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More than ever in today's atmosphere of heightened expectations, principal effectiveness is playing a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools and improving school achievement. To better understand the effectiveness of school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain, this study investigated school principal effectiveness in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the skills needed to be successful in the roles and responsibilities of school leaders.

Through a qualitative approach, interviews with school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain were carried out to uncover data that would reveal the commonalities of principals' needs and describe thinking that impacts their effectiveness. The study discusses the effectiveness of school principals from the perspective of school principals and compares those perceptions with the North Carolina School Executive Standards

To gain thoughtful information about school principal effectiveness in the Kingdom of Bahrain, fifteen school principals were interviewed in the Kingdom of Bahrain about their perspectives about school principal effectiveness. These participants' perspectives will inform the reader about the reality of the school principalship in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the evaluation tools that are now used and what they think about them, and the impact of these tools on their skills. Using the

lens of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives further illuminated the areas of strength and development for Bahraini principals.

The study found that there are no standards adopted for school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and there is no plan in place to develop future standards.

The study also found that principals have managerial roles that were impacted by the ministry policy, culture, and religion. In addition, the principals mentioned eighteen skills that they believed are essential for effective school leaders. Those mentioned most often were knowledge, ability to communicate, delegate responsibility, spirit leader, and professional development. Unfortunately, participants ignored many important issues even though the North Carolina Standards for School Executives emphasized them as criteria principals should use to develop their schools.

COMPARING PERCEPTIONS OF SCHOOL PRINCIPAL EFFECTIVENESS
IN THE KINGDOM OF BAHRAIN WITH THE U.S.
PRINCIPALSHIP LITERATURE

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Education reform has attempted to apply a variety of guidelines and standards that assist leaders in mastering a common knowledge base to assure competent professionalism. The development of professional standards is a continuous mission to find consensus among policymakers and scholars relating to a common body of knowledge and a set of competencies, dispositions, and language. Scholars in the field of education consider standards designed to create alignment between the academic curriculum and hands-on experience and performance as essential factors that determine professional status and quality performance. “The standards will serve as an important tool for principals and assistant principals as they consider their growth and development as executives leading schools in the 21st century” (NC State Board of Education, 2013, p. 3). This study concerns school principal effectiveness in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the skills needed to be successful in their roles and responsibilities as school leaders. Through a qualitative approach, interviews with school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain were carried out to discover trend data that would validate the commonalities of principals’ needs and tools and describe potential thoughts that impact their effectiveness. The study reveals the effectiveness of school principals from the perspective of school principals and compares those perceptions with the U.S. principalship literature.

Rationale of the Study

More than ever in today's atmosphere of heightened expectations, principals are playing a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools and are key to improving school achievement. The performance of school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain is below the expectation, as the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training (QAAET, 2009) has declared. Researchers have not studied Bahraini school principal effectiveness and the skills needed for them to be successful in their roles.

The QAAET (2009) examination is based on the analysis of 72 out of 204 public schools (just over one third, 35%). Of the 72 schools reviewed, just over half (53%) were primary schools and 15% were secondary, in line with the greater number of primary schools compared to secondary schools. Twenty-one percent of the schools reviewed were intermediate and a further 11% were mixed primary-intermediate schools. Over half of the schools were found to be satisfactory (53%). Two were found to be excellent (3%), and just under one-third were rated good (30%). Fourteen percent of schools were providing an inadequate overall quality of education. Primary schools generally outperformed secondary schools. Two schools, both of them primary, were found to be outstanding. One was a boys' school and the other a girls' school. Just under half of secondary schools (45%) were inadequate (Annual Report, 2009).

Relating to effectiveness of the schools' leadership and management in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the QAAET report mentions that in the great majority of schools (82%), leadership and management are satisfactory or good. Approximately half (51%) have at least good leadership and management and 8% of these (6 schools) are

outstanding. The review framework emphasizes driving continuous improvement through effective self-evaluation (Annual Report, 2009). This has presented a significant challenge in many schools where managerial duties are the main focus of the work of the principal. From day to day, there are substantial managerial demands placed on principals from different quarters in the Ministry, and this distracts too many of them from focusing on improving the quality of teaching and raising performance levels. Instead of time being spent on supporting school improvement, too much of their time is spent on bureaucracy, which takes higher priority. Additionally, school principals are driven by the priorities set by others who do not have school improvement at the center of their work, and principals have little power to control this given the lack of autonomy. The lack of autonomy impacts schools in different ways. For example, principals are not able to control staffing and are dependent on teachers sent to them by the Ministry of Education. Often principals are moved from one school to another before they have had a chance to make a difference.

In the weakest schools (10% are inadequate), strategic improvement planning is not developed, teaching and learning are not effective, and the poor behavior of a minority of students hinders their progress and achievement as well as the progress of the majority of students. These behavior issues, as well as low-level disruptions, are dealt with ineffectively.

