School Leadership Preparation And Development:

The Cases of Fiji and the Solomon Islands

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Abstract

This paper focuses on school leadership preparation and development. Since it is increasingly being recognised that the quality of leadership contributes significantly to schools' success, the small island states of the Pacific would do well to pay considerable attention to the preparation and development of school leaders. For too long, these countries have allowed incumbents without any specific leadership preparation to head schools. Only recently have some countries embarked on leadership preparation; this chapter highlights two cases, Fiji and Solomon Islands. This paper also draws on international literature on leadership preparation and development, stressing the need for on-going training and development of school leaders to ensure improvement in educational provision. For principal stakeholders in the region's national education systems, the issue of school leadership certainly warrants serious thinking and rethinking.

Introduction

In the contemporary context, it scarcely needs mentioning that improvement in the quality of learning-teaching requires increased expenditure on the provision of well qualified teachers and suitable resources. Beyond this, the recent literature highlights yet another critical factor that can make a significant difference in achieving school success: sound leadership (Cardno & Howse, 2005; OECD, 2006). When school leadership is favourable it can have a positive impact on school improvement and effectiveness (Cardno & Howse, 2005; Southworth, 2002). Conversely, poor leadership is likely to have negative impacts on all functions and operations of the school, in turn making the school spiral downwards. In light of this, school leaders must have the knowledge, skills, and ability to effectively undertake their leadership role. However, in most developing contexts, scant attention is paid to leadership training and incumbents tend to assume leadership positions without any induction, mentoring, or training (Cardno & Howse, 2005). Clearly, in such contexts school leaders would find it difficult to cope with the ever changing demands of work placed upon them. This should be of concern not only to the principal stakeholder but also to all those who have a vested interest in children's education. Since leadership is a critical issue in school improvement, all countries in the Pacific need to rethink their

strategies for preparing and developing school leaders, to ensure tha
to-date with the pace of social, economic, and technological chang
prepare their students meaningfully for a future that is scarcely ima
senior leaders.

This chapter draws on international literature to illustrate t
potential benefits of training school leaders. In doing so, it highlig
programmes put in place in developed countries to prepare schoo
positions. In addition, the recurring issue of leadership preparatio
discussed on the basis of local literature and the authors' work exp
part of the chapter draws on two cases from the Pacific – Fiji and
– that have embarked on leadership training. By implication, this
attention to the need for other countries in the region to implemer
ership development programmes for the long-term benefit of their e

The Literature

In this rapidly changing world, pressure on school heads to prov
schooling is mounting. Current research literature illustrates that t
heads keep intensifying and at the same time they are faced with
of work together with pressure from multiple stakeholders to perf
2003; Gronn, 2003; Leithwood, 1999; Moorosi & Bush, 2011).
pansion in school heads' role arises from continued growth and incr
in school organisations (OECD, 2006). As the twenty-first cen
are likely to see school heads' role becoming ever more challeng
ing. Already, a variety of additional responsibilities –such as school
and reaching out to the community – has been added to their tradit
most part without any professional preparation for undertaking th

The growing complexity of the work of school leaders (Boyd
& Ehrich, 2002) underscores the need for more attention to
and development. The employing authorities need to consider w
develop these people for effective leadership and management of sc
times. Nor is the need for a development programme confined t

ever-changing role effectively (McMahon & Bolam, 1990; Rudman, 2002; Woodall & Winstanley, 1998). On-the-job training as well as externally-driven training and education are vital for the professional development needs of the school leaders. The literature clearly spells out a range of models that could be effectively utilised to meet the development needs of school leaders (Griffith & Taraban, 2002; Martin &Robertson, 2003).

When designing professional development programmes for school leaders, it would be sound to consider Woodall and Winstanley's (1998) suggestion for career-long development at various stages, such as grooming, induction, competence within the role, and team effectiveness. Grooming and induction include preparation, socialisation, orientation, and induction to the leadership position, whereas the other two phases are associated with management development that aims to build on both personal competence within the role and team effectiveness dimensions (Cardno & Howse, 2005; Woodall & Winstanley, 1998). Overall, international literature suggests that it would be best to have training programmes that are context-specific so that the development needs of the school leaders are well catered for (Moorosi & Bush, 2011). For example, within a single country, the development needs of rural and urban school leaders are likely to differ quite widely. Therefore, training programmes should be designed to cater for the particular sociocultural context. The idea of *one size fits all* is not the most productive way forward in leadership preparation.

