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Author(s): Pontso Moorosi and Tony Bush

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# School Leadership Development in Commonwealth Countries: Learning Across Boundaries

**Pontso Moorosi and Tony Bush**

**Abstract:** *The field of educational leadership has received significant attention in the past decade due to a growing recognition of the role of effective leadership in improving schooling experience. The paper presents findings from a study exploring school leadership preparation and development in Commonwealth countries. Respondents from several countries that are members of the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration Management (CCEAM) participated in the study that explored the nature of leadership development provision. Questionnaires and interviews were used to collect data. The findings suggest that there is a variety of leadership learning provision and that the content appears to have changed over the years. However, the degree to which this content is shaped by local contextual experiences is questionable. The paper argues that a meaningful model of crosscultural learning for leadership development is one that is informed by context specific experiences.*

## Introduction

The field of educational leadership has received significant attention in the past decade due to a growing recognition of the role of effective leadership in improving the schooling experience. Research has established a link between effective leadership and enhanced school performance (Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins 2008), and writers have argued that schools may not be able to achieve a successful turnaround of learner achievement in the absence of 'talented leadership' (Leithwood et al. 2008: 29). The discourse on effective leadership for school improvement brings under the spotlight the significance of leadership preparation and development and whether training programmes equip leaders with the necessary skills they need to address current and emerging school challenges. If school leadership does make a difference in the outcomes of schooling (Hallinger & Heck 1996; Bush 2008; Leithwood et al. 2008), it follows that researchers should continually be asking critical questions about how school leaders are prepared for the role, what type of leadership development they receive and what impact training has. Concerns around leadership succession are being addressed through policy-makers' development of strategies that accelerate leadership development (Churches, Hutchinson & Jones 2009; Jones 2010); specific leadership programmes targeting certain minority groups (Campbell-Stephens 2009; Coleman and Campbell-Stephens 2010) and personalised leadership learning approaches (Crawford and Earley 2011). However, evidence continues to show lack of preparation for school leadership in the developing world

(Lumby, Crow & Pashiardis 2008), suggesting that school principals are largely overwhelmed by the role with negative implications for the improvement of schools. This paper explores these issues through a specific focus on preparation and development for school principalship in the Commonwealth.

While leadership development is often used as a generic term for both pre-service and in-service leadership training, leadership preparation and development are deliberately distinguished in this paper to give sufficient focus to each type of training. The former refers to preparation prior to becoming a school principal, and encompasses entry qualifications and other forms of training. Ribbins (2008) argues that the preparation stage is a lot more complex and does not only happen through formal programmes but through the entire socialisation process that entails interaction with different agencies shaping the potential leader's personality from childhood (also Crow 2006). However, the aim of this paper is to explore the nature of formal preparation and will be limited to formal programmes that qualify a leader to become a school principal. Leadership development, on the other hand, is used to refer to continuing development of a leader after they have become school principals, which is regarded as career-long learning (Ribbins 2008). This paper contributes to the contemporary debate by providing an overview of both leadership preparation and development in the Commonwealth.

The need for effective school leadership in developing Commonwealth countries is raised in some Commonwealth reports such as Pashiardis & Brauckman (2010). Many other authors have linked the role of effective headship to school improvement (e.g. Leithwood et al. 2008; Day, Sammons, Hopkins, Leithwood & Kington. 2008). These authors have highlighted the significance of effective school leadership in order for the school to enjoy enhanced learning experience and ensure positive learning outcomes. In particular, Leithwood et al. (2008) underscored the necessity of effective school leadership for successful learning experience and school organisation by stating that effective school leadership is second only to classroom teaching in its impact on learning outcomes. They add that schools are not likely to achieve successful results without 'talented leadership', since leadership effectively unleashes the already existing talent within the school (Leithwood et al. 2008: 29). Thus, the notion of leadership making a difference in school improvement appears to be the starting point for the global debates on what type of leadership training programmes should be provided in preparation for school principalship.

