanation of the didactical planning (Chapter 4.2). This chapter ends with a description of the development process of the training workshop and a summary of the entire chapter (Chapter 4.3).

4.1 Objectives of the intervention

The training for secondary school principals on enhancing professional capital for quality educational outcomes was done at the threshold of the leadership challenges associated with the organizational dynamics of schools (Northfield, 2013, p. 173). It is logical to suggest that principals will need to constantly develop their professional and leadership skills (Brabham, 2017, p. 1). This would improve their competencies and leadership in matters of teaching, learning, and student achievement (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013, p. 535). According to Qablan (2018, p. 133), the objective of transforming the education system for better learning outcomes can only be achieved through capacity building of teachers and principals. In this regard, the goal of the training project is that the schools involved are managed professionally and effectively and are realizing quality student achievements (in terms of knowledge, skills, and competencies). To attain this goal, the training objectives are articulated in two aspects, namely, the outcome objectives and the output objectives.

4.1.1 Outcome objectives

The outcome objectives are expected to be attained when participants effectively transform the knowledge and competencies gained in the training to bring change in their schools. These objectives are, (a) principals are relating with students, teachers, parents, and the community professionally; (b) principals lead with a greater focus on student learning and students are gaining better outcomes; and (c) capacity development plans are functional and sustainable in schools. It is probable that, by and large, better learner outcomes are attained if principals focus on the teaching-learning process and on

the sustainable professional development of themselves and their teachers (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005, p. 12). Besides teaching and learning, constructing professional relationships with other education stakeholders (ibid.) is an effective way of attaining set objectives.

4.1.2 Output objectives

The output objectives are the knowledge and competencies that participants gain during the training and which helps them to lead change in their schools. In this regard, the output objectives of the training are: (a) participants gain basic understanding of the meaning of professional capital; (b) participants gain a theoretical and practical understanding of the impact of professional capital on effective leadership and learner outcomes; and (c) participants gain competencies on how to enhance and effectively make use of professional capital. Once principals are exposed to the theoretical understanding of professional capital and gain competencies that enable them to connect theory to praxis, it is expected that the outcome objectives will be attained.

Both the outcome and output objectives are inherently connected to the problem described in chapter 1, which is the deficiency of professional capital potentials and low-quality educational outcomes in Cameroon. This is mirrored by the perceived principals' lack of requisite skills, experiences, and knowledge to lead effectively. Thus, when principals are equipped with adequate knowledge and skills in developing their professional capital before and on-the-job, it is likely that they lead professionally and effectively and realize better student achievements.

The training set forth to attain the output objectives and eventually the outcome objectives. In-service training like this seeks to reap the benefits of improving leadership outcomes. This is supported by evidence, which holds that principals who undergo pre- and in-service training are more effective in instructional improvement (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 144). This is because such training dwells on problems of practice and stimulates effective problem solving and reflection (Davis et al, p. 9). With the knowledge and skills gained through the training content, process, and practice, participants are able to improve their professional capital potentials. As a consequence, they are able to use them and realize better leadership and learner outcomes.

4.2 Didactical planning

During the development of the didactical plan, precedence was given to the dimensions of process and praxis. The content of the didactical planning consisted of introductory communication on the theoretical background of professional capital and quality education, the impact of professional capital on leadership and outcomes (praxis), strategies to enhance professional capital, and evaluation/follow-up. The target was not only to show content but more importantly, to reflect professional capital in the process and make a connection of theory, process, and practice. This was in response to the need to realize the output objectives and prepare the ground for the attainment of the outcome objectives. By this intervention, I, therefore, by way of the process used the different methods comprising individual reflections, pair work, TPS, buzz group work, observation, and carousel. The process of how the intervention was done (shown by way of the training), how it was practiced,

and the methods used, all combine to show how change can be brought by this intervention.

The didactics of the training comprises of several activities (cf. Appendix III). After the official opening, the training started with the establishment of the ground rules by participants on activity cards. These written rules and expectations were read out and posted on the wall of the main training room. This was useful and kept the participants actively involved throughout the workshop as all the participants adhered to the ground rules. The training content includes different activities carried out in a bid to realizing the objectives of the training (cf. Chapter 4.1), which are discussed in the ensuing paragraphs.

The introductory communication, which used a PPP exposition and interactive reflection on the theoretical background of educational quality and professional capital, was the first activity. This was punctuated by tasks for participants to reflect, write down their reflections on papers, and share their understanding of professional capital, quality education, and learning outcomes. Another activity that used the TPS method required participants to reflect their understanding of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. This was done through individual reflections, and then pair-sharing and plenary discussions. In all, the exposition, reflections, and discussions were done for 65 minutes.

The second activity, which took 90 minutes, was a reflection on the impact of professional capital on leadership and learning outcomes. This was carried out with the use of a single-task buzz group work, where participants reflected experiences in their professional lives where they made use of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital,

how they manifested potentials in each of them and what the results were. After each presentation, there were observations and interactive feedback by the participants, done in the plenary. With this activity, participants were able to reflect the topic within the frame of their practice.

After reflecting the practice of professional capital, participants were given the opportunity to reflect the connectivity of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital and the impact of each in improving student achievement through an observation exercise. This was followed by a 112 minutes activity in which participants discursively reflected strategies to enhance and effectively use human capital, social capital, and decisional capital, using different-tasks group work. The visualization of the results, the presentations by the different groups, and the discussions suggest the potentials of the participants in the process of developing skills of enhancing their professional capital.

The different-tasks group work activity was proceeded by peer feedback and evaluation, which took 50 minutes. The peer feedback used the carousel method and gave participants the possibility of sharing their understanding of the different training content, processes, and the competencies they have gained in the training. They also shared the aspects they will implement in their schools and how that will be done. With this activity, peer tutoring and shared understanding were made manifest. The card-question method was then used by participants to evaluate the workshop, in terms of what went well, what needed improvement and the way forward. Thus, according to participants, time management, the moderation, visualization, reflections in the group work sessions,

discussions, learning climate were aspects that made the training largely successful. On the question of what needed improvement, participants cited seating space, tables, and more time for reflection and plenary discussions, suggesting that future training of this magnitude need more than one day. The last feedback on the training was captured by the feedback questionnaire, which focused on the objectives, content, and processes of the training.

From the participants' observations as expressed in the questionnaire, the following summaries are made: The one-day duration and the time allocated for each activity is insufficient. On visualization, all but one participant said it is very adequate and useful in the training. The moderation of the workshop according to the participants, largely met their expectations. The overall expectations of the participants in the training were met to a greater extent. Regarding the different methods used in the training, participants observe that they were very useful for their practice, having used some themselves during their reflections and peer feedback. The content of the training in terms of theoretical concepts, the importance of professional capital, and the strategies to enhance and effectively make use of professional capital were valuable for their practice. The learning climate during the training according to the participants was conducive and the workshop materials were adequate and relevant. Finally, participants suggested that more workshops be organized on similar and other relevant topics but should run for more than a day with the involvement of other education stakeholders (teachers, parents, and authorities).

As earlier discussed in the chapter on methodology (cf. Chapter 3.1), the didactical plan was developed to show

the connectivity between content, process, and praxis. The content helped participants to gain knowledge of quality education and professional capital while the methods used showed the process of the intervention as a method through which change can be brought into a school system.

4.3 Development of the training workshop

The training was run in accordance with the didactical plan (cf. Appendix III) to meet the objectives of the training (cf. Chapter 4.2). The learning environment during the training was inclusive, collaborative, and participatory (O'Donoghue et al., 2018, p. 119) rather than transmissive (top-down learning), besides focusing on relevance (ibid., p. 130). This was fostered through the introductory communication and the subsequent reflections, pair work, Q & A, group work activities, and discussions. Through these, participants gained a theoretical and practical understanding of professional capital and its impact on effective leadership and learner outcomes. Besides, they also gained competencies on how to enhance and effectively make use of their professional capital. They demonstrated this through the presentations of group work results and in the carousel exchange. Specifically, the theoretical and practical understanding of the impact of professional capital on quality leadership and learner outcomes was reinforced by their participation in the reflection task on situations or difficulties in their schools in which they made use of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital and to explain how they did it and the results obtained. Most of the experiences shared are reminiscent of the power of professional capital and suggests that its effective use is likely to bring about better learning outcomes.

Participants additionally engaged in individual reflections and then collaborative brainstorming to come out with strategies to enhance and effectively make use of professional capital in their schools. Through this, a greater possibility was open for them to develop competencies on how to grow their individual professional capital potentials. This was on the understanding that collaborative learning that applies critical analysis and problem solving to address real-life problems is fundamental to fostering the development of transformative lifestyles (Didham & Ofei-Manu, 2018, p. 98).