Few schools carry out rigorous monitoring and evaluation, and where this does occur, the information about the quality of teaching and learning across the school is not often used to drive the school's improvement. In particular, schools rarely use student

performance data to target resources or raise achievement for classes, let alone the entire school (Alsaleh, 2008). As a result, issues of underachievement are not precisely diagnosed in order to plan interventions. There are examples of excellent teaching in schools, and two examples of excellent schools. However, rarely have schools formally planned the spreading and sharing of best practices, and therefore they fail to capitalize on what is best in the system. To develop schools and school leadership in the Kingdom of Bahrain, more study needs to be done, particularly research on school leadership, because research points out that there is a connection between school leadership and student achievement. In addition, principals' actions and practices are not research based, since principals are busy with day-to-day issues that prevent them from developing leadership skills.

Problem Statement

The Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain has made many efforts to improve the education system through advanced projects. However, these principalship programs do not focus on the school principal and provides little space for principal training. Throughout my experience as a school principal, there was an evaluation at the end of the year for school principals that focused on managerial responsibility. School principals have no standards that can be used as a tool to develop principal skills and leadership. In addition, the evaluation is based on routine progress that has no critical impact on developing principals' effectiveness.

This study centers on principal effectiveness in the Kingdom of Bahrain in view of the fact that there is no study the researcher is aware of that highlights school principal

leadership. As the field develops, school leaders have more responsibility that impacts teacher performance and student achievement. Research has demonstrated that school leadership has direct and indirect implications leading to student achievement (Rautiola, 2009).

The researcher studied school principals' perspectives in the Kingdom of Bahrain, what they think an effective principal should look like, and what tools would help them to be effective principals, and then compared their perceptions to the North Carolina School Executive Standards. The researcher shed light on the reality of the school principalship in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the evaluation tools that are now used and what they think about them, and the impact of these tools on their skills. Using the lens of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives further illuminated the areas of strength and development for Bahraini principals.

Experience and Expectations

The researcher's experience as an educator and school leader in a foreign country has been much different from what he learned and observed in the university leadership program in the U.S. The researcher has 15 years of experience as a teacher, an assistant principal, and principal in the Kingdom of Bahrain Schools and Universities. The constitutional foundations of Bahraini education are based upon two principles set forth by the Ministry of Education (MOE). Adopted on May 26, 1973, and effective since December 6, 1973, the Constitution of the State of Bahrain guarantees education as a basic right of Bahraini citizens. Article 4 of the Constitution refers to education as one of

the “pillars of society guaranteed by the Kingdom of Bahrain.” (Ministry of Education, 2013)

The Directorate of Curricula at the Ministry of Education provides textbooks in every subject for all students in public schools, free of charge, at the beginning of each academic year. Textbooks are generally written locally by curricula specialists and university faculty in Bahrain. They are printed and produced locally by the government through their printing organization Educational Technology Center Press. The textbooks for private education are determined by each private school and must comply with the Ministry’s criteria (Ministry of Education, 2013).

The Ministry provides a cafeteria in each school. Meals served are authorized by the Ministry of Education with the cooperation of the Ministry of Health. Food is prepared and sold by contractors (tradesmen and restaurant owners). The MOE supervision committee regulates each school’s commitment to providing healthy food choices, and the contractors are obligated to abstain from selling prohibited food and drink. There is no system of free and reduced meals for children. All students pay the same amount, and there is only breakfast served at school (Ministry of Education, 2013).

The Ministry provides free transportation for the students living far from their schools who do not have their own transportation. Some private schools provide transportation for their students for a fee. Higher education institutions also provide transportation for their students who live far from the schools (Ministry of Education, 2013). The principal plays a critical role in assuring that all the above operations are in place and work collaboratively to ensure students receive a fair and proper education.

When I was nominated to be an assistant principal at high school, I was appointed to a public K–12 school unlike other public schools in Bahrain. The country of Bahrain has 36 high schools, 67 middle schools, and 110 elementary schools. Under the public school category, only my school has three levels in one building. For that reason, I was in constant contact with the director of middle and elementary school, in addition to the director of high school. My school's curriculum content, budget, student grading system, and final exams were mostly different from public schools, but there are some similarities in middle and elementary school. Because I was supervising more than one grade level, I attended many training programs that were offered by the Ministry of Education. The training programs are designed to help school leaders develop skills they need to operate schools effectively. In addition, the Ministry trains the principals to implement new programs related to curriculum, student development, and technology that contribute to the agenda of the MOE (Ministry of Education, 2013). These programs are an attempt aimed at developing school leaders' skills as well as student achievement.

Based on my background in the Kingdom of Bahrain, when I began my interviews with school principals from my country, I expected that their experiences as administrators would differ significantly from what is expected in the U.S. in a variety of ways. Firstly, while interviewees talk about the ideal principal who operates school-based programs on all the criteria I have cited, the reality is that their scope of work is largely in the area of management. Secondly, like American school systems, it was the researcher's belief that the subjects would be most likely to identify with the lack of autonomy and the ability to make decisions based on the needs and culture of the school,

since the MOE controls all schools, and principals are not allowed to act independently of the desires of the MOE.