To investigate the nature of leadership preparation and development provision, the paper borrows the concepts of 'blank spots' and 'blind spots' (Heck & Hallinger 1999: 141) of educational leadership development. Heck & Hallinger refer to blank spots as areas in our knowledge needing further investigation in order to expand our understanding. These areas are explored through important questions that can be answered through narrowly focused and sustainable inquiries. Blind spots simply refer to gaps in our knowledge and understanding of a phenomenon. Through examining the blank and blind spots of educational leadership development, the study seeks to explore the features of the leadership development and preparation programmes in Commonwealth countries. To achieve this aim the paper addresses the following key questions:

- What is the nature of leadership preparation and development in Commonwealth countries?
- What is the content of leadership development provision?
- What lessons can be drawn from the nature of leadership provision across borders?

In addressing these questions, the paper begins with a brief overview of the existing literature highlighting the gaps on leadership development and examining the effectiveness and impact of preparation programmes. The methods used to collect data are explained and are followed by the presentation of findings. The paper then discusses the nature of leadership provision across the participating countries and questions the legitimacy of existing training programmes, and argues a case for shared learning across boundaries.

## **Leadership Development: An Overview of the Literature**

There is a rapidly growing body of literature on leadership development and specific preparation for school leadership. One of the earliest works on educational management development was by Glatter (1972), which examined how school managers were developed and began to question the responsiveness of the models in operation at that time. In the USA, Greenfield (1985) looked into the socialisation processes of being and becoming a school principal, and scrutinised role-learning among teachers aspiring for the principalship. These early works were valuable but they mostly focused on processes of individual socialisation and less on the complexity of the interplay between the different agents involved in the socialisation of school principals. However, these works began to highlight the need for more responsive models in view of the shifting technological and social climate. The surge in educational leadership development research in the UK centred on the establishment and evaluation of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) and its leadership development framework (Bush, Glover & Harris 2007; Glatter 2009; Simkins, Close & Smith 2009a; etc.). More globally, many volumes have been dedicated to leadership development issues. For example, the journal *School Leadership and Management* dedicated an issue to leadership development (Volume 26, Number 2, 2006), which covered several leadership development issues in some international contexts. *Educational Management Administration and Leadership* also dedicated an issue to leadership development that was entirely focused on the NCSL (2004). Brundrett & Crawford (2009) published a book on the global perspectives on leadership development, while Huber (2004) had earlier provided an international analysis of leadership development models across continents. While these were global analyses and offered very useful contributions, they focused mainly on Europe, North America, Australasia and Asia. Notably, they did not cover leadership development in Africa, Latin America and most of the Middle East.

Bush (2008) and Lumby et al. (2008) on leadership development, however, provide a comprehensive coverage of international practices that focuses on both developing and developed contexts. In particular Lumby et al. provide global coverage of leadership preparation and development issues that highlight the limited attention to the developing world. This volume was heralded as the first of its kind to take a global view on leadership preparation and development and, in particular, to give an extensive treatment of the developing world. Bush (2008) provides a useful distinction between centralised and decentralised systems, which highlights the centrality of context in leadership development. This may appear to be in sharp contrast to Lumby et al.'s (2008) focus on 'global leadership' but, rather than being in contradiction with each other, these works depict the complexity of the challenges facing educational leadership and the need for development programmes to be equally responsive. It is worth noting, however, that even in Lumby et al.'s (2008) comprehensive regionalised approach, there are still a large number of individual countries that are not represented. This remains a gap in the literature which calls for more comprehensive country-by-country analyses and comparative analyses that will inform learning across boundaries.

The second gap identified in the existing body of literature relates to the regional bias and the divide between West and South. In particular, the literature focuses more on developed and Western models and practices and it is not very strong on experiences from the South and the developing world. Lumby et al. (2008) and Bush (2008) acknowledged the dearth of published work on school leadership preparation and development generally, but even more so in the developing world. They highlighted the significance of leadership preparation for leadership aspirants as well as continuing leadership development for practising leaders, particularly in the developing world. The authors encouraged further work in leadership preparation and development, and specifically they reiterated Heck & Hallinger's (1999) call for more research that identifies and addresses these gaps in research knowledge. One key issue highlighted in Lumby et al. (2008), and in Bush & Jackson (2002), is the diverse leadership development approaches adopted in different countries, which are largely informed by varying conceptualisations of leadership preparation and development. Although such diversity exists in the field, a common factor seems to be the fact that leadership practices across the globe are affected by local (social, political and economic) factors as well as globalisation flows through, for example, the impact of technology and migration (Lumby et al. 2008). This leads to a need for more crosscultural studies that will inform responsive models of leadership learning and practice.