Moreover, the different methods used by the facilitators to deliver the content (cf. Chapter 3.1) gave participants new praxis options, which they took commitment to applying in their leadership and training of teachers back in their respective schools. During the group work activities and presentations by participants, praxis, indicative of the cooperative facilitation was reflected.

However, in regard to the didactical plan, a few changes were made, particularly regarding two methods, the snowball game and role play, which were replaced by buzz group work activities. Snowball game planned as an outdoor activity could not be carried out due to the closed-door nature of the training caused by the general insecurity in the region at the time of the training and the small size of the workshop rooms. This method (snowball) was then replaced by a buzz group work. Also, as a response to the practical reality at the second phase of the training, the role-play that was intended to be used to assess the impact of professional capital in the individual schools was replaced by buzz group reflection, which enabled all the participants to be actively involved. The first buzz group activity was

a single-task buzz group work with participants reflecting experiences in their professional lives where they made use of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital, how they manifested potentials in each of them and the results that they obtained. The second group work activity had different tasks for each of the three groups where participants reflected and brainstormed on strategies to develop and effectively use human capital, social capital, and decisional capital.

At the end of the different workshop sessions, as earlier mentioned, participants gave written feedback to the training regarding workshop materials, visualization, moderation, content, methodologies used, relevance, learning climate, and suggestions for further improvement. The entire feedback process was evaluative in nature and carried out purposefully for improvement (Fullan, 2016, p. 46).

The process by way of training and how it was practiced including the methods used and the knowledge gained, points to the effective change that an intervention like this one can bring. This is highly needed for effective functioning by principals and in the topic of this study on the perceptions of secondary school principals of professional capital. The results of this intervention are discussed in Chapter 6.1.

5

FINDINGS

The previous chapters specified the introduction and context and problem of the study, swotted the literature related to this study, detailed the methodology of the study and the intervention. The focus was to investigate principals' perceptions of their professional capital aptitudes, which can give possible implicit leads to the extent of educational outcomes as measured by students' achievements. This chapter on findings describes the accumulated data (Chapter 5.1) and synthesizes the data as results by summarizing the findings (Chapter 5.2) and relating them to the research questions (cf. Chapter 1.2), giving an explicit answer to the research question.

5.1. Data description

The first part of this section describes the process of managing the data. In the second part, analyzes of the different thematic are made from the accumulated data.

5.1.1 Managing data

The data gathered from this sample by means of semi-structured interviews and tape recording are transcribed and serves as my primary data source for analysis. The average duration of each interview is approximated 37 minutes. In the process of data transcription (which was

explained in Chapter 3.2.4), I listened to the tape of each interview several times to have an overall picture of each respondent's understanding of the different aspects investigated. Then, with a trial version of the Temi transcription software, I made the transcriptions of the first three recordings and was unable to continue as payments were requested for any further use. This software, however, had some drawbacks, as it could not capture all the words correctly. Because of this shortcoming, a second transcription was done, this time manually. That is, I listened to the tape recordings again, compared it with the Temi transcripts and then made corrections where there were errors. The fourth transcription was done by typing word for word the audio-recordings of the interviews.

In the course of doing the transcriptions, I was able to conceptualize myself as someone who would read the transcripts in the light of a specific analytical framework (Dortins, 2002, p. 208). Exploring the transcription as a process led me to the re-organization of data and a further probing into the nature of the interview space, its products, and the process of analysis (ibid.). The ideas of the different respondents were organized under different themes and codes were applied to develop categories from the material (Flick, 2009, p. 370) according to the different themes (ibid., p. 374). In the descriptive analysis process, each step builds on others, which require me to reconsider and modify as my understanding of the phenomenon and the study unfolds (Loeb et al., 2017, p. 39).

In the process for me to have a good perception of the respondents on the different thematic, I have displayed the data in a condensed and systematic matrix form (cf. Appendix II). Organizing the information coherently

is necessary as it has immense consequences for my understanding (Miles, Huberman, & Saldaña, 2014, p. 108). This matrix is a tabular format of defined rows and columns, which I have used to capture and arrange data for easy viewing in one place (*ibid.*, p. 111). The matrix is carefully reflected in line with the research questions and considers the portions of data needed to answer them (*ibid.*, p. 108). Thus, the format allows me to align nine related themes, to distinguish them according to the pool of responses, and to explain each response pattern (*ibid.*, p. 109). The themes are: Principals understanding of role, description of things that facilitates functioning, perceptions of job challenges, existing networks for school growth, role in promoting teaching and learning, working with teachers, parents, and community leaders, perception of work as principal, perception of how teachers, parents, and community view their role, and perception of professional life in another field. Furthermore, the matrix allows for detailed analysis and set the stage for cross-case analysis with other comparable cases later (*ibid.*, p. 111).

5.1.2 Analysis of the thematic framework

This process of analyzing the data according to the different thematic frames follows the procedure described in Chapter 3.2.5. The transcripts for analysis reflect the complex processes of the interviews due to the heterogeneous nature of the responses, which are embedded with social, cultural, linguistic, and semantic meanings of the central phenomenon (Dortins, 2002, p. 211). In this analysis, care is taken to ensure that justice is done to participants by avoiding judgments on a personal level and making the participants subject to a “diagnostic assessment” (Flick, 2009, p. 42). Consequently, I have

abstracted sensitive details from the data set and withheld extensive details about the participants, their schools, or communities (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018, p. 8). This is done while intersubjective transparency is upheld, which is an important quality criterion in qualitative research (Lüders, 2004, p. 360). The different thematic frames highlighted above have been discussed below.

Principals' understanding of role and duty

The understanding of role by principals is mixed and varied. The understanding of role by two of the principals (Apple and Ackee) is by completing routine administrative tasks (like basic office routines), carrying out unplanned activities, attending to visitors, conducting morning devotions, and handling student discipline. However, Cherry perceives teaching as a challenging role but does not understand what quality teaching entails or what the challenges in teaching are. Cherry simply states: "I also have classes to teach. I take Biology 1 and 2 and I also assist in Human Biology 5" (Interview of Cherry, March 2019, line 17–18). Ackee, besides handling students from diverse backgrounds and providing social amenities as the perception of role, further perceives ensuring students' success as a duty, with no clear picture of how to go about it. Specifically, Ackee comments: "You know, the ultimate goal is that the children who have been put under your care should be successful. In order to be successful or in order to make the children succeed, you need to know their background" (Interview of Ackee, January 2019, line 10–12).

It is possible, by the perceptions that the lack of pre-service training in leadership and continuous professional development has contributed to these differences in

perceptions about the principals' role. This perceived lack of training suggests that some principals are not certain about what their roles are. They do not equally perceive their knowledge, skills, and experiences as capital. This, therefore, means that professional training for principals in leadership is crucial in order for them to have converging views on their duties and responsibilities.

Principals' description of things that facilitate functioning

Regarding the things that facilitate functioning, all four respondents (Apple, Ackee, Durian, and Cherry) agree on the usefulness of teamwork and mention the persons with whom they collaborate such as vice principals, discipline personnel, and other duty post holders. This notwithstanding, only one respondent is explicit on "how". Durian identifies the persons with whom he collaborates: "[...] my collaborators, immediate collaborators, my vice principals, [...] discipline department, the teachers and even the students, they make things easy for me (Interview of Durian, January 2019, line 26–29). [...] the parents, they too, contribute to easing my work (line 35). On teamwork, Durian comments:

[...] my vice principals are presently organizing and holding a meeting with the security agents in school [...] I will only get feedback from them and give them guides on how to go about it. The other Vice Principal is busy supervising, lessons, and, producing, sequential test questions. The discipline department, they are conducting minute-by-minute roll call and giving me feedback. My PTA president [...] we had to handle some issues concerning some parents" (line 40–49).

Ackee sounds confident by asserting: “In fact, uh, I am very sure that if I am out of that campus for two months, things will function as if I were there” (Interview of Ackee, January 2019, line 222–224). This suggests the presence of shared responsibility, trust, and collaboration and points to a more transformational leadership style by Ackee. In addition, out of the four respondents, Cherry stresses the hand of God in facilitating work. From these perspectives, the overall understanding of teamwork and collaboration is grounded in theory more than it is in practice.