Leadership Development in the Developed Nations

Generally speaking, most developed countries undertake school leadership development seriously and embark upon training their school heads throughout their professional careers. As far back as the 1990s, Harvard (1992) reported that the Scottish education system carried out a nation-wide management training programme for all school leaders. This programme consisted of eight modules: the principles of management, personnel management, managing the curriculum, management of resources, financial management, monitoring school effectiveness, the school and the community, and education and the law. In any education system, acquisition of knowledge and skills related to these dimensions is vital for a positive impact on educational leadership and management practices. In particular, knowledge and skills in the last area mentioned – that is, on education and law – are crucial for school leaders in all contexts. The burgeoning complexity of school organisations and the rapidly changing world demand that leaders be aware of the impact of laws governing education, so that they avoid any action that may bring disrepute to the school organisation and the education fraternity as a whole.

England, too, has a number of training programmes for the development of school leaders; for example, the Headship Induction Programme, the creation of the National Professional Qualifications for Headship, and the establishment of the

National College for School Leadership (OECD, 2006). Likewise, Australia has established a National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership. In the United States, Goldstein (2001) reports training programmes in place for prospective principals. The programmes in each of these countries emphasise various dimensions of leadership based on the requirements for the position in the specific jurisdictions. In the case of the Swedish education system, there exists a career-long training programme: recruitment of those who want to become school leaders; induction for those newly appointed; a national professional development programme after two years on the job; and on-going career development, such as university courses and extensive support from professional associations of school leaders (Johansson, 2002). In the developed countries, such as the United States, Australia, the United Kingdom, and New Zealand, a strong emphasis in training is on financial management. This is the result of central authorities giving more powers to schools to be self-managed and self-governed. As such, the schools become responsible for budget allocation and staff employment. For example, in the United Kingdom a series of legislative acts was passed in the 1980s and 1990s, which gave schools full control of their budgets including teachers' salaries, an area hitherto retained centrally by the local education authorities (Power & Whitty, 1999). Training in financial management matters is needed not only where self-managed school arrangements apply, but also in centralised systems, because school leaders deal with school funds.

It is apparent from the review of literature that developed countries, by putting in place training programmes to develop them, have realised the critical role school leaders play in improving the performance of schools.

Leadership development in the Pacific

Developments in education require new knowledge and skills to facilitate all dimensions of the school organisation. Recent changes in the school work in most of the countries in the region require school leaders to be better prepared for their role. As in the developed nations, the environment of Pacific schools and school systems is changing very rapidly. Many new demands, expectations, and other educational changes have emerged during these past decades. All these transformations have an impact on the role of school heads, which continues to evolve.

For too long, countries in the Pacific such as Fiji have relied on the experience of the incumbents appointed to the position (Tavola, 2000). Given the magnitude of change, reliance on experience or years of service alone may not guarantee success. In our island states, existing school heads who are leading our educational institutions and educational systems are classroom teachers by training and experience. The new role is outside their professed experience and skills and, as such they are technically unqualified to head schools. They may perform well in their instructional role but this is not the only dimension of their work. Even in terms of the instructional role a lot of changes have taken place, such as in the areas of learning-teaching, assessment,

and curriculum. In my work experience in the Pacific, I have observed that school heads are reasonably successful in effectively maintaining the day-to-day running of the school and they could do more and better provided they were professionally prepared for the role.

In fact, in the Pacific Islands countries limited opportunities are available for the professional development of school leaders. Generally, they are chosen to become secondary school principals or primary school head teacherson the basis of seniority. Since the leadership position is a virtually a second career that classroom practitioners embark upon, they need to undergo suitable professional development programmes in order to perform effectively in their new multi-functional role, including the extended professional responsibilities they are expected to shoulder from time to time. For example, recent research conducted by Aleta (2010) on school leaders in Tokelau, found several barriers to effective execution of their duties and responsibilities: "The principals in the case study schools lack the capacity to effectively fulfil their duties and roles due to the lack of pre-preparation and training for principalship. The lack of pre-preparation is often overlooked in the appointment of principals in Tokelau" (p.157). The provision of education in this small island state could be further affected by not having school leaders prepared for the most important role. Provision of suitable development programmes will surely sharpen their skills and develop their abilities in effective leadership and management practices of school organisations.