The third gap in our knowledge regarding educational leadership development emanates from a diverse set of issues that the developed world is dealing with as compared to those experienced in developing countries. For example, the current focus in many Western countries is on leadership succession planning in the wake of the imminent baby boomers' retirement (Thomson 2008; Bush 2011). The apparent lack of interest in future school headship is in sharp contrast with the abundance of unskilled school principals overwhelmed by the role (Bush & Oduro 2006), in developing contexts. In Africa, for example, there are many untrained principals who lack the 'necessary skills, knowledge and attitudes to manage their schools effectively and efficiently' (Otunga, Serem & Kindiki 2008: 372). In the USA, the focus has been more on the nature, quality and influence of the preparation training programme for school leaders (EAQ 2011) while the Middle Eastern countries are focusing on reconciling the differences in religion and culture to encourage inclusion rather than exclusion (Macpherson & Tofighian 2008). Many of these authors have highlighted the significance of focusing school leadership development on needs and challenges specific to a particular context while at the same time leaving room for international and crosscultural learning.

The concept of crosscultural learning in educational leadership was initiated by Dimmock & Walker (1998) and further endorsed by Heck (2002), Crow & Grogan (2005) and Lumby et al. (2008), who advocated the international perspective in learning 'with and from each other' (Lumby et al. 2008: 7) in the context of globalisation. The argument here is that leadership preparation no longer serves the homogeneous communities that existed before globalisation, but such programmes should rather prepare leaders for global heterogeneous communities. Lumby et al. see this global learning as an emotional and intellectual connection that provides the platform for intercultural and international exchange of ideas, experiences and solutions to problems. The authors on intercultural learning maintain that educational leadership research could benefit from more international collaboration and experiences as well as comparative analyses. Crow & Grogan reiterate that 'limiting our research to Western countries prohibits the use of conceptions and frameworks from non-Western cultures that may provide insight into our own national educational problems' (2005: 377). However,

Macpherson & Tofighian (2008) warn that intellectual traditions of the Western models should be adopted with great caution as Western research tends to impose cultural homogeneity. On the surface, the revised pilot of the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) offering a personalised approach (Crawford & Earley 2011) might appear to be in sharp contrast with crosscultural learning as it focuses on customised personal development. However, our conception of shared learning across the boundaries is driven by the premise that, for crosscultural learning to happen, leaders have to be in full understanding and mastery of their own contexts. The next section looks at the value of leadership preparation and the effect it has on school improvement.

### **Leadership Preparation and School Effectiveness**

Schools are faced with growing demands due to forces of globalisation and growing accountabilities. These demands require highly skilled and well-prepared leadership. In response to these demands, some advanced countries, such as England, have put a strong focus on the leadership preparation processes and even mandated an entry qualification into the headship in the form of the NPQH (Bush 2008; Simkins et al. 2009a). However, other countries have invested in the provision of 'on-the-job' leadership development programmes for their school principals after they have been appointed. Until the pilot of its entry qualification from 2007, South Africa was one such example (see Bush, Duku, Glover, Kiggundu, Kola, Msila & Moorosi 2009). Teachers were promoted into headship on the basis of their teaching experience, and other 'middle management' tasks and roles (Bush 2008: 112), as well as, to some degree, the level of their qualifications, as reflected in Moorosi's (2010) study on women principals' career paths. The notion of untrained and unprepared principals is not unique to South Africa, but it is seen in many (if not all) African states as well as other developing countries (Bush & Oduro 2006; Otunga et al. 2008). Mathibe warned of the danger of placing the most important job at the school in the hands of 'technically unqualified personnel' (2007: 529), but perhaps what we need to scrutinise is the effect leadership preparation has on school improvement.