Additionally, the researcher anticipated that the subjects would also disagree with the shared decision making model that is often practiced in schools in this country.

Unlike principals in the U.S., principals in Bahrain are allowed to give executive orders based on their own judgment with little to no involvement from the stakeholders within the school. As a result, I expected that few principals would have the tools to effectively engage the community in school decisions, thus creating isolation between home and school. While many parents may be interested in helping the school and being a part of the school environment, without real opportunities to engage stakeholders in school issues, strong relationships between the two cannot be established.

I expected that one of the main similarities between the two groups of principals would be the emphasis on testing. The MOE prepares final exams for all students, and teachers must ensure that students are prepared for these exams by covering the curriculum thoroughly throughout the year. The researcher believes that this requirement elicited responses from those whom he interviewed about the lack of preparation they have to be true instructional leaders in their schools. The researcher had doubts that school principals in Bahrain would communicate strong professional beliefs about school, teaching, and learning that reflect the latest research and best practices in preparing students for success in college or in work, simply because there is no strong connection between higher education and school principals. Most of the schools have an

improvement plan, student achievement data, and dropout data, but they lack documented use of formative assessment instruments to impact instruction.

Bahrain public schools are mostly filled with native students. Foreign students have their own schools, with the exception of a few private schools that have a multicultural environment. In recent years public schools were starting to include foreign students as well (Ministry of Education, 2013). With this shift in demographics, the administrators included in this study would probably have feedback regarding how this change is challenging their leadership skills, as well as their personal convictions and beliefs about cultures other than their own.

Thus, principals in Kingdom of Bahrain are not prepared to understand the important role of diversity as it contributes to the performance of the school. Many of the teachers come to the Kingdom of Bahrain from other countries to work under a two-year contract, subject to renewal, which causes some conflict with students' culture. For that reason, there is no visible support for positive, culturally-responsive traditions that build school community or a sense of efficacy and empowerment among staff.

To develop school principals' skills in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Ministry of Education could benefit from the U.S., a country that has spent time and effort developing school leadership. Bahrain is a small country in the Arabic region. For a long time it only had one university and expended little effort and research in developing school principals' leadership. There are no standards in the Kingdom of Bahrain for school principals. The U.S. has made excellent efforts to develop school principals' leadership and good experience throughout its huge education system. Therefore,

interviewing school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain is needed and critical because it can provide rich information in understanding the causes of low scores in leadership in the national evaluations, discover effective principals compared to NC Standards for School Executives, analyze the lack of training for school principals, review the current principal evaluation system, and recommend what the principal might need to be effective. In addition, there is no research about school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The Bahraini school principals in this study were exposed to another country's efforts and standards, which will be the foundation for developing leadership skills that are in demand in the 21st century, as well as help them to develop their own standards.

Research Questions

In-depth interviews are a useful qualitative data collection technique to be used in discovering individual perspectives about concerning issues. The technique was used to explore the school principals' perspectives on principals' effectiveness in the Kingdom of Bahrain, and then compare them to NCSSE standards. Therefore, the researcher developed an interview-based approach that shed light on their perspectives. The researcher's goal was to allow principals share their thoughts. Consequently, to achieve this goal the researcher addressed the following questions and sub-questions:

What are the perspectives of school principals in The Kingdom of Bahrain about effective school principals?

- What organizational policy factors influence the effective principal practice in Bahrain?

- What are the perspectives of school principals about the current roles of the school principal in Bahrain?
- How does principal practice in Bahrain compare to the North Carolina School Executives standards?
- What skills do principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain need to be effective school leaders?

Background of the Study

Bahrain History

Anciently known as Dilmun, Bahrain was known to the Greeks as Tylos. Ruled by Portugal in the 16th century and by Persia intermittently from 1603, Bahrain became a sheikhdom in 1783, but it became a British-protected state in 1861. Many aspects of the education system in Bahrain are impacted by the British educational system. In 1971 Bahrain became an independent country and adopted a constitution in 1973, which limited the ruler's powers and established an elected national Parliament (Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2011). After two years, the rulers suspended the constitution and dissolved the national Parliament due to the tension between the government and Parliament.

Bahraini territory was used by allied forces during the 1991 Arabian Gulf War. Sheikh Isa bin Salman Al-Khalifa, who had ruled since 1961, died in 1999; he was succeeded by his son, Sheikh Hamad bin Isa Al-Khalifa. A new national charter establishing a constitutional monarchy was approved in 2001, and Bahrain was proclaimed a Kingdom in 2002. Elections to the lower house of the National Assembly

were held in October 2002; they marked the first time that women in an Arab Gulf monarchy could vote or run for national office (Al Mahadeen, 2010).