In what follows are snapshots of the school leadership situation in two countries of the Pacific region, namely Fiji and Solomon Islands, before the introduction of some training programmes in the two countries.

Solomon Islands

In the case of Solomon Islands, Sanga (1992) reported that for many years those incumbents who were selected to lead schools generally failed to meet the minimum qualification as stipulated in the advertisements for the positions. He reported that at that time, such appointments were normal, further pointing out (1992, p. 4) that in Solomon Islands, "The responsibility of developing principals or potential principals professionally has never been an issue to question. No one had the resources to talk or do anything about it. One's own staff development used to be one's own responsibility". Sanga (1992) went on to describe the range of work expected of school leaders in Solomon Islands in the early 1990s, some of which was clearly extraneous to the central role: "Being a Secondary Principal in the Solomons requires much more than just being the administrative head of a school. Because our schools are mostly boarding and co-educational, principals often play the roles of Community Chief, Government Agent, Community Adviser, Pastor and a 'big man'" (Sanga, 1992, p. 4). The findings of later studies about school leadership in Solomon Islands illustrate that the situation described by Sanga still persists (Malasa, 2007; Ruqebatu,

2008). Without adequate preparation for the job, the incumbents are likely to fa a lot of challenges in effectively managing and leading the schools. Malasa (200 and Ruqebatu (2008) suggested the need to put strategies in place for leadersl preparation and development. In a recent study conducted by Lingam (2011), c of the most emphatic findings, endorsed by all of the participants, was that tl experienced difficulties in effectively managing the various spheres of their sch organisation. Some of the broad categories identified were organising the schc time management, managing human resources, fostering accountability, manag change, and community participation in education. It is patent that school hea failure to manage these important areas of school organisation effectively could l help but have negative effects on children's education.

Fiji Islands

To give an idea of the work of school leaders in secondary schools in the Fiji conte the job description prepared by the employer, the Ministry of Education (2004) is cluded here. The range of duties expected of secondary school principals is indicat

- Educational and professional leaders who enhance staff and student perl mance. They are also expected to undertake "some" teaching duties
- The chief executive of the school operating within government policies a the legal framework of the Education Act
- Accountable by reporting to Ministry of Education Officers and also repo to the school's Board of Governors or Management Committee as the incu bent is accountable to them for fulfilling their educational aspirations a expectations
- Responsible for the performance of all staff and direct supervisor of the V Principal, Heads of Department, Counsellor, teachers and ancillary staff
- Responsible for fostering and maintaining positive collegial relationsl among staff members and maintaining cordial relationships with the wi community
- Equal to meeting the challenge of providing quality education requiring principal to have vision, wisdom, creativity and professionalism

  They are accountable specifically for:

  i. Planning and policy – both formulation and review

  ii. School management and implementation of a school development p

  iii. Controlling, regulating and reporting teaching and learning

vii. Maintaining a healthy, safe, supportive environment

viii. Eliminating discrimination and harassment

ix. Behaviour management (codes for student and staff). (Ministry of Education, 2004, p. 1)

Given the range and variety of work expected of secondary school principals in the Fiji Islands, one can rightly ask whether they are professionally prepared to contribute effectively to all the areas mentioned in their job description. Effective contribution towards various areas of the job description, such as in terms of staff performance, maintaining relationships with staff and with the community, accountability to the Ministry of Education, School Education Board or Management Committee, and to operate the school within the ambit of government policy and the Education Act, requires suitable sophisticated knowledge and skills in a full range of leadership and school management practices.

Without appropriate professional preparation and development for the multi-faceted nature of their role as school leaders, the incumbents cannot be expected to perform at a high level. They are likely to experience a lot of difficulties in effectively executing the numerous duties inherent in the position. The job description entails a heavy responsibility and it can be clearly seen that the role has varied expectations and these are likely to escalate and intensify with the passage of time.