There is increasing evidence that the quality of leadership provided by the school is dependent on the quality of the leaders' preparation experiences (Greenfield 1985; Orr & Barber 2007; Orr & Orphanos 2011). Greenfield established very early on that 'what one learns prior to role entry has an impact on role performance' (1985: 49). Leadership preparation and development are therefore linked to effective school leadership. This important linkage was also made by Bush & Jackson (2002) and Bush (2010). In underlining the significance of sufficient leadership preparation, Bush (2010) noted the global recognition of the need for effective school leaders and managers in order to produce the best learning experience for school learners, while Bush & Jackson specifically noted that:

the development of school leaders is a critical component in system building if schools are to be places in which teachers learn, teaching and learning are powerfully planned and delivered, students achieve and leadership is widely distributed. It is unsurprising, then, that leadership preparation and development are on the agenda across the world. (2002: 418)

Darling-Hammond, La Pointe, Meyerson, Orr & Cohen (2007), have also linked the preparation of school leaders to the effectiveness of leadership practices and overall school

improvement. According to these authors, leadership preparation programmes have a significant bearing on national policies and should receive national interest. They note, however, that there is little evidence to suggest political interest in school leadership preparation, particularly in developing countries. The absence of political interest in school leadership results in the lack of consistency in leadership development programmes and unsustainable initiatives. Young (2010) and Orr (2010) highlight the disparity of leadership preparation programmes (and content) across the various institutions in the USA that lead to varied benefits on school improvement even after the adoption of the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards in 2006. Other inconsistencies are seen in Australia, Canada and mainland China (Rusch 2008), where leadership preparation programmes are not mandatory and this results in different standards and differential experiences. While Crow (2006) suggests that looking at formal programmes alone offers a limited conception of preparation, as socialisation does not occur in a vacuum, it is argued that policy on formal and mandatory preparation infused with standards (Pounder 2011) signifies an important commitment to the notion of trained leaders.

Although there has been growing demand for effective school leaders, and some connections made between leadership preparation and school improvement (Leithwood et al. 2008), we still do not know the type of training that leads to more effective schooling experience and to higher learning outcomes. The literature shows that many countries, particularly those in developed regions, have embarked on leadership preparation and development programmes for aspiring and practising school leaders, which have significantly improved the profile and performance of school principals and confirmed the relationship between principal behaviour and student achievement (Roach, Smith & Boutin 2011). In many contexts, these are often offered by a variety of service providers. For example, most US states provide compulsory leadership preparation for school leaders (Young & Grogan 2008) through a diverse range of programmes, offered mostly by universities. While these have been successful in many aspects, they have been criticised on their failure to adapt curriculum to the learning needs of candidates, being overly didactic and not linking theory to practice (Darling-Hammond et al. 2007). The English National College's NPQH programme has also been regarded as a successful preparation programme for personal development, but has also been criticised for its unambitious approach (Bush 2008). The degree to which preparation in particular can be linked directly to effectiveness in schools needs further research, as some countries across Europe, including Holland and Norway (Moller & Schratz 2008), and Australia (Anderson, Kleinhenz, Mulford & Gurr 2008) do not require pre-service preparation for school principals but provide in-service training in various forms for school principals once they are appointed. These education systems are perceived to be successful, so the relationship between leadership preparation and effective schooling is by no means conclusive.

In countries where no formal leadership preparation is required for school principals, headship is assumed on the basis of a successful teaching career (Bush & Oduro 2006; Moller & Schratz 2008). Although the education experiences in the latter cases are not necessarily considered amongst the best in the world, there is no evidence suggesting that preparation alone can improve results. What researchers currently know is that prepared and sufficiently trained leaders perform significantly better on the job than unprepared and unskilled ones (Greenfield 1985; Orr & Barber 2007). However, the degree to which certain types of preparation contribute directly to improved learner achievement in schools needs more scrutiny. Perhaps added to this scrutiny there has to be the role of the provider and the quality

of the provision. Orr (2010) cautioned that debates around leadership development programmes cannot be ignored as they shape the role of universities and other providers that prepare leaders for the ultimate school leadership position.

In summary, existing reviews and evaluations of preparation programmes note some positive impact on personal development, the enhancement of school's capacity for further development, and a range of pupil outcomes (Darling-Hammond et al. 2007; Simkins, Coldwell, Close & Morgan 2009b; Orr & Orphanos 2011), but preparation alone has not been directly linked to improved learner performance. In the recent evaluation of the national pilot leadership development programme in South Africa, Bush et al. (2009) showed that the programme led to improved confidence in principals as well as enhanced leadership learning. The research did not establish a direct effect on learner performance, but a later follow-up impact evaluation showed some improved learner outcomes and changed learner attitudes that could be linked to the programme (Bush, Duku, Glover, Kiggundu, Kola, Msila & Moorosi forthcoming). Overall, there are some positive outcomes linked to proper leadership preparation, but specific evidence on the effects of leadership preparation on student learning has more scrutiny.