Principals’ perceptions of job challenges

On the perception of the challenges that make functioning difficult all four respondents converge on the lack of collaboration but however differ in the rest of the aspects. For example, Apple cites resistance to change, saying:

“There are some people; it’s very difficult for them to accept change. Some people always talk about tradition. Some people always say, when I was in this place, this is what was being done. Some people always think that you must stick only to their ideas [...]” (Interview of Apple, January 2019, line 35–39):

Apple continues by citing another challenge to her functioning as principal, which is staff indiscipline:

“This issue of the trade union [...] some of the teachers who are there are very, very indiscipline; I have teachers in my school who don’t go to class they are the main executive members in this particular trade union” (line 297–300).

As a way forward, Apple suggest the issue of queries and intervention by hierarchy for possible sanctions:

“So, when it’s occurring the second or the third time, now you issue a query [...] but at the end, there are some that when you can no longer bear it, you write to the administration, you write to your hierarchy” (line 326–333).

On his part, Ackee highlights lateness and absenteeism, pretentious attitudes, and student indiscipline. On lateness and absenteeism, Ackee says:

“[...] staff members who don’t toe the line [...] You have some staff members, who, no matter the case, they must come late to staff meetings. They must go late to class, no matter the measures you put in place” (Interview of Ackee, January 2019, line 77–81).

Ackee further highlights the pretentious work attitudes of some teachers and students with deviant attitudes:

“[...] you have some staff members who want to function only when the principal is around. Same with the students. Uh, you have some students who would not toe the line [respect the rules], no matter what you do, no matter the method you use” (line 86–88).

In another dimension, Durian, describes hierarchical bottlenecks as follows:

“Sometimes my hierarchy, my hierarchy too does not see into certain suggestions that I put forth. I am in the field, they [hierarchy] are in the office and sometimes when I suggest, uh, it takes time. It takes quite some time before they now understand [...] sometimes they are reticent, the hierarchy is reticent to take some decisions [...]” (Interview of Durian, January 2019, line 84–90).

Still in another perspective, Cherry dwells on low enrolment and irregular salaries:

“One of the most difficult challenges that I have is the number of students on campus. They are too few. We used to be 357 [students] but they are not even up to 50. And, because of that, giving out anything [salaries] to teachers, is very difficult” (Interview of Cherry, March 2019, line 128–131).

The principals’ perceptions of the challenges of functioning contradict their earlier perceptions of the positive role of teamwork in school leadership but for Cherry who introduces a new dimension of enrolment and salaries. The inability of some of the principals to effectively cope with indiscipline teachers and deviant behaviors and the over-reliance on the hierarchy is evocative of the low professional capital potentials of the respondents and show that more training is necessary.

Principals’ perceptions of existing networks for school growth

The understanding of social capital by Apple is liaising with ex-students in the carrier orientation of the students and attending seminars while Cherry views networking as the presence of PTA, chain prayers and staff socials, thereby, translating a very weak understanding of social capital. Two out of the four respondents (Ackee and Durian) demonstrate a fairly good understanding and use of social capital. They, however, vary in regard to the focus. While Ackee focuses on using social capital to improve on school infrastructure, Durian uses social capital for the improvement of the teaching-learning process.

Ackee comments: “I have networks of excellence, ex-students at home and abroad who network with me, as individuals, and as associations (Interview of Ackee, January 2019, line 113–114). [...] ex-student ... [in a country abroad], through an organization wrote a project for [the school] and sent to me. I endorsed, and they came up with that project (line 129–131). “[...] presently, we have a tractor that cuts grass on campus, brand new [from] a group of ex-students [in another country abroad] (line 132–134).

On his part, Durian articulates: “We have students, with all physical impairment, and we are linking up with the Health Services [...] (Interview of Durian, January 2019, line 119–120).

In the use of social capital to improve the teaching-learning process, Durian comments:

“And so, that is one of the networks that we are creating with the health services of the [Church] to ensure that inclusive education is, very very successful in school. We are also trying to link up with [...] education technicians who have an insight in certain areas of teaching, evaluation [...] so that they can be able to help to giving the teachers seminars on [pedagogic issues], so that we give room to everybody, slow learners, fast learners, moderate learners. We want to involve all of them [...] and we are shifting towards a situation where we would say that this is what this student is able to do (line 126–138).

Durian also highlights facilities that are being used to reinforce teaching and learning in his school:

“The printing press is just nearby. The children go there [to the printing press] for rehearsals on certain things, with the subjects Office practice. [...] the radio is also there for those students in the second cycle, who want to do journalism. So, most often they go there [radio station] to do some practical lessons” (line 143–147).

The principals’ perceptions on networking with parents and community leaders show weak social capital aptitudes. For example, Apple, Durian, and Cherry mention the supportive nature of the PTA, especially in the area of school infrastructure and staff motivation with little focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. The bottom line is that principals tend to depend a lot on the PTA for networking with parents and for the growth and welfare of their schools.

Principals’ perceptions of role in promoting teaching and learning

The principals’ perceptions of role in promoting the teaching-learning process are diverse and bring into the lamplight the lack of quality in the schools. Cherry mentions classroom supervision and follow-up but rather superficially with no clear idea of how this is done to guarantee quality outcomes. Apple highlights positive student-teacher relationship and regular seminars while Ackee dwells much on the provision of social amenities to students and mentions lesson observation but with nothing on how? and why? Durian focuses on syllabus coverage and teaching with no clear strategy. In this regard, Durian comments:

“But, from the beginning of the academic year, what we settled on, was that we were going to work as if

we will not have another day. We were going to teach; as if we'll not have another day [...] we have been struggling to let the students pick up that philosophy, so that they too, will also learn to receive" (Interview of Durian, January 2019, line 177–182).

This hinges into the direction of the “banking of knowledge” where students are turned into “containers,” and “receptacles” to be “filled” by the teacher (Freire, 2000, p. 72). The teacher in this circumstance “fills” the students by making deposits of information, which he or she considers constituting true knowledge (ibid., p. 76). It is evident that teaching is not an act in isolation but rather a process that addresses recipients (students), which then requires that classroom activity-methods that meet the different learning orientations be crafted (Lange, 2016, p. 31).

From the analysis of the principals’ role in the teaching-learning process, none of the respondents sees the need to promote learner-centered pedagogy. This is suggestive of the low quality of education in Cameroon (World Bank, 2018, p. 12).

Perceptions of work as a principal

The principals’ perceptions of their work are shallow and diverse. Concerning the perception of work, Apple insinuates: “Things are lighter for me because I have understood the manner or the approach that the Church [Proprietor] wants us to function” (Interview of Apple, January 2019, line 192–194). “[...] but my work in the office, I program it. And I know when to do it so as to meet up with deadlines” (line 204–205). “There are some situations that you can deviate taking instructions from the hierarchy. But it is very, very rare” (line 211–213).

Durian on his part view work as a “Divine” assignment and handling issues as they come up. Specifically, Durian describes his perception of work as follows:

“I look at my work, as a Principal as [...] a Divine assignment. It is a Divine assignment and God does it for me on a daily basis, on a minute by minute. Because sometimes, you take a decision, and after sometimes, you don’t believe that you are the one who took that decision. [...] I listen first, to God talk, before certain decisions are taken. [...] Because, as per my strength, as per my ability, there are certain things that I cannot do. There are certain things that I cannot do, with certainty. I can’t tell you that I’ll come today, and this is what I’m going to do. [...] I allow things to come, and when they come, we, together with the collaborators, we look for possible ways of solving things or handling things as they come” (Interview of Durian, January 2019, line 239–258).

The different principals have varied views on their perceptions of work. The product in these perceptions are their over-dependence on instructions and directives from hierarchy (Apple and Durian). In addition, Durian believes in miracles from God as guides to his decision making. On their part, Ackee and Cherry perceive their work from the perspective of the expression of feelings.

Principals’ perceptions of how teachers view their role

The principals were rather subjective in their perceptions of how teachers view their role. All the respondents are subjectively descriptive of self (Apple), rating the perception as either average (Cherry) or positive (Ackee).

On his perception of how teachers view his role, Durian, for example, says:

“Good! First thing is, you will have colleagues that, if they were to be given the powers, they would immediately ask me off. They will immediately ask that; I should be relieved. Probably because, they do not, see eye to eye with certain decisions, certain things that I may want that they should do, at a given time” (Interview of Durian, January 2019, line 294–298).

The principals’ perception of their role as viewed by teachers insinuate their inability to reflect metacognitively.

Principals’ perceptions of how parents and community view their role

On the principals’ perceptions of how parents and community view their work, all the respondents consider positive feedback and appreciation from them (parents) as a positive mark of recognition of their work. However, their understanding of positive feedback here is theoretically diverse and not connected to praxis.

Cherry, for example, says: “They [parents] think that the children are given the best. Like some parents with whom we had a meeting, they told us that they were happy when they went through the exercise books of their children (Interview of Cherry, March 2019, line 157–159).