The Political System

The governmental system in the Kingdom of Bahrain is based on separation of legislature, executive, and judiciary powers, with their cooperation according to the Constitution rules. Two councils have been established by decree—Law No. (15) of 2002—the Consultative Council and House of Representatives. The Consultative Council's task is to offer opinion and advice on various questions submitted to it by the Cabinet, which cover bills, general policy matters, and economic and social development projects, as well as any other issues on which the Cabinet may seek the Council's advice. The task of the House of Representatives is to monitor the executive's actions and behaviors. It coordinates with the Shura Council in issuing bills approved by the King. The legislative power in the Kingdom of Bahrain is held by both Councils according to the principles of the National Action Charter (NAC), which the Bahraini voted overwhelmingly (98.4%) in favor of, and was issued on February 14, 2002 (Ministry of Finance, 2011) according to the Constitution of the Kingdom of Bahrain,.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is an archipelago consisting of 33 islands, five of which are inhabited. The largest of these islands are Bahrain, Muharraq, Umm an Nasan, Nabih Saleh, and Sitra. Bahrain is one of the most densely populated countries in the world, with a total land mass of 760 square kilometers. To the southeast of Bahrain is the State of Qatar, and to its west lies the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to which it is connected by a 25-kilometer causeway. To the north and east of Bahrain lies the Islamic Republic of

Iran. The territory of Bahrain is divided for administrative purposes into five governorates: The Capital, Muharraq, Northern, Southern, and Central. As of 2010 official statistics reported that 42% of the population lives in the two largest cities, Manama and Muharraq. According to the 2010 census, the total number of persons residing in Bahrain was 1,234,571 (The Central Informatics Organization, 2011).

Education in Bahrain

The history of education in Bahrain dates back to the Middle Ages with the spread of Islamic schools in mosques and in the homes of scientists. These schools offered classes in literature, language, memorizing the Quran, learning to write, and some of the other sciences such as philosophy. Post-Islamic schools, or Katateeb, were started by scientists (AlMudhahki, 2009). These scientists created classrooms in their homes and paid all costs of operating and maintaining the classroom. Consequently, this grassroots effort increased the number of educated people in the country.

In 1912 the first formal education school in the Kingdom of Bahrain was founded through the Ali Bin Ibrahim Alzayani School in Muharraq. Afterwards the people of Bahrain, including the rulers, elders, traders, and dignitaries realized the importance of education in people's lives and consequently started raising funds for the construction of the first edifice of science and knowledge in the territory of Bahrain. This collective effort on behalf of the rulers, elders, and traders made this dream a reality in 1919, when the first public school was built. The first school in the Arabian Gulf region, situated in Muharraq city, was called Alhedayah Alkhalifiya (Al Mahadeen, 2010). Alhedayah Alkhalifiyaah was built during the reign of Sheikh Isa bin Ali Al Khalifa, the ruler of

Bahrain. The cooperative effort led the way for the establishment of more schools in different areas of Bahrain.

In 1921, another primary boys' school—also called “Alhedayah Alkhalifiyah”—opened in the capital city of Manama, and in 1927 two boys schools were established; one in Alhidd city and the other in East Riffa, both of which took up the same name: “Alhedayah Alkhalifiyah.” The government's interest in education accelerated the establishment of schools, and parents were encouraged to contribute to the effort of creating schools. Consequently, several schools opened in the next few years. The first girls' elementary school was opened in 1928. In 1932 oil was found in Bahrain—the first discovery of oil on the Arabian side of the Gulf. The reserve, however, was relatively small. Accordingly, Bahrain has moved judiciously through the 20th century, diversifying its economy and nurturing international business relationships. In 1936 the first industrial school was established, and a secondary school for girls was opened in 1951. A religious school for Shari'a (Islamic law) scholars was opened in 1943, which later became the Religious Institute of Bahrain in 1960 (Al Mahadeen, 2010).

The first private education endeavors began in 1952 with the opening of the Manama School, followed in 1961 by the promulgation of the Private Education Act. The Teachers College was inaugurated in 1966, and in 1968 Bahrain University opened its doors after a reincorporation of Khaliji Technical College. As of 2001, private education accommodated an estimated 15% of school age students. In 1971 the Joint National Committee for Adult Education was organized, and in 1979 the Bahrain University's College of Arts, Sciences, and Education opened. In the same year, the

Arabian Gulf University was inaugurated with the institution of its Faculty of Medicine (Annual Report, 2008). According to the Ministry of Education's latest statistics, there were 209 government schools and 67 private schools by academic year 2010–2011, total student enrollment in the government schools was 127,670, and approximately 88% of the teachers in these schools were Bahraini (Ministry of Education, 2011).

In 1999 a conference was held to discuss the reformation and development of educational systems in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries (Annual Report, 2008). The conference presented a remarkable report that underlined the importance of aligning the education sectors of Gulf countries with actual labor market needs so as to ensure greater economic productivity, workforce efficiency, and social stability. In addition, important requirements for GCC countries suggested by educational research included curriculum reform, employer involvement, and a higher level of quality assurance through systems of external accountability.