## Methodology

There are 25 countries affiliated to the Commonwealth Council for Educational Administration and Management (CCEAM). In the first instance, all affiliates of the participating countries were emailed the initial questionnaire and ten responses were received. These participating countries are from the following regions: Africa (Namibia, Nigeria, South Africa, Seychelles and Uganda), the Pacific (Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea), the Caribbean (Trinidad and Tobago) and Asia (India). Subsequently, telephone interviews were also held with seven of the affiliate members, which triangulated and verified the questionnaire data as well as adding depth and detail to the findings.

The challenges of mailed questionnaires are well-documented (e.g Bell 2007; Punch 2009), but the return rate in this study was a satisfactory 40 per cent. The questionnaire was piloted with one country, which was also included in the study. This pilot made us aware of the complexity of leadership provision, particularly in places where there are multiple provisions, and enabled the revision of one ambiguous question in this regard.

This analysis relied on preliminary findings from questionnaires distributed to the CCEAM affiliates and follow-up interviews. The combined use of questionnaires and interviews triangulated data and ensured authenticity of the findings. However, a critical evaluation of the research design highlights some strengths and limitations: in some cases the affiliates were not best placed to answer the questions and were asked to pass the questionnaire on to the most appropriate person. Also, not all participants could be reached for telephone interviews. This may have compromised the richness of data, but it has not affected the authenticity of the study. There were also multiple CCEAM affiliates in some countries and, while there were no significant contradictions in the responses to the questionnaire, there were different responses to questions, which highlighted different interpretations of existing practices. Follow-up interviews clarified some of these ambiguities.

## Provision for Leadership Development

With regard to the provision of training, the findings reveal that all the participating countries provide leadership development and preparation opportunities for school leaders but to

varying degrees. In all ten countries, leadership development is provided at some stage after the appointment but three countries did not provide leadership preparation opportunities for aspiring principals, suggesting that principals assume their responsibilities before any specific leadership training. Table 1 provides a summary of leadership preparation and development in the Commonwealth countries that participated in the study.

**Table 1:** Leadership development provision in Commonwealth countries

Country	Preparation	Development
Australia (AU)	✓ Optional	✓ Optional
India (IN)	✓ Mandatory	✓ Mandatory
Namibia (NA)	✗	✓ Optional
New Zealand (NZ)	✓ Optional	✓ Optional
Nigeria (NG)	✓ Recommended	✓ Recommended
Papua New Guinea (PNG)	✓ Mandatory	✓ Mandatory
Seychelles (SY)	✗	✓ Recommended
South Africa (SA)	✓ Pilot	✓ Optional
Trinidad and Tobago (TT)	✓ Recommended	✓ Recommended
Uganda (UG)	✗	✓ Recommended

Where preparatory training was not provided, and did not serve as an entry requirement, principals were appointed on the basis of the management and leadership experience. The interview responses revealed that, in most countries, principals are expected to have some experience of middle management to be appointed into the post, which suggested that prior experience in a leadership position was valued for promotion. One affiliate states,

It is just how many years of experience and if you apply for a position that is available then you are appointed. (Affiliate 1)

Another one says,

Candidates are appointed on the basis of their experience in teaching as well experience in management which they would have acquired through promotion. (Affiliate 2)

Although almost all the countries participating in the study provide leadership training for their school leaders, Table 1 shows that only two have mandatory programmes for entry into school principalship. The questionnaire data showed only two countries requiring mandatory preparation training while they also provided mandatory training for continuing principals. However, the interview data revealed that there are more development programmes for school

leaders, which all school principals are expected to take in many other countries. It was also revealed in the case of PNG that mandatory status did not refer to the national programme, but was more specific to a particular association of principals and did not apply across the board.