Regarding the community’s view of her role Cherry explains:

“Then the community, they are happy because we are welcoming. Like a principal, some neighbors come to my house, who are not even [...] parents to this

school. They come. And how do I welcome them? They can express difficulties, and I may not even be able to solve the difficulties, but I will give encouraging words [...] or share the word of God [with them]" (line 160–165).

Ackee, on the other hand, perceives: "The community is very supportive so far [...] they accept the principal's job. In fact, they have recognized me whenever I have been in the community (Interview of Ackee, January 2019, line 260–263). [...] if a neighbor sees my student loitering somewhere out of campus, I would be called, I would be informed" (Interview of Ackee, January 2019, line 266–267).

Just as with their perceptions of how teachers view their role, the principals' perception of how parents and community view their role does not focus adequately on the teaching-learning process, whose outcome is of great interest to all parents. This also suggests inadequate metacognitive skills by the principals.

Principals' perceptions of professional life in another field

Regarding the perception of professional life in another field all the respondents but for Ackee are passionate with their jobs as teachers and cannot cope with another job. Ackee describes possible life in another field through the following experiences: "If you look at, the two schools where I have been principal, I have opened school farms that have had impacts in this country [Cameroon]. The Minister of Agriculture came to visit [one of the] farms (Interview of Ackee, January 2019, line 298–301). But, on Saturday morning, Form Four boys, in particular, worked

in the school farm with the Principal (line 309–310). So, I took that time to train Form four students on how to harvest, and they were very excited (line 313-314). [...] the children studied in the school farm, how to plant plantains, how to harvest [...] (line 315–316).

From their perceptions, a majority of school principals are buried in the routine work of school management and fail to take advantage of the opportunities created by their exposure to different persons and situations in the wider society. This presupposes a feeble understanding of the use of professional capital. However, one out of the four respondents (Ackee) shows a degree of flexibility of their professional life in another field. The reflection of Ackee on the perception of life in another field shows a clear understanding of school farms and gardens as an educational landscape. This landscape offers students the opportunity to learn both hard skills (e.g. in planting and harvesting) and soft skills (e.g. when the results of an experiment in which students compared two identical crops grown with and without compost are graphed) (Ozer, 2007, p. 855).

5.2 Summary of results

The different themes identified in the data described above are: principals' understanding of duty; principals' description of things that facilitates functioning; the challenges of principalship; existing networks for school growth; principals' role in promoting teaching and learning; perception of work as a principal; principals perception of how teachers, parents, and community view their role; and principals' perception of professional life in another field. After the data description and the focus of my research, which is on the perspectives of secondary school

principals of professional capital, this section summarizes the findings in relation to the main research question and the sub-questions. The main research question centers on the understanding of secondary school principals of professional capital. The sub-questions are articulated in the dimensions to understand the perceptions of principals on the following: Their knowledge, skills, and experiences; their collaboration with teachers, parents, and the community; their decision-making in school and their leading role. The summary of results discussed below will help provide an explicit answer to my main research question and the sub research questions. In support of my analysis, I used the principals' sensemaking of their professional experiences and beliefs as a theoretical framework to understand their interpretations of how professional capital influences their work as school leaders (Wieczorek & Manard, 2018, pp. 2-3).

5.2.1 Perceptions of knowledge, skills, and experiences as capital

The understanding of knowledge and skills in promoting teamwork, collaboration, and effective leadership by all the respondents but for Durian is strong in theory but not in practice. Where there is some collaboration, it is perceived more in routine activities. Generally, the weak perception of knowledge, skills, and experiences as capital suggest that the need for further training is imperative for principals to be equipped with necessary skills for effective leadership (Arikewuyo, 2009, p. 81). Regarding experience, the accumulated data show that the years of experience have some direct, though weak, connection with the perceptions of principals on professional capital for male respondents (Ackee and Durian). This nonetheless contradicts the

perceptions of female principals (Apple and Cherry) that have no direct relationship.

5.2.2 Perceptions of collaboration with parents and community

The perceptions of the principals' collaboration with parents and community leaders show a weak understanding of the role of parents and the community in the education triangle. The principals' understanding shows that parents and the community view principals' role from the perspectives of social activity (Apple). In another dimension, some parents and community make an effort to give feedback to the school on its functioning (Durian and Cherry) but do not understand what quality feedback is. Ackee sees this collaboration in the area of student discipline. In addition, Durian demonstrates a fairly good understanding of theory and practice of social capital by liaising with the health services department, education technicians, and principals of other schools (Lin, 2001, p. 19; Fullan, 2016, p. 44). These elements cited by Durian are fitting in the understanding of leadership in the instructional perspective. In another vein, social capital is understood by Ackee in the direction of developing school infrastructure while Durian understands it more from the perspective of teaching and learning.

The involvement of parents in the education triangle is consciously reflected but there is no clear understanding of how this can be done to improve the learning achievements of students. Principals' description of collaboration with teachers, parents, and the community is, therefore, mix and focus more on activities that do not have a direct influence on student learning. This suggests that additional training is necessary to develop their social capital potentials (Goldin, 2014, p. 7; Gage & Smith, 2016, p. 6), which will

enable them to engage in proper networking with peers, teachers, parents, and community leaders to bring quality to their schools.

5.2.3 Perceptions of decision-making

The decision-making process by Apple and Durian is highly hierarchical suggesting the lack of decisional capital and functional autonomy (Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010, p. 112; OECD, 2018b, p. 13). This lack of autonomy impedes creativity and reflectivity in the school leadership. By their understanding, decision making by Apple and Durian is either proposing to hierarchy and waiting for the instruction to proceed or simply taking decisions in line with hierarchical directives. With Cherry, there is no clear understanding of the theory or practice of decision-making. For Ackee, there is some degree of autonomy in decision-making, but the process is more individualistic. This necessitates the creation of awareness in principals on the fact that leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 34). Generally, the perceptions of decisional capital by the respondents shows a lack of quality in decision making in the schools as the process is guided by administrative exigencies. From these perceptions, it is evident that further training and continuous professional development for school principals in Cameroon is an issue to be given conscious attention.

5.2.4 Perceptions of leading as capital

On the leadership dimension, the responses of the principals portray an array of leadership mix along gender lines. These perceptions reveal Apple and Cherry as leaning towards a more administrative leadership

style while Ackee shows some attachment towards administrative and transformational leadership. Leading according to Apple is synonymous to functioning in line with directives from hierarchy, supervising routine activities and respecting deadlines. These elements add up to the administrative leadership style and suggest that her decision-making is by referring to hierarchy. For Durian to view work as a “Divine” assignment and handing issues as they come up is indicative of the absence of proper vision for the school (Schiefer & Döbel, 2001, p. 16). This suggests the tendency of being reactive rather than proactive (Greany, 2015, p. 125). Furthermore, Durian’s perception of leading points to inadequate skills in goal setting, planning, prioritizing, decision-making, delegating, and scheduling (Hassanzabeh & Ebadi, 2007, p. 168).

On the perception of the teaching-learning process, Apple identifies the fact that many teachers, by boycotting lessons, negatively affect the teaching-learning process and by implication, teachers need close supervision and feedback. In another dimension, Ackee perceives the need for feedback to learners as important but in another instance, contradicts self by highlighting the strict respect of directives from the hierarchy in functioning. While talking on the improvement of teaching and learning process, not all the respondents saw the need to keep aside certain administrative routines that take away class time, suggesting the lack of quality in their schools. This is apparent as none of the respondents mentioned lesson observation, staff mentoring/coaching, monitoring, feedback, and evaluation as important in the teaching-learning process (Harris & Lowery, 2004, p. 182; Mercer, 2016, p.8). This means that an important aspect of feedback carried out primarily for improvement (Fullan,

2016, p. 46) is ignored. Protecting the teaching time from administrative and student disruption is one critical aspect of the element of an orderly and supportive learning environment (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 667), with teaching and learning at the center. Hence, not focusing on the teaching and learning process is suggestive of the quality-deficient leadership in Cameroon secondary schools and justifies the low educational outcomes. Durian and Cherry believe more on the role of faith in God for effective school leadership, thus, portraying the importance of religiosity, especially in Protestant education. However, there is visible lack of understanding of the Protestant profile of education, as there is no conscious effort to give all students the opportunity to acquire life skills needed to cope with the existential challenges (Androne, 2014, p.81) of the 21st century. Although all the respondents were unanimous on the perception of teamwork and collaboration as elements that facilitate functioning, they again contradict it by citing lack of collaboration, resistance to change, and administrative bottlenecks as constituents of the challenges they face. This, therefore, shows a lack of understanding of the meaning and functioning of teamwork.