A clear and modern framework governed education in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The legal framework constitution was drafted in 2002 and guaranteed the right to a free education for all residents, as well as a compulsory education, as mentioned in Article 7 of the Constitution:

State shall sponsor sciences, literatures and arts and encourage scientific research besides providing educational and cultural services to the citizens, education shall be free and compulsory in the first stages defined by the law which draws up the necessary plan to eradicate illiteracy. (Department of legal affairs, 2011, p. 1)

At the commencement of the 2005–2006 academic year, basic education became a right for all children beginning at age six. In the Kingdom of Bahrain, a nine-year-long

basic education is compulsory for children between the ages of six and fourteen. It was introduced in 2006 in accordance with Education Law No. 27 of 2005, which stated that all children must be enrolled either in the state-run schools or the private schools.

Children with severe disabilities are also required to attend school but receive education in special institutions that cater to their diverse physical and educational needs.

According to the Constitution of Bahrain, the government should provide a free basic education, and parents and guardians should abide by this law for nine academic years.

The Ministry of Education's responsibility is to issue the relevant resolutions that organize and ensure parent and guardian compliance with the law, in addition to drawing up the necessary plans to implement the education law.

The Ministry of Education administers the government's educational institutions and supervises private educational institutions in the country. The organization consists of the Minister of Education, Secretary General of the Council of Higher Education, the Undersecretaries for recourses and service, and the Undersecretary for educational affairs and curriculum, who oversees the following directorates: Educational Services and Private Education, General and Technical Education, Financial and Administrative Affairs, Curricula and Training, and Educational Planning and Information (see Appendix A).

According to the Annual Report of 2008, the development of Bahrain's human resources potential is a high priority on the government agenda. It aims to develop Bahrain's services and industrial sectors to compensate for decreases in oil revenue. Under the Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs, the Training Promotions Office is

working to establish an internationally accredited national vocational qualification system, modeled after the British system. Aligning the industrial and services sectors with the national education system is a key component of this strategy. The government is pursuing ambitious technological agendas, as exemplified by the introduction of Internet-based teaching and learning initiatives in government schools. In 1998 the government's investment in education amounted to Bahraini Dinars (BD) 82 million (about U.S. \$21.8 million).

Women in Bahrain were granted suffrage and the right to stand for office under the National Action Charter. In 2006, a woman was elected to the Council of Representatives for the first time in Bahrain. In 2006, Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa became the third woman to become President of the UN General Assembly. While Bahraini women have made gains in higher education and now comprise 70% of students in tertiary education, leadership roles in private, public, and higher education remain solidly male. Female participation in the labor force in 2008 stood at 35%. In addition, the number of women in leadership positions in public and private sectors is still disproportionately low when compared to their qualifications (Annual Report, 2009).

New Educational District System

There is no denying the fact that the Ministry of Education is the body charged with organizing and providing educational services since it provides free basic and secondary education for all citizens; 80% of students in all levels study at 206 government schools while 20% study at private schools, besides children who join private kindergartens (Ministry of Education, 2013). The Ministry of Education's new

structure includes an advanced description of roles and tasks and a systematic approach with regard to the distribution of powers and responsibilities. The approach is based on the principle of the centralization of planning and the decentralization of execution. A new educational district system was introduced in the 2005–2006 academic year; each district comprises 20 primary schools (Alsaleh, 2008). According to the Ministry of Education, this system, which was implemented to create decentralized administration, will enhance efficiency in school systems and will allow daily follow up and facilitate school work through coordination and integration between the central administration and the education district. The school as an educational institution undertakes running of its administrative and academic affairs under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. The ministry has recently directed its concerns towards the development of the school and its mechanism to reform education and to further improve its quality in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

To develop school performance and upgrade their educational and administrative activity, the Ministry of Education has introduced programs in 2008 with the intention of tackling the development of school performance and leadership. Among several programs created there are five major projects (Annual Report, 2008):

- Model of an Excellent School: Provides criteria for excellence that enables schools to utilize it for self-assessment and outlining their priorities.
- School leadership: Aims to enhance school leadership. It comprises the assessment of leadership teams, strategic planning, budget, and monitoring the performance of school teachers, administration and the technical staff.

- **Teaching to Boost Education:** Based on improving the effectiveness of the teaching process in schools.
- **School Performance:** Fosters the requirements for information and transparency through the use of key performance indicators, the challenging and supportive system, operations and results, and the criteria the ministry uses to evaluate schools' performance.
- **Improving the Ministry of Education Performance:** Improve performance by pinpointing the required changes and their applications to further enhance school performance on a large scale.

The Structure of Education and Projects

The educational system in the Kingdom of Bahrain follows a ladder of twelve years—six years in primary level, three years in intermediate level, and three years of secondary education, in its various tracks, and then higher education. In the 2005–2006 academic year the system of unified tracks commenced. It included science, literary, and commercial tracks. The system replaced and canceled the separated tracks system (General, Science, Literary, and Commercial). In subsequent years the Vocational Apprenticeship was introduced. According to the Ministry of Education, the unified academic track in secondary education will give all students the opportunity to join various universities and colleges either inside Bahrain or overseas.