Another factor that facilitated promotion to headship was the qualification of candidates. These might be undergraduate or postgraduate degrees, which are not necessarily focused on leadership and/or management. These qualifications were not mandatory, but there was an expectation that the principals would have them. Nigeria, for example, expects principals to have at least a bachelor's degree to be appointed, while in the Seychelles principals should have a master's degree in educational leadership. In Trinidad and Tobago, there is no mandatory entry requirement but, in practice, principalship is almost always given to candidates with a master's degree. As the affiliate says:

I have not recently seen a situation where a principal was appointed who did not have a master's degree. (Affiliate 3)

In these cases some postgraduate and undergraduate degrees appear to be strongly recommended yet they are not stipulated as a formal entry requirement. This leads to varied practices.

Where preparatory training was available, but not compulsory, it was not clear how many aspiring principals choose to enrol themselves into training courses that provide the necessary preparation for the principalship. It was clear, however, that formal preparation was not a requirement for entry into the principalship, but that seniority often counts for promotion. In the Seychelles, for example, the only formal mode of leadership development was the master's programme 'reserved' for senior leaders who are either already practising principals or are ready to be promoted. While potential and practising leaders often decide when to receive this training, the same could not be said about the Seychelles, where candidates for the master's programme are 'centrally selected'. A contrast to this was the Australian system, where provision lay with the state governments and the territories.

While the questionnaire data suggested that few of the countries (two out of ten) provide mandatory leadership training for aspiring principals, the interview data revealed that the mandatory requirement had different interpretations. Whereas in some countries mandatory provision referred to the whole country, in others, where there were different associations of principals, some provisions were mandatory for members of the association and not for the whole country. This was evidenced in both India and Papua New Guinea, where mandatory provision(s) appeared to be confined to certain associations and regions. South Africa's pilot project was intended to become mandatory for aspiring principals and to serve as an entry requirement into the principalship. As a significant policy move towards this, the pilot led to an official national requirement for principals to be trained within three years of their appointment. Also, after providing training for a significant number of aspiring principals, Seychelles had a *de facto* policy not to appoint untrained school leaders. Thus, political commitment to trained school leaders was evident.

## **Who are the Providers?**

The data revealed that many countries had multiple provision with a variety of providers offering programmes at both graduate and undergraduate levels. Several countries offered

training opportunities that were not centrally regulated but were offered by higher education institutions and/or private providers. Only the Seychelles had its programmes centrally regulated. In this context, even higher-education-based training was controlled by government through a selection programme. This control includes selecting candidates for the master's programme, believed to give people a better chance of promotion. Table 2 shows the different providers involved in the leadership development.

**Table 2:** Providers of leadership development programmes

CCEAM country	AI	S	P	L
Australia (AU)	✓	✓	✓	✓
India (IN)	✓	✓	✓	
Namibia (NA)	✓			
New Zealand (NZ)	✓	✓	✓	
Nigeria (NG)	✓			
Papua New Guinea (PNG)	✓		✓	
Seychelles (SY)	✓	✓		
South Africa (SA)	✓	✓	✓	✓
Trinidad and Tobago (TT)		✓		
Uganda (UG)	✓	✓		

AI = academic institution; S = state; P = private; L = local

Table 2 shows that the state and universities or colleges are the main providers, followed by private organisations and/or associations. In Nigeria, for example, some providers are consultants who nonetheless use the same material provided by government. Local or provincial governments were the least used providers as they were only evident in South Africa and Australia. The providers range from universities offering formal programmes leading to formal qualifications (in the case of India and PNG) to non-formal in-service workshops provided by government departments (e.g. Uganda) and principal associations (Nigeria). In PNG formal training programmes were also offered through colleges, while government and private associations led continuing and developmental in-service workshops. Generally, formal programmes leading to formal qualifications were mostly offered by colleges and universities, while in-service training appeared to be mostly the responsibility of governments and principal associations.

## The Content of Leadership Programmes

The findings show that different countries provide almost similar content for leadership training. All countries appear to be providing courses on school improvement/effectiveness, leadership for learning, and effective leadership and management. Other courses covered in almost all countries include team leadership and financial management. There were no

distinctions made between the type of content for aspiring and practising principals, which could suggest either flexibility or the likelihood of repetition. This could also suggest that content is influenced by global rather than contextual needs, such as the need for more effective leadership in schools. Many countries also had mentoring and coaching programmes in place for newly appointed principals even though this was not part of the curriculum for formal training. Table 3 provides an overview of the curriculum content.