Tavola (2000), reporting on the situation in Fiji, highlighted that because of poor leadership schools were not geared towards improving the quality of education. She emphasised the need for better trained head teachers, principals, and even education officers so that they can provide better performance at work. She went on to state that the problem is aggravated by the shortage of suitable candidates for the school heads position. For example, the following was highlighted:

Many of the low-achieving schools are led by principals who lack motivation, initiative and direction and are often overwhelmed by the school situation they are confronted with. They have a defeatist attitude from the start. Unfortunately, our rural Fijian secondary schools fall into this category. (Tavola, 2000, p. 98)

This is no doubt a significant contributory factor in the poor learning outcomes of children in rural schools. Even though the report accorded a high priority to the training of principals, details about the facilitation of such training and the standards to be met remained futile for many years. For example, Tavola highlighted that most principals in Fiji had no specific training for the job and emphasised the need for training of principals in a wide range of areas such as "coping with the bureaucratic demands of the Ministry of Education, dealing with inter-personal relations and pastoral care of staff, curriculum issues, monitoring teaching, managing crisis and solving problems" (2000, p. 98). In fact, to bridge the gap between rural and urban children, rural schools need better prepared leaders. Otherwise, the rural children

compared with their urban counterparts will continue to be negatively affectec their learning outcomes.

In the cases of both Fiji and Solomon Islands, qualified and experienced classrc teachers constituted the pool of candidates for leadership positions in schools. M of the incumbents have limited knowledge and skills for the position. They ma> good teachers but this is not an indication that they will be effective school lea (Bush & Oduro, 2006). In contemporary times this practice is unsound and shc be discontinued. In most developed countries prospective principal candidates required to complete leadership training courses or take advanced degrees in scl leadership. On the other hand, Fiji and Solomon Islands are examples of Pa -region countries that do not require mandatory or specific qualification promotion to a headship position. Generally, school leaders are appointed on basis of teaching record and experience rather than leadership potential, wl is similar to the practice in most parts of the African continent (Bush & Od 2006). However, excellent teaching ability does not necessarily indicate that person appointed will be an effective principal or head teacher. Recent research the perceptions of professional development needs of principals in Fiji found principals have indicated skills for effective leadership and management as extrer important to their role and expect to see a balanced approach to their professic development (Cardno & Howse, 2005).

What then emerges from the school leadership literature is the concern the preparation and development of school leaders. Particularly pertinent is adoption of a training programme that is consonant with the current trends of l ership training and development. Added to this is the need to ground the trai programmes in the particular sociocultural context, to suit the development neec the school leaders therein.

Some developments in leadership preparation

Some positive developments in school leadership have taken place in Fiji and Solor Islands in the 2000s. In the case of Solomon Islands, through the New Zealand programme, the Ministry of Education in partnership with the University of South Pacific has mounted leadership programmes. So far the University has c pleted providing training to three cohorts of current school leaders, each cohort sisting of about 30 school leaders. The training component consisted of the follo courses in the educational leadership programme: Educational Decision-making Problem Solving; Educational Project Planning; Introduction to Curriculum D opment: School Organisation and Management: Educational Planning and D

by the Ministry of Education and plans are in place for the training of more current leaders for leadership positions in both primary and secondary schools. In view of the changing times, more training programmes are vital at different stages of headship to meet the changing demands of their work (Gronn, 2003).

With reference to the training programme mounted in Solomon Islands, the findings of a study by Lingam (2011) illustrate that the school leaders perceive the training programme positively, finding that it helps them to acquire much needed support in terms of knowledge, skills, beliefs and values in improving their schools' overall performance. For instance, some of the comments demonstrate this satisfaction:

- The course has enlightened me towards my path to quality leadership.

- To be honest, the course has broadened my knowledge on some of the contributing factors that will hinder achieving quality education in our schools...it's high time that we must work on school leadership to improve school organisation and management in order to achieve quality education.

- Now after going through this course on school organisation and management, I have the courage and ideas of how to minimise the difficulties and I wish I could go back to 1987 to start again especially after going through this programme.

- Studying this course it really helps a lot. The course gives me new ideas of dealing with different kinds of situations in school. The course helps me to be confident in my school responsibilities...it helps me know how to manage a school properly and in a *wantok* or relative system.

- Since I have gone through the course I have learnt a lot from it especially about leadership and management. Managing human resources, maintaining healthy partnership with parents and communities... To be honest I really gained a lot of new knowledge, skills and techniques from this course. I will try my best to put into practise what I have learnt to achieve the goals of my school.