The higher education law passed in 2005 and endorsed for the first time the establishment of a Higher Education Council, which will look after administration, scientific research, and student affairs. The Higher Education Council General

Secretariat has drawn up the financial, academic, and administrative bylaws that organize the work of private higher education institutions, set conditions for the appointment of staff in academic jobs, and introduce a data system for staff. Since the philosophical framework of the Ministry of Education action plan is akin to the Kingdom's own philosophical framework, the King issued Law No. 27 of 2005, which comprises 14 articles. Article 3, which defined the education strategic goals in the Kingdom of Bahrain, states:

education aims to develop the learner at the cultural, vocational, scientific, national, emotional, ethical, mental, social, health, behavioral, and sport levels within the tenets of Islam, Arab heritage, modern culture, and the customs and traditions of the Bahraini society. Education also aims to inculcate in the learner the spirit of citizenship, patriotism, and allegiance to the King, emphasizing the role of Islamic religion in the integration of personality, family cohesion, and unity within the society and highlighting the role of Islam as a guide in everyday life and its ability to keep pace with all modern developments at all times and places. (Ministry of Education, 2013)

In relation to the curriculum, the Ministry of Education adopted a vision for future education in the Kingdom of Bahrain that asserted various needs in curricula such as the concept of citizenship and patriotism; diversification of vocational and academic tracks; the interaction of curricula with the requirements of the labor market; further kinds of family, environment, and health education; and compliance with communications and information technology revolution. The ministry aims to comprehensively review and update the current curricula (Ministry of Education, 2013). For inclusive quality development of the curricula, the ministry introduced several projects as a part of its development plan as follows:

- Development and review of the current curricula,
- Implementation of a plan for developing science and math curricula,
- Converting a substantial portion of these curricula to electronic media,
- Implementation of the integrated curricula project in primary school with the aim of incorporating it to become one entity,
- Teaching English from the first primary grade level, and
- Introduction of civics syllabi in all stages of education and community service and life skills syllabi as well.

Although there are several projects in education in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the level of education is still below the desired competitive level. Thus, in 2006 the Bahrain Cabinet endorsed a new national project to evaluate and develop the outcomes of education and preparation programs in public school and higher education. The initiatives led to the adoption of new techniques to ensure the provision of quality education. They have also brought about a qualitative leap in education. In this context, the Ministry of Education has worked in conjunction with the Economic Development Board and the National Institute of Education in Singapore to set up a new college for training teachers, which started in the academic year 2008–2009.

The initiative included setting up an independent Quality Assurance Authority to ensure the quality of education (Alsaleh, 2008). In 2007–2008, the Quality Assurance Authority for Education & Training (QAAET) conducted a National Evaluation process to study the performance of 50 schools in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The final report mentions that public schools need more support. The QAAET had divided the schools

into four categories: inadequate, satisfactory, good, and excellent. It was noted in the final reports that while 88% of schools had received satisfactory or good, 12% of schools were rated inadequate, and none were named as excellent; intervention was needed to support the development of performance for the better, particularly school leadership. Researchers relied on the empirical link between school leadership and improved student achievement.

School Leadership in the Kingdom of Bahrain

Even though all developing steps were put into place in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the reality is telling us that “school lost much of its appeal” (Goodlad, 1984, p. 7). There are many factors that change school effectiveness in the Kingdom of Bahrain—the economics of providing for such essentials as food, clothing, and other factors is changing the nature of communities. Educators themselves became divided because they belonged to professional organizations that reinforce these affiliations rather than a concern for the educative process. The Ministry of Education strategies are not based on an analysis of what currently exists in school but the requirement of the labor market and the universal world.

Based on my experience, teaching did not meet students’ needs, and traditional practice and wisdom affected students’ learning and resulted in students hating school. There is a need to improve instructional leadership plans that reflect empirical, research-based methods and that are also consistent with the Ministry of Education’s strategies. This plan will help the Ministry of Education to step forward to develop school practices and develop the educational leader’s programs that take into account the fact that

“Leadership is a collective relationship in which roles and responsibilities are distributed among all stakeholders in a program” (Biddle, 2010, p. 2). Many of the decisions in the Kingdom of Bahrain are made at a high level without sharing the information and continuing the talks at the school level. What schools need is a leadership capacity that creates a group of leaders so that when a leader leaves, the school community can keep going, whether the leader is a teacher, a principal, or a powerful parent. Many school staff members are affected when the school’s leader leaves because they equate leadership with the leader only (Lambert, 1998).

As for me and being a longtime teacher in many schools in the Kingdom of Bahrain, I cited and noticed that teachers were talking and discussing issues of pursuing a teaching career, so what I found after analyzing the situation and out of my personal experience is that one of the important dilemmas in Bahraini schools is that many teachers neglect school goals, and teachers often repeat that teaching is the worst job ever or worse, saying that their big mistake in life was choosing a career as teachers.