**Table 3:** Content of leadership development programmes

Leadership topic	AU	IN	NA	NZ	NG	PNG	SA	SY	TT	UG
HR management	●	●			●		●	●	●	
Financial management	●	●	●		●		●	●	●	
School improvement	●	●	●		●		●	●	●	●
Team leadership	●	●		●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Effective L & M	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
Mentoring & coaching	●	●		●	●	●		●	●	
Policy	●			●	●		●	●	●	●
Leadership for learning	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	●
L & M theories	●			●	●	●	●	●	●	

HR: human resources; L&M: leadership and management.

There are many other topics covered but Table 3 presents a summary of the most common content topics across the participating countries. The delivery modes across the countries involved mostly lectures and seminars for university-based programmes, while state-led providers mostly used workshop-based delivery. Within the state-led provision, there was indication of content initiated by the participants or based on the needs of the school leaders in at least one context (TT) for in-service training, which suggests the possibility of more practice-based provision as opposed to theory-based. Due to the multiple nature of providers in many countries, there are also multiple methods and structures of delivery, which largely depend on the providers. In countries where the provision is mandatory, the mode of delivery largely involves formal teaching and lecturing while developmental training is through workshops and seminars regardless of the provider.

## Discussion

Bush & Jackson (2002) established that leadership training was mostly provided on an optional basis for both aspiring and practising principals. This does not appear to have changed, as the current study shows that only two of the ten countries provided compulsory training for entry into the principalship. While this may suggest little change in leadership preparation over a decade, it also means that a large number of principals assume the post without the necessary anticipatory socialisation training. In Bush & Jackson's study, there was a lack of focus on newly appointed principals. In the current study, the data suggest that the focus on newly

appointed principals has improved. In fact, there appeared to be more focus on newly appointed principals (than later on in their career), through mentoring and coaching programmes and other workshops offered by government or principal associations. While this may have been a good practice, it does suggest limited focus on continuous leadership development. However, although this may suggest a global trend, it should be noted that the two projects focused on different countries.

There are also variations in the nature and meaning of 'mandatory' provision. Our initial conception of mandatory provision implied a national entry qualification status, but the findings suggested that the involvement of different associations may also give programmes compulsory status within the association. While this adds to the level of commitment to developing principals, it still suggests some inconsistencies, differential experiences within a system and perhaps limited political commitment at a national level. Another level at which the mandatory status appeared problematic pertains to common practices that are referred to as 'expectations' but actually operate as the norm. In Trinidad and Tobago, it was not a stipulated requirement for aspiring principals to have a master's degree, but in reality many principals had been expected to have this qualification to qualify for the post. While it may signify high levels of academic and professional readiness, possession of a master's or undergraduate degree that is not specific to leadership still does not suggest adequate preparation for a school principal.

Moller & Schratz (2008) emphasise the significance of preparation programmes for principals, which they argue provide a useful base for theoretical engagement. They argue that 'the less preparation head teachers have, the more likely they are to fall back on their lay theories of leadership that are often premised on a very narrow experiential base of prior experience as a teacher' (2008: 363). The value of prior experiential learning as an entry requirement resonates with modern learning approaches that advocate customised and context-focus leadership learning. However, our view is that formal training is a significant part of the broader socialisation process that ensures that leadership practice is based on theory.

The content of leadership provision suggests a shift from what Bush & Jackson (2002) found in their study where the content included vision and mission, instructional leadership, financial management and human resource management. While some of these areas were still indicated as part of the leadership training curriculum in some countries in the current study, it was also found that some new topics such as effective leadership, leadership for learning and team leadership were more prevalent. The inclusion of topics on effective leadership appears to be responsive to the global pressure on schools to provide effective leadership that supports learning and teaching, but it does not seem to suggest the degree to which leadership training responds to contextual challenges. The twenty-first-century model of leadership learning (Bush et al. 2007) advances emergent and context-responsive learning that focuses more on the team rather than the individual leaders. In the current study, work-based learning was implied in development programmes for practising principals, suggesting a possibility of addressing the needs of the school leaders and their contexts. However, the same could not be established with regard to preparatory programmes, as these did not appear to be customised to the clients. As has been established in earlier studies (e.g Bush et al. 2007), customised programmes have more potential for context-based learning for leadership development within the school rather than generic ones that are open for all candidates and seem to focus on individual leaders. It is our contention that, when the focus is on developing leadership rather than developing individual leaders, crosscultural learning is more likely to happen.