The results of this study are an actual reflection of the intensity of principals' professional needs in the education reform (Hussin & Abri, 2015, p.92) in Cameroon. Further, this study has shown that there is a wide gap between the principals' understanding of the theory as well as the process of exploiting professional capital for quality education outcomes (ibid., p.96). The findings of this study are discussed in Chapter 6 in line with the state of the literature presented in Chapter 2.

6

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the important results of the intervention (cf. Chapter 4) and this study (cf. Chapter 5) are discussed. The results are reflected in regard to the discourse presented in Chapter 2. The results of the intervention are discussed in Chapter 6.1 and that of the research in Chapter 6.2. The discussion is done in relation to the topic and problem of this study. These reflections suggest how my findings can be discussed in the context of the scientific discourse on educational quality.

The research question of this study is: What is the understanding of secondary school principals of professional capital? This question enables me to probe into the perceptions of the principals on an important dimension of school leadership, the challenges involved, and guides to ameliorating the situation. To attain this, the research interest is articulated under four sub-questions, namely: How do principals perceive their knowledge, skills, and experiences as capital?; How do principals describe their collaboration with teachers, parents, and the community?; How do principals reflect their decision making in school?; How do principals perceive their leading in school as capital? The first three sub-questions stem from the need to understand principals' perceptions of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital. The fourth sub-question is meant to understand the leadership posture of the different principals.

6.1 Important results of the intervention

The intervention was based on the concept of professional capital and the didactical planning focused more on process and praxis than on content. This was in a bid to uphold quality in the training and a response to the need to realize the output objectives and prepare the ground for the attainment of the outcome objectives. The intervention, therefore, was developed according to the criteria of the teaching quality discourse in order to serve as a model. Here, three criteria stand out in a distinct manner: efficient classroom management, clarity in subject knowledge, and good learning climate. First, efficient classroom management was visible as the training accorded more time for learning and reflection by participants either individually, in pairs or in groups (Marzano, 2007, p. 118). Second, the clear content and structure of the different knowledge is evident that there was clarity in subject knowledge (Hativa, Barak, & Simhi, 2001, p. 702; Kreber, 2002, p. 9; Gauthier & Dembélé, 2004, p. 27; Hattie, 2012, p. 25). Third, a good learning climate was reflected by mutual respect, democracy, justice, responsibility, and high expectations manifested by facilitators and participants throughout the training (Hativa et al., 2001, p. 702; UNESCO, 2005, p. 10; Marzano, 2007, p. 162; Hattie, 2009, p. 115; Devlin & Samarawickrema, 2010, p. 113; Hattie, 2012, p. 26; OECD, 2013, p. 25). By way of the process, different methods were used (e.g. individual reflection, pair work, TPS, buzz group work, observation, and carousel). The integration of these methods enhanced the participants' understanding of the training content.

The summary of the important results of the intervention is discussed in two dimensions. Results from the part of

the principals in connection to the output objectives and results from the perspective of the topic. On the part of the principals, the results are reflected from the output objectives. By this intervention, which was a training on enhancing professional capital for secondary school principals, major results were achieved. These results are reflected in terms of knowledge and competencies gained, active participation, and commitment to start the change process in the schools. As mentioned earlier, the didactical planning of the training allocated more time and attention on the process and praxis dimensions of the training. By the methods used, participant reflected individually and in groups and collaboratively presented their findings. Through this, they gained interpersonal, communication, and collaborative skills suggesting that new praxis options were acquired, which were demonstrated in the training with the opportunity for practice afterward.

Concerning the output objectives, they were largely attained. That is, participants gained an understanding of the meaning of education quality and professional capital. They also gained a theoretical and practical understanding of the impact of professional capital on effective leadership and learner outcomes. Finally, they gained competencies on how to enhance their professional capital. With this knowledge and competencies, they are now able to manage the process of leading change (Fullan, 2002, p. 18) in their schools. This gained knowledge by the intervention shows how change can be brought, which is highly needed for principals' functioning and for the understanding of the topic of this research.

In the intervention, awareness was created, and the principals expressed the change process. By the end of

the training principals already started engaging on talking of how to put in place a network system in their schools. I facilitated this process by preparing a network system for them through the creation of a WhatsApp group. This was motivated by the assertion of Stoll, Bolam, McMahon, Wallace, and Thomas (2006) that: sustaining change requires sustaining deep learning; involving a broad range of people in chains of influence; spreading improvements beyond individual schools; using existing resources, sharing responsibility; engagement to secure outside support; and developing capacity (p. 247). The professional learning community created through this group has increased the level of collaboration, empowered members, and created avenues for continuous learning, all directed towards student achievements (Bonces, 2004, p. 313; Vescio, Ross, & Adams, 2008, p. 88). The principals are now using this functional professional WhatsApp group as a medium to connect and share best practices alongside collaboratively solving problems/challenges in their respective schools.

Regarding the topic dimension, the important results of the intervention are summarized as the implementation of the topic of the intervention. The process of planning, sensitization, and execution of the intervention made use of professional capital. This process reveals the power of collaboration, networking, knowledge and skills, and decision-making, which are all embedded in professional capital. The closed contact with mentors, networking with IMPEQ cohorts, and the closed communication kept with principals and education authorities (through regular phone calls, short messages, and e-mails) are suggestive of the effective use of social capital. Another dimension of the results of the intervention was the manifestation of professional capital through collaborative facilitation of the

training by exploiting the human capital potentials of co-facilitators. Further, decision-making involving the date and location of the training, participation and methods to be used translates the effective use of human and decisional capital.

6.2 Important results of the research

This research is based on perceptions of secondary school principals of professional capital. In this section, an explicit answer to the research question is presented. It also shows the results at the level of knowledge and praxis as well as in regard to literature.

The results reveal that the perspectives of the study participants correspond to the main reasons described in the literature for why principals do not endorse learning leadership, which are deficits in professional capital, content knowledge, and deep-rooted organizational norms (Shaked, 2018, p. 527). In addition, the results did not only show considerable differences in the principals' perceptions of professional capital but some similarities as well. Regarding the teaching-learning process, all the principals involved in the study are conscious of the importance of active teaching and learning. Nonetheless, none mentioned the elements that constitute quality teaching and learning such as lesson observations/feedback, evaluation, staff monitoring and staff support (Leithwood et al., 2008, p. 30).

The discussion is done by confronting the results of the findings with the state of the literature. This is meant to give theoretical support to the findings so that they can be integrated into the wider discourse on quality education. This discussion is done in regard to the understandability

of professional capital (Chapter 6.2.1), the importance of professional capital in leadership (Chapter 6.2.2), the challenges in developing and using professional capital (Chapter 6.2.3), and the relationship between perceptions and experience of professional capital (Chapter 6.2.4).

6.2.1 Understandability of professional capital

There is, some evidence (though moderate) that the training intervention had some influence in the responses that some of the principals in this study gave regarding their understandings of the practice of professional capital in leadership. In responding to the assessment of networking in the promotion of quality learning outcomes, 2 out of the 4 principals reported positive influence. Further, the demonstration of the understanding of the praxis of teamwork and collaboration is not visible among principals. This is reflected by their perceptions of the things that facilitate learning leadership, where all the principals recognized collaboration and teamwork as essential drivers for quality leadership, but a majority do not understand how to go about it. However, one of the principals was able to demonstrate a good understanding of praxis of teamwork and collaboration (OECD, 2009, p. 19).

The results of this research, therefore, shows a weak understanding of teamwork and networking by principals as it is grounded in theory but not in practice. There is also a nuanced contradiction with their perceptions of things that facilitate functioning. It would then be necessary that further training and follow-up be done to make them change perspectives regarding teamwork and collaboration in school leadership. The principals' inability to recognize the importance of ICT tools in the facilitation of their duties

suggest that they are not aware of the untold benefits of these tools (Salatin & Fallah, 2014, p. 255). Consequently, principals need to be assisted through training in this direction and supported in the acquisition of the basic ICT tools.

There are equally visible problems in the acquisition and use of professional capital for quality school leadership as demonstrated by the descriptions. The dimensions of understanding leading such as carrying out routine activities, attending to parents, handling issues as they come up, functioning according to directives from the hierarchy, attending to student discipline are fitting in understanding leading from administrative perspectives (Jenkins, 2009, p. 37).