“Teachers frequently have perceived themselves as confronting difficult problems of teaching less motivated students” (Goodlad, 1984, p. 12). Many feel that they are ignored by the school leadership and the Ministry of Education.

Principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain need to communicate with and inspire the participation of stakeholders, as well as be involved in the stakeholders’ needs and wants and the implementation of vision. Principals in Bahraini schools need to focus on bringing opportunities to the surface and mediating perceptions, values, beliefs, information, and assumptions through continuing conversations. This will help school

personnel to feel better about the school and education system and encourage them “to inquire about and generate ideas together; to seek to reflect upon and make sense of work in the light of shared beliefs and new information; and to create actions that grow out of these understandings” (Lambert, 1998, p. 6).

The Ministry of Education “mandate what matters” (Fullan, 2012, p. 22) based on what is decided in the upper level. It is important to share information with teachers, students, and parents. What is available for one school may not be appropriate for another school. In addition, from my experience, I did not reach the school’s goal if I mandated what mattered and most of the time I faced resistance and rejection. The Ministry of Education should encourage principals to focus on working together to create a shared vision and skill development.

The Ministry of Education is taking steps to change schooling to improve students’ learning, and all of these changes seem—to the school personnel—without purpose because they do not share their opinion, they do not understand these changes or developments, they do not know the reason for those changes, and they do not share their values and beliefs about the change. This condition in schools leads scholars in Bahrain to think about making it a priority for principals to be “facilitators of teachers’ growth” instead of being “inspectors of teacher competence” (Reitzug, West, & Angel, 2008, p. 695). For example, two years ago the Minister of Education personally came to a school’s main gate to observe teachers coming late. Many principals think of roles or people as fixed entities instead of viewing them as patterns of relationships that involve one another. The school leader should exemplify understanding of leadership as “the

reciprocal process that enables participants in an educational community to construct meanings that lead toward a common purpose of schooling” (Lambert et al., 2002, p. 4).

The school principal needs to evoke potential in a trusting environment to reconstruct or break with old assumptions and myths, focus on construction of meaning, and frame actions that embody new behaviors and purposeful intention. It is important to build trust between the principal, school personnel, and the Ministry of Education. In reality, teachers do not trust the Ministry of Education because they feel it is acting in a way that does not help teachers to improve, understand their needs, or share their desire for development.

Therefore, the Ministry of Education should use inquiry-based data to inform decisions and practice instead of the traditional wisdom that states that the upper level or the superior knows best how things work for the school. Consequently, many decisions were made without considering different voices, particularly teachers’ voices. The result is a collective resistance on the school level. Change can be easy in schools if it is based on reciprocal learning processes that consists of (a) bringing to the surface, clarifying, and defining school community values, beliefs, assumptions, perceptions, and experience; (b) inquiring into practice by generating information that could point to whether or not and how well students are learning in the desired ways; (c) constructing meaning and knowledge by comparing beliefs and expectations with the results of inquiry by continuing conversations with all stakeholders individually and collectively about students’ learning and why they hate school and teachers; and (d) framing action and developing implementation plans on the basis of the various conversations so everyone in

school feels he/she is part of the school's change to improve school practice (Fullan, 1993).

The change in schools should be considered a journey, not a blueprint, and any plan in school should be built after understanding the school environment, such as concerns of teachers, students, and parents. Any plan will not be successful if it is built in a private room with only some of the teachers and school's personnel present. In contrast, when principals share the school activities and plan with all school personnel, the school community will challenge the status quo and lead the journey until the desired change at the school occurs regardless of the difficulties and anxieties. The difficulties and anxieties convert to an interesting part of the journey. Fullan (1993) mentions that "people will not venture into uncertainty unless they appreciate that difficulties are a natural part of any change scenario" (p. 24). If school personnel lead the change they will face difficulties and anxiety if they believe in the ideas of change.

I remember that a decision was made by the Ministry of Education to build a power station at a school playground, although the school needed more classes and a sports field. The principal had no power to reject the decision because it came from a higher level at the Ministry. He shared the problem with the school community, parents, and the person who he believed had power in society. This effort ended with high collaboration and strong voices that used newspapers and other media to stop building the power station at the school.

To improve schools' practices, important factors should be considered. Schools need to improve the measures used to determine their health. Often school principals use

test scores to tell them everything about their school and the quality of education; school principals lack the diagnosis skills necessary when the scores are in decline. In addition, the first step should be to determine what is currently in existence, so that all the future steps and strategies should be based on what we have and what we need. If changes are to be more than cosmetic, a school's culture should be understood (Goodlad, 1984). In the Kingdom of Bahrain, it is important to consider all groups' faith in the new strategies; what is occurring recently is a result of ignoring conflict among groups, as well as the stakeholder's participation, which should be included in the Ministry of Education's vision and mission.