The question of who is best placed to provide leadership learning has received significant attention in the USA, where providers are mostly universities. In the current study, providers were a combination of universities, and state-led and private providers, with the former being more for pre-service and latter two for in-service training. Delivery methods also comprised a mixture of lectures, seminars and workshops. As indicated in the introduction, debates around the nature of provision focus on the climate of effective leadership that improves student learning. A subsequent concern becomes that of eligibility of participants, which has implications for the quality of the programme and its impact. There was more control and uniformity of providers and participants in small island states such as the Seychelles and Trinidad and Tobago, rather than in bigger multistate countries such as Australia. However, the critical question that this study highlights as needing further attention is whether control and consistency necessarily ensure improved quality of leadership preparation and development programmes and their impact.

### **What Can we Learn Across Borders?**

In their analysis of school leadership development in Africa, Otunga et al. suggested that to some extent school leadership development challenges are universal, and urged African states to look beyond African borders for support (2008: 380). The view that there are universal problems and universal solutions is not shared in this paper, but the merit in learning from others' experiences across boundaries is acknowledged. This approach is influenced by the notion that each context is unique and requires its own context-specific approach to dealing with its challenges. However, only when leaders are aware of their contextual needs would they be in a position to learn and share experiences with others. In this way, context-specific solutions can be informed by global crosscultural experiences. Indeed, Crow asserts that leadership is a context-specific practice and so should be its development.

Are there lessons to be shared across contexts? In response to this question, Otunga et al.'s (2008) approach is a rather prescriptive one as opposed to critical and analytical, and does not leave room for shared and mutual 'international' learning between the different contexts, as well as inter- and intracultural learning within the region. In particular it does not leave room for much to be learned from the experiences on the African continent. An approach that is more resonant with the stance taken in this paper is one taken by Macpherson & Tofighian (2008), who cautioned us to be more thoughtful in adopting Western models as they tend to impose cultural homogeneity. Similar sentiments have been expressed around 'borrowing' and 'learning' from others' experiences. The latter is more critical and congruent with crosscultural learning as suggested in this paper. However, it is acknowledged that this is a complex approach that would need further scrutiny through research before it makes sense for practitioners and policy-makers.

### **Conclusion**

Bearing in mind the differentiation made at the beginning of the paper between preparation and development, it seems sensible to conclude that many Commonwealth countries focus more on leadership development than on preparation. The literature and the current study appear to be in agreement in noting the limited attention given to leadership preparation in spite of the consistent message across the literature on the importance of sufficient preparation for school principalship. Less focus on preparation means there is a chance that schools are

placed in the hands of unqualified personnel – but this is not clear-cut, as it has been established that principalship socialisation involves prior leadership experience as well. However, it is believed that preparation for school leadership is an important step in the right direction towards improved learning experience.

In addition, there appear to have been some shifts in the content of leadership learning but there still remains a critical question about the degree to which this is shaped by local contexts. The literature suggests that the more context-specific leadership learning is shaped by local experiences, the more chance it has to be responsive to both local and global challenges. However, evidence towards the latter was not strong in the literature or in the current study. Establishing the impact of leadership learning influenced by local experiences remains a challenge for further research as it is strongly believed that crosscultural learning becomes more meaningful when it is informed by local experiences.

Finally, it is perhaps important to recognise the complexity of the interplay between political, social and economic agents within which school leadership preparation and development operate, across the developing context. Understanding this interaction within the developing world continues to be a blank spot in our knowledge.

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## **Authors' Details**

Pontso Moorosi  
Institute of Education  
University of Warwick  
Coventry  
CV4 7AL  
UK  
Email: [p.c.moorosi@warwick.ac.uk](mailto:p.c.moorosi@warwick.ac.uk)

Tony Bush  
Institute of Education  
University of Warwick  
Coventry  
CV4 7AL  
UK  
Email: [tony.bush@ntlworld.com](mailto:tony.bush@ntlworld.com)