On the perception of decision-making, the principals' understanding is either by proposing to hierarchy or taking decisions as per directives from the hierarchy. Thus, the principals in this study showed little understanding of its importance in quality decision making as they rely heavily on hierarchical prerogatives/dictums and faith in God. This suggests that they are not aware of the impact of decision making on learning outcomes. This is parallel to what literature holds on the significant role of decisional capital in the improvement of teaching and learning (Fullan, 2018, p. 86). From these perceptions, it is apparent that the understanding of professional capital by principals is grounded in theory but not in practice and it is indicative of lack of quality in school and student outcomes in Cameroon's secondary schools. The fact that administrative bottleneck is perceived to slow down decision making in schools suggests that, not only do principals need training but hierarchy as well.

The principals' understanding of role as immersed in professional capital is embedded neither in theory nor in practice and void of any focus on teaching and learning. The elements of their responses such as the provision of social amenities, enrolment, handling unplanned activities, doing routine office work, and attending to visitors without any focus on teaching and learning show that they are unaware of what learning outcomes are. This suggests a low quality of education and the need for further training (O'Doherty & Ovando, 2013, p. 535). This will improve their competencies to focus leadership on teaching, learning, and student achievement.

6.2.2 Importance of professional capital

It is likely that the mutual interconnection and effective use of human capital, social capital, and decisional capital in school leadership produce better students' achievements (Leana, 2011, pp. 33–34). The findings of this study portray the indisputable role of professional capital in quality school leadership (Hargreaves & Fullan, 2012, p. 146). Nonetheless, the weak understanding of theory and praxis of professional capital by the principals in this research shows that they are not conscious of the importance of professional capital in leadership. Additionally, the weak understanding of social capital is reflected in the inability by principals to exploit it for the improvement of the teaching-learning process. This contradicts what research has found regarding the strong influence of social capital on learner outcomes (Leana, 2011, p. 33).

Further training is, hence, indispensable in order to cultivate leadership skills and competencies in school principals, required for them to tailor their leadership towards student learning and quality outcomes (Fullan,

2002, p. 16). Likewise, the inevitability of continuous professional development is justified by the fact that it would help shape the direction of school leaders towards quality teaching and learning. Focusing on quality is crucial if the school system in Cameroon is to enable learners to acquire much-needed life skills in problem solving and creative thinking.

6.2.3 Challenges in developing and using professional capital

This study has equally reviewed challenges in the enhancement and use of professional capital in school leadership. The immersion of principals in daily administrative routines points to a lack of competencies in developing and exploiting professional capital for effective leadership. The data from the interviews show that principals depend very much on information and directives from hierarchy and are not able to reflect on what it means for improvement. The fact that principals cannot make changes on their own shows that they do not have autonomy (OECD, 2018b, p. 13) to reflect their own decision making. The results of this study also suggest that the challenges faced by principals in Cameroon regarding professional development are similar to what literature opines. These challenges stem from the lack of sustainable training programs (Sincar, 2013, p. 1275) and lack of funding (Tembon, 1994, p. 220; Greany, 2015, p. 125).

In another dimension, principals' perceptions of the challenge to their functioning come from teachers who are not ready to embrace change but prefer to remain in the *status quo*. This is fitting in what Hargreaves and Fullan (2013) refer to as "resisters and reprobates" (p. 38).

Their understanding reveals their inability to deal with this group of staff members. By their perceptions, referring uncooperative staff to the hierarchy (for possible sanctions) show that they have inadequate skills in managing the change process and suggest that further training for principals in change management is necessary. Besides, the study also reveals that some principals are not ready to entertain new ideas (especially from teachers) other than theirs and rather view such as a challenge to their authority, thereby, rendering their ability to lead change problematic.

This study has equally revealed challenges stemming from hierarchical bottlenecks, crowded administrative responsibilities (World Bank, 2012, p. 14), and weak understanding/inability to interconnectedly use human capital, social capital, and decisional capital for quality school leadership. However, by the principals' understanding of developing leadership through professional capital, there is a need to reflect on enrolment, infrastructure, social amenities, and salaries.

6.2.4 Relationship between perceptions and experience of professional capital

From the findings of this study, there is no direct robust relationship between years of experience as a principal and evidence-based understanding of professional capital. These findings also point to the fact that leadership training is not only an imperative to provide the requisite knowledge and skills for principals (Hussin & Abri, 2015, p. 92) but needs to be sustainable (Davis et al., 2005, p. 12). The sustainability criterion presumes that all principals need to be involved and not selected based on experience and/or qualification. This is essential for quality

learning outcomes to be attained. In addition, it supports the assertion by Fullan (2002, p. 16) that reforms which lead to sustained improvement in student achievement can only be implemented by principals who are equipped with skills to handle a complex and rapidly changing learning environment. Without continuous professional development and the commitment by principals to lead change, the *status quo* will continue to subsist, while mediocre outcomes are produced by the Cameroon secondary school system.

Conclusively, the findings of this study are important as they add to the existing state of the literature on principals' professional capital and provide a modality for positive social change. From the findings, principals face resistance from some teachers, who often, question their ability to lead. This is probably due to their status as appointees to positions that were never advertised nor were there transparent and measurable criteria for their appointments (Wirba, 2015, p. 7). The predominant perception across the different respondents is that principals consider themselves as representatives of their higher authorities, responsible for implementing policies and programs defined by such authorities. These results, therefore, provide a framework that needs to prompt the articulation of education policy (Koh, 2014, p. 53) which is capable of bringing meaningful change, especially in the direction of leadership preparation and development in the Cameroon education system.

7

CONCLUSION

The current qualitative study, based on semi-structured interviews with four secondary school principals in Cameroon, suggests one more explanation for today's reality of principals' limited knowledge and aptitudes in professional capital and the engagement necessary for better learning outcomes (Shaked, 2018, p. 517). The purpose of this study was to investigate principals' perceptions of professional capital and what such perceptions mean for learning outcomes. In this chapter, summaries of the different chapters are given (Chapter 7.1), precise answers to the research question are recapitulated (Chapter 7.2), and the implications of the study are presented (Chapter 7.3).

7.1 Summary of previous chapters

This study on the perceptions of secondary school principals of professional capital used the qualitative research method. The problem addressed in this study was the lack of competencies in developing and using professional capital for quality educational outcomes as discussed in Chapter 1. To set the stage for the in-depth study of this problem, a review of related literature was done so that the study has a theoretical foundation necessary to be embedded in the overall discourse on education quality.

Since the research question of this study is connected to the understanding of processes of quality improvement, the study is, therefore, conceptualized as a controlled intervention followed by small research. For the purpose of intersubjectivity, this study establishes different methods, which are the intervention as a method (cf. Chapter 3.1) and intervention as a research method (cf. Chapter 3.2). This study used the qualitative research approach with semi-structured interviews as the instruments for data collection. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and analyzed according to the different thematic framework.

The intervention itself was discussed in Chapter 4. The methods used in the intervention were explain and justified. Results here reveal the knowledge and skills gained by the participants and the use of such knowledge and skills to bring change in the school system. The findings of this study are explained in chapter 5. The description of data in respect to different thematic was done in Chapter 5.1 and the summary of results in connection to the research questions explained in Chapter 5.2.

The discussion of the results of this research was done in two parts. First, important results of the intervention (cf. Chapter 6.1) and second, important results of the research (cf. Chapter 6.2). From the findings of the study, there is a significant relationship between principals' perception of professional capital and the effective school leadership levels.

7.2 Answers to the research questions

The analysis of the results shows situations of either nuanced or complete lack of understanding of theory and/or practice of the components of professional capital. The

contested meaning and contradictions help me to develop rich and subtle explanations of the principals' perceptions of professional capital in school leadership (O'toole, 2010, p. 121). I succumb to the assertion by O'toole that wisdom is required to make the connections that result in a coherent representation and to acknowledge that this representation is fallible and subject to amendment (*ibid.*, p. 124). This study focused on answering the question: What is the understanding of secondary school principals of professional capital? This research interest was articulated in three parts with the following sub-questions reflected in: How principals perceive their leading in school as capital; How principals reflect their knowledge, skills, and experiences as capital; How principals describe their collaboration with teachers, parents, and the community; and How principals reflect their decisions in school.

The main research question reads: What is the understanding of secondary school principals of professional capital? The answer to this main research question was envisaged to address the main problem of the research, which is the lack of professional capital potentials of secondary school principals and consequently the low quality of education in Cameroon. Regarding the question of this research, the findings from data analysis and interpretation of results reveal a shallow understanding of professional capital and its connectivity to learner outcomes. These results show little understanding of theory and a very weak understanding of praxis. The study has established the inability of secondary school principals in Cameroon to make effective use of professional capital, thereby, justifying the inadequate requisite knowledge and skills to effectively lead the teaching and learning process.