- I am learning quite a lot of good things from this course and it will certainly help me in my school leadership, children in school and my community. (Lingam, 2011, p. 7)

The leadership training in Solomon Islands, then, has certainly benefited the participants in heading their schools.

In the case of Fiji, the Ministry of Education secured financial and technical aid from AusAID and embarked on a leadership and management training project (Fiji Ministry of Education, 2009). The programme catered for the training of not only current school leaders but also aspiring school leaders. Instead of using the programme offered by the University of the South Pacific; the project had its own programme, which consisted of the following modules: Developing Personal

Leadership Skills, Financial Management and School Improvement using Standa
Monitoring, and Change Management, School Planning and Policy.

According to the Ministry of Education report (Ministry of Education, 200⁹
the purpose of the leadership and management training programme was to devel
leadership capacities for the successful operation of the school organisation. T
initiative to engage and improve leadership and management skills for current sch
principals is a welcome move. The current and aspiring principals from both prim
and secondary schools who attended the same training programme went throug
series of workshops, each lasting for four days.

Table 1: Schedule for the Leadership Training Programme, Fiji, 2004–2009

Phase	Module	Year of Offer	School Division
1	Developing Personal Leadership Skills	2004 2005	Eastern/Western Central/Northern
2	Financial Management and School Improvement using Standard Monitoring	2006 2007	Eastern/Western Central/Northern
3	Change Management, School Planning and Policy	2008 2009	Eastern/Western Central/Northern

Source: Lingam, 2012, p. 20.

A recent study on the training programme found that its impacts on sch
leaders in their work were positive (Lingam, 2012). In particular, the participa
indicated the training programme enhanced their leadership knowledge and mana
ment skills. For example, the feedback from the school leaders who participate
the training programme demonstrates this:

- The most important aim that the programme had was to develop the cap
  ties in heads of schools in leadership and management and this had a lo
  do with time management, qualities of leadership. A lot of this was aime
  capacity building and exposing leaders to new approaches or approaches
  would be appropriate in working smart. It helped me to re-look at way
  manage school, manage the team which is made up of human resources,
  set directions together with the team.
- The training programme had a lot of new ideas, new thinking, and

- Basically the training programme empowered us to be better leaders and how to manage the school in a better way. Whatever I learnt in that training, I came back and had professional development with my teachers and trained them to make their own plans on lesson preparation and teaching and learning. (Lingam, 2012, pp54–55)

These comments clearly illustrate the potential that appropriate and effective training programmes can have for school leaders' professional work. It can build their skills, knowledge, and attitudes to lead schools effectively. Its effects on their self-confidence are also apparent. The comments suggest that without any preparatory training, school leaders are unlikely to lead and manage schools effectively and confidently.

Concluding remarks

In the main, the provision of educational services depends on the quality of school leaders. Where the school leader is capable and competent, the general performance in all facets of the school improves. Conversely, where the school leader has significant shortcomings, the provision of educational services is likely to suffer much damage. Thus, school leaders play a prominent role in the provision of quality educational services. The snapshots of the two countries' training programmes should provide the remaining countries in the Pacific with some cause for rethinking on the need for leadership preparation. For Fiji and Solomon Islands, it is a significant step and reflects the commitment of the education ministries to provide appropriate training to school leaders as they are one of the crucial factors in school improvement and effectiveness.

Generally, school leadership in most of the countries of the Pacific region deserves a lot more attention to ensure school improvement and effectiveness. From the authors' observation and work experience in the region, leadership and school management practices are still more attuned to the past than to contemporary times. This is a sad state of affairs and could be primarily due to the absence or lack of adequate preparation and development of school leaders. This implies school leaders lack creativity, and new approaches to lead school organisations to meet the demands of the twenty-first century. On the other hand, the principal stakeholders – that is, the education authorities – have been complacent about the situation for too long and as a result schools continue to be managed by people who are technically unqualified for the role.

As noted in the preceding discussion, some governments in the Pacific region have embarked on leadership preparation, but they still have a long way to go in their efforts to prepare individuals for the role. Besides, countries still have the tendency to mount training programmes as a *one-shot* affair, rather than running training programmes on an on-going basis. Lack of appreciation of the urgency of the matter appears to be the key issue and this requires serious rethinking in order for the Pacific region to be on track on school leadership preparation for the benefit of children's education.

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