As concerns the sub-questions, the first question states: How do principals describe their leading in school? Concerning principals' perceptions of leading, results show an administrative-leaning leadership style with a very strong passion for administrative routines. This shows the inability for principals to squarely fit in the dynamics of quality school leadership. The second sub-question reads: How do principals perceive their knowledge, skills, and experiences as capital? Results from the perception of their human capital present a gap between theory and practice as the respondents' understanding is more in theory than in praxis.

The third sub-question says: How do principals describe their collaboration with teachers, parents, and the community? This question sought to understand principals' perception of social capital. Concerning the question of principals' social capital perception, the understanding is grounded in theory than in practice.

The fourth sub-question reads: How do principals reflect their decision making in school? This question was meant to understand the perception of principals in the decision-making process. In regard to the principals' perception of decisional capital, the results show a strong influence of hierarchy on the decision-making process in schools and the lack of functional autonomy, suggesting that those in the chain of educational hierarchy equally need training. By the strength of these results, there are implications. The implications are expressed in two dimensions, namely: the implication for practice and implication for educational science.

7.3 Implications of the study

The findings of this study of the perceptions of secondary school principals of professional capital (cf. Chapter 5) points to some implications. Based on the findings, this section discusses the implications for praxis in the Cameroon education system and SSA (Chapter 7.3.1) and implications for educational science (Chapter 7.3.2).

7.3.1 Implications for practice

The design, quality, and impact of principal preparation and development programs can be significantly shaped by goals-oriented policy agendas at the system level (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 152). The government's drive towards matching the Cameroon educational system to the global scene is less likely to succeed without significant attention to the preparation and development of school leaders and teachers (Eacott & Asuga, 2014, p. 919). The reliance on experience teachers for appointments to posts of principal is no longer rational, as they need to be equipped with the necessary leadership skills to surmount the challenges of school leadership. (Arikewuyo, 2009, p. 82). With likely potentials for improvement nonetheless, the major challenge remains the wide gap between theory and practice. Consequently, the study points to four major implications for education policymakers and stakeholders concerning praxis. These implications have been discussed in the subsequent paragraphs.

There is a need for credible induction, pre- and in-service training as well as continuous professional development for those to function as school principals (Darling-Hammond et al., 2007, p. 143; Qablan, 2018, p. 135) including teachers and other education stakeholders in Cameroon and SSA.

This continuous professional development of principals will equip them with the requisite knowledge and competencies (Fullan, 2002, p. 16; Fullan & Hargreaves, 2016, p. 1; Qablan, 2018, p. 136) needed for effective leadership. The need for school principals to be equipped with essential skills and competencies suggests that investment in both social and human capital development should be prioritized by policymakers and education providers in Cameroon and SSA. Investing in the social and human capital acquisition and making them interact and building the resources required for schoolwide success is vital (McLaughlin & Talbert, 2010, p. 39; Fullan, 2016, p. 46) and the principal's role is to participate as a learner and leader. Besides, he/she is expected to ensure that the combined human and social capital forces are devoted to outcomes in a targeted and continuous manner (Fullan, 2016, p. 46). Hence, the knowledge and skills acquired will release them from the entrapment in the comfort of administrative leadership practices towards a more evidence-based and outcomes-oriented leadership. This is indispensable to address the contemporary needs of school leadership and respond to changing social-economic circumstances (Lewin, 2008, p.153) which require students with adaptable skills and competencies.

School principals should be empowered to be able to play their role effectively (U.S. Department of Education, 2010, p.1; Dea & Basha, 2014, p. 066). The strong influence of principals on school quality suggests that higher authorities in the education domain should give them the opportunity to lead without many administrative bottlenecks (UNESCO, 2004, p.17). School principals should be provided with adequate resources and enabling environment, besides clearly defining their roles and responsibilities (UNESCO,

2004, p. 17; Lewin, 2008, p. 128) if their professionalism is to be developed. Efforts will need to be focused on how to create an education system whose success is not just assessed in terms of test scores or examination results, but by how it is helping to develop students' character, resilience, and wellbeing (Earley, 2016, p. 30).

Secondary school curricula need pointed reform and design in such a way that they are effectively teachable in all schools so that valued knowledge, skills, and competencies are gained by learners (Lewin, 2008, p. 153). Hanushek (2002, p. 2) is emphatic on the direction of such a policy and opines that a policy aimed at improving students' performance should have students at the center of the policy.

As the results also reflect principals' inability to articulate the invaluable role of teachers in ensuring quality teaching and learning, principals need to invest time and resources in teacher training and teacher support besides creating a positive environment that allows for teacher creativity. Moreover, principals need to provide an enabling environment for parents and the community to play a more effective role in the pursuance of quality learning outcomes.

7.3.2 Implication for educational science

My professional experience and findings of this study backed by literature from (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 663; Leana, 2011, pp. 33–34) shows the visible gap between theory and praxis of professional capital in Cameroon secondary schools. This gap needs to be abridged for educational reforms to have a positive impact on Cameroon's educational landscape and aid the attainment of the "Vision 2035".

This study focused on the oral/subjective perceptions of principals concerning professional capital; consequently, further research using more objective empirical methods like the observation of principals' behavior in the field and the obtention of quantitative data might supplement the findings of this study. An elaborate comparison of the findings of this research consistent with the principals' demographic variables (such as gender and experience) and school characteristics (such as status and location of school) was outside the immediate range of this study (Shaked, 2018, p. 532). Hence, further research could investigate the role of demographic variables and school characteristics in the enhancement and use of professional capital. In addition, more research may be useful to investigate why the inertia and resistance to change by secondary school principals and teachers in SSA, which makes the development and effective use of professional capital problematic. While there is considerable research on the influence of professional capital (e.g. Fullan, 2002, p. 16; Fullan, 2016, p. 44), there is insufficient focus on how school principals can overcome the resistance-to-change syndrome. This researcher strongly believes that if this inertia is overcome in SSA, further training in the acquisition and use of professional capital will have measured impact in terms of quality educational outcomes.

There is congruence among researchers concerning the importance of professional capital in enhancing leadership for quality outcomes (Robinson et al., 2008, p. 665; Leana, 2011, p. 33). However, the difficulty remains the ability to develop and effectively use professional capital by school principals to bring change to the Cameroon education system. Because principals must prepare their students to face the challenges of the contemporary world,

their leadership focus needs to shift from the perceived practices (which focus on administrative routines), towards the process of effective teaching and active learning. The results of this study reflect urgent professional needs for principals in the education reform process in Cameroon and suggest that further training is necessary, and that continuous professional development needs to be institutionalized. This will equip them with the aptitude needed to create a sustained fundamental transformation in the learning cultures of schools including the teaching profession itself for quality education to be achieved.

Emphasizing the importance of placing the student at the center of education policies and decisions, Fullan (2016) articulates:

To implement decisions for school change initiatives the focus should be based on student achievement and participation data, involving educators in collaboratively selecting intervention programs, developing instructional techniques, and designing assessment strategies that reflect student needs. Educators have to be engaged in collaborative conversations and data dialogues as part of their districtwide reform efforts to support all students, parents, and community members (p. 56).

APPENDIX

Appendix I: Semi-structured interview stimulation guide

Purpose: Study for an International Master in Educational Quality
for Developing Countries (IMPEQ), University of Bamberg,
Germany.

Topic: Principals' perspectives of professional capital

Research method: Qualitative research

Data collection method: Semi-structured interviews

Context: North West Region of Cameroon

General information:

Gender Years of experience.....

Location of school Status of school.....

Additional training.....

Date of interview.....

Place

Time: Start End

Disruptions

Measures taken

Interview stimulation questions:

<i>N°</i>	<i>Lead questions</i>
1	As a Principal in charge of leading, tell me what you do on a daily basis.
2	What makes your job easy and what helps you, what makes your job difficult?
3	What existing networks do you have for the growth of your school?
4	You are in charge of leading your school where teaching and learning takes place, tell me, how do you do this?
5	In your school, you have parents, community leaders, and friends, tell me how you have been making use of them.
6	How do you see your work as a Principal?
7	What are some of the things your colleagues think about your administration?
8	What can you say about the way parents and the community consider your work?
9	How do you think your professional life would have been different if you were employed in another field?
10	Are there some other things that can help me understand your experience which we have not touched?

Appendix II: Respondents' charted matrix

Themes	Apple	Ackee	Durian	Cherry
Understanding of role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - perceived from appointment - job is challenging 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - job is challenging - identifying qualities in teachers - provision of social amenities & infrastructure - enrollment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - handling unplanned activities - student discipline - doing basic office routines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - leading morning devotions - attend to visitors - teaching
Things that facilitates functioning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teamwork and collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teamwork and collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teamwork and collaboration 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Teamwork and collaboration - God's hand
Perceptions of job challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - resistance to change - male minimization of female - interference by highly connected parents - lack of collaboration from some teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - uncooperative staff - lateness, absenteeism - pretentious attitudes of some collaborators - student indiscipline 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - impromptu activities - uncooperative staff - hierarchical bottlenecks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of collaboration - low enrolment - irregular salaries - pretentious attitudes of some staff

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Themes	Apple	Ackee	Durian	Cherry
Existing networks for school growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - se of phones to communicate - WhatsApp group - attending seminars - ex-student association through prizes, small projects, carrier orientation of students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ex-students - ex-students association - friends - All Anglophone Development Association in Germany 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - liaising with the health services department - linking with education technicians - connecting with principals of other schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PTA (infrastructure, staff motivation) - chain prayers - staff socials
Perceptions on teaching-learning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive student-teacher & student-student relationship - regular seminars by VPs and Multipliers - high frequency of lesson boycott by some teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - social amenities - attractive to parents and students - strict respect of PEA program - frequent talks to students - observe lessons - motivate students - encouraging students to opt for challenging fields - empowering the girl child 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - focus on syllabus coverage - students as receptors - uncertainties due to insecurity - focus on learning outcomes - exposing students to practice and reality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - classroom supervision - follow up of uncooperative students - “born again” staff are doing their work - the fear of God

Appendix II: Respondents' Charted Matrix (cont.)

Themes	Apple	Ackee	Durian	Cherry
Working with parents, community leaders, and friends	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - counselling of indisciplined students by parents - medical talks - liaise with neighbors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enrolment beefed up by friends' kids 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - PTA and parents are supportive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - use PTA exco to appeal for fees payment - use proprietor to appeal to staff
Perceptions of work as a Principal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - experience makes it lighter - function according to directives by hierarchy - supervise work in classrooms, kitchen, collaborators - respecting deadlines 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - enjoyable - cooperative staff and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a Divine assignment - decisions are guided by God - handle issues as they come 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a little above average
Principals' perception of how colleagues view their role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - description of self as open and down-to-earth - Negative, especially the trade union and disgruntled teachers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - some will want leadership change - some happy with job performance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - averagely good

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Themes	Apple	Ackee	Durian	Cherry
Principals' perception of how parents/ community view their role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appreciative - request of principal's phone number - request for special attention to child - attend occasions and burials - view community as immediate security - invite community leaders for occasions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive feedback - show of trust, confidence, and commitment by parents - recognition in public - community support in discipline, enrolment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - less appreciative by community - positive feedback from objective parents and students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - positive feedback by parents - welcoming to community
Perception of professional life in another field	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - comfortable with current job - ok, if it involves paperwork - sees present job as a calling - had wished for medical doctor and agribusiness 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - passion in agriculture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - passion for teaching from childhood - wouldn't cope in the business or technical field 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - passion for teaching is ordained by God - have never thought of something else

Appendix III:

Execution of the didactical plan of the intervention

Topic: Training workshop for secondary school principals on the theme “Enhancing professional capital for quality educational outcomes”						
Place: PNS Early Childhood Education Center, Presbyterian Church Center Mankon, Bamenda Cameroon						
Date: 15.12.2018				Time: 08:00		
What (Activity)	How (Methods)	Material	Who	How long (mins)	Total time	Remarks
1. Registration & Breakfast						
Registration Breakfast	Form filling Self service	Folders, pens papers	Me	25	08:40	Program started 15 minutes late
2. Welcome						
Meditation Official opening Self- Introduction Organizational issues	Exposition Drawing lots Exposition	PPP Papers Pens	Em ES DD Es	5 5 5 5 Total 20	08:45 08:50 08:55 09:00	
3. Unit 1: Introductory communication on the theoretical background of PC and quality education						
Overview Objectives Theoretical background: - education quality, learning outcomes, leadership, PC - situation in SSA - connection of PC to learner outcomes	Input Presentation: IR, Pair work, Discussions. IR of participants on perception of their PC followed by discussions	PPP Papers Pens	Es	PPP 30 IR 20 Discussions 35 Total 85	09:30 10:25	

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4. Unit 2: WS Part 1 - Impact of PC on leadership and outcomes (praxis)						
Impact of PC on: - effective leadership - quality outcomes	Participants reflect and share experiences on situations in school that warranted the use of opportunities outside what was readily available within the school setup (i.e. PC) followed by a critique Using: IR, Role play, Plenary discussions.	Papers Pens	Em	IR 20 Role play 20 Discussions 25 PL 25 Total 85	11:55	Role play was replaced by buzz GW to ensure active participation by all
Coffee break				10	12:05	

Appendix:

Execution of the didactical plan of the intervention (cont.)

What (Activity)	How (Methods)	Material	Who	How long	Total time	Remarks
Coffee break				10	12:05	
5. Unit 3: WS Part 2 - Strategies to enhance PC						
Ways to enhance PC for better learning outcomes	Participants discursively reflect, brainstorm and work in groups on strategies to develop: - social capital, - decisional capital, - human capital Using: IR, GW, Brainstorming SBG, Discussions	Graphic Activity cards Bold markers Flip Charts	Es	Observation 15 IR 15 GW 30 PL 35 SBG 20 Discussions 20 Total 135	14:20	Introduction of a task on observation SBG replaced by buzz group work due to closed-door nature of the training and small room sizes.
Lunch Break	Self-service			30	14:50	
6. Unit 4: Evaluation and follow-up						
Feedback/ Action plan/LC	- Carousel - Card- question feedback - Feedback questionnaires - Professional LC (WhatsApp group)	Printed Questionnaire forms	Es Me	Carousel 20 Card-question 15 Discussion on card-question feedback 15 Questionnaire 15 Total 65	15:55	

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Closing	Exposition	Participants' list	Em/ ESR	5		
Transport			/DD Ge	5	16:00 16:05	
				Total 10		

KEY:

DD: Divisional Delegate	Ge: George	PL: Plenary
Em: Emmanuel	GW: Group work	PPP: PowerPoint presentation
ES: Education Secretary	IR: Individual reflection	SBG: Snowball game
Es: Essaw	LC: Learning communities	SSA: Sub Saharan Africa
ESR: Education Secretary's Representative	Me: Mercy	PC: Professional capital

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Abstract and author information

Cameroon is a bilingual country with two subsystems of education (English and French) inherited from its colonial history. Quality education in Cameroon is reflected more in policies and declarations as it is skewed towards the behaviorist tradition. The education system, therefore, is far from liberating the learner to acquire life skills and competencies. School leadership that would have offered the enabling milieu still suffers from the subjugation of its colonial past as principals remain glued in the cocoon of administrative routines. This study, thus, focuses on the perceptions of school principals in Cameroon on professional capital and provides a pathway for action by education policymakers and stakeholders. To realize the intents, the study uses the qualitative design including semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions, purposeful sampling strategy, and descriptive data analysis. The findings point to two main conclusions: First, there is a strong influence of hierarchy on the decision-making process in schools suggesting a lack of decisional capital by principals. Second, the understanding of social capital is embedded more in theory than in practice. Consequently, continuous training for school principals is imperative and should be incorporated in the top priorities of education policymakers.

Résumé et informations sur l'auteur

Le Cameroun est un pays bilingue avec deux sous-systèmes d'éducation (anglais et français) hérités de son histoire coloniale. Une éducation de qualité au Cameroun se reflète davantage dans les politiques et les déclarations, car elle est biaisée vers la tradition comportementaliste. Le système éducatif est donc loin de permettre à l'apprenant d'acquérir des aptitudes à la vie quotidienne. La direction des écoles qui aurait offert le milieu habitant souffre toujours de la subjugation de son passé colonial, les directeurs étant toujours collés au cocon des routines administratives. Cette étude se concentre donc sur les perceptions des directeurs d'écoles au Cameroun sur le capital professionnel et fournit une voie d'action pour les décideurs et les parties prenantes en matière d'éducation. Pour concrétiser ses intentions, l'étude utilise un plan qualitatif comprenant des entretiens semi-structurés avec des questions ouvertes, une stratégie d'échantillonnage ciblée et une analyse descriptive des données. Les conclusions suggèrent deux conclusions principales: premièrement, la hiérarchie a une forte influence sur le processus de prise de décision dans les écoles, ce qui suggère un manque de capital décisionnel de la part des directeurs. Deuxièmement, la compréhension du capital social est davantage ancrée dans la théorie que dans la pratique. Par conséquent, la formation continue des directeurs d'école est impérative et devrait être intégrée dans les principales priorités des décideurs en matière d'éducation.

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