Many of the school issues that are mentioned above can be resolved if schools have leaders who understand their role and develop their leadership skills. School principals have an important role that impacts the school environment and connects the school to the community. Therefore, there is a need to focus and develop school principal leadership standards and understand the policy governing leadership behavior. In addition to the Ministry of Education's efforts to develop schooling in the Kingdom of Bahrain, school principal leadership is critical in these efforts and many steps should be taken to improve school principal leadership. One of the most important steps in achieving this goal is to benefit from research and experiences in the field of leadership. For example, the U.S. has an excellent history of effort that focuses on developing school leader skills. The school leaders in the Kingdom of Bahrain can gain enormous benefit from the development experience in the U.S. For that reason, the next chapter will shed

light on developing school principal standards in the U.S. in general, and North Carolina in particular.

Overview of the Study

To better understand the problem statement of the study, I conducted a qualitative interview-based study involving elementary, middle, and high school principals. Next, I engaged the principals in sharing their experiences and perspectives about effective school principals. I examined their common point of view considering for themes to emerge that would inform school principals about perspectives' implications on their leadership skills. Therefore, I provided a forum in which participants could be heard through sharing in-depth. Finally, I interpreted the data shared by participants and I communicated my insight into the experiences shared.

In the next chapter, the development of the school principal standards in the U.S. in general, and North Carolina in particular is explored. In addition, a comparison between North Carolina School Standard for Executive (NCSSE) and Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortiums (ISLLC) is presented. Chapter III focuses on an introduction to the research setting and participants, data analysis, and the overall data collection process. Chapter IV consists of analysis of the data about principals' perspectives toward effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain, organizational policy factors influence the effective principals, the current roles of school principal, skills principal need to be effective, and principal practice in Bahrain compared to North Carolina Executive Standards. The final chapter involves the interpretation of the data collections through the interviews and the implication of this research.

CHAPTER II

STANDARDS AND STANDARDS COMPARISONS

This chapter contains three sections:

- The ISLLC standards history and development.
- North Carolina Standards for School Executive development.
- Standards Comparisons.

The ISLLC Standards

Education reform has attempted to apply a variety of guidelines and standards that assist leaders in mastering a common knowledge base to assure competent professionalism. The development of professional standards is a continuous mission to find consensus among scholars relating to a common body of knowledge and a set of competencies, dispositions, and language. Scholars in the field of education consider standards designed to create alignment between the academic curriculum and hands-on experience and performance as essential factors that determine professional status and quality performance (Goldring, Porter, Murphy, Elliott, & Cravens, 2009).

Initially, school administration was influenced by ideas from philosophy and religion (Button, 1966; Callahan & Button, 1964). In the 19th century, the position of school administrator was based on concepts from management and the behavioral sciences (Murphy, 2003). Considering school leaders as business managers was inspired by early 20th century corporate America and its leader, the CEO (Murphy,

2003, p. 4). The field of school administration adopted the new perspective to improve principal leadership and student achievement. Then after World War II, the needs changed because the mosaic of American society began to transform, which in turn led the field of education to combine two perspectives related to social science and business management. Murphy (2003) states that scholars “developed . . . a ladder-shaped structure for the profession, with one leg fostering the growth of ideas from management and the other leg nurturing the development of concepts from the social sciences” (p. 6). The change and diversity of the new society, along with its growth, highly affected the job description of school leaders. Consequently, improving schools and administrators was, and will always be, a continuous mission.

Based on the important roles of standards in enhancing leaders’ skills as well as professional development, an abundant effort has been made to form a set of standards throughout the history of education reform. According to Hoyle (2005), the earliest recorded effort to create standards for administrator preparation and licensure were stimulated by the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE), which was initiated in 1954. The main goal in establishing NCATE was to provide voluntary accreditation for academic institutions that were preparing professional staff for education.

In 1955, a negotiation between the American Association of School Administration (AASA) and the Kellogg Foundation resulted in the establishment of the Committee for the Advancement of School Administration (CASA). The initial project for CASA was to develop a set of standards for a school administrator

preparation program (Hoyle, 2005). The standards included in the book *Something to Steer By*, published by AASA in 1958, were widely distributed and impacted the increasing use of the standards of preparation and professional development for school administrators. In the late 1970s, CASA began standards revisions to enhance the quality of administrator preparation programs and college students who sought leadership roles in schools (Hoyle, 2005).

The continuous reviews and critiques to the school administrator's role aimed at developing school leaders' skills resulted in several endeavors to create standards for school executives. In 1987, the National Commission on Excellence in Education Administration (NCEEA), an organization sponsored by the University Council of Educational Administration (UCEA), presented a report that highlighted the challenges and concerns for preparation programs of educational leaders. The NCEEA criticized preparation programs for a number of deficiencies, including a lack of the following (NCEEA, 1987):

- A definition of good educational leadership;
- Leader recruitment programs in the schools;
- Collaboration between school districts and universities;
- Minorities and women in the field;
- Systematic professional development for school administrators;
- Quality candidates for preparation programs;
- Preparation programs relevant to the job demands of school administrators;
- Sequence, modern content, and clinical experience in preparation programs;

- Licensure systems to promote excellence; and
- A national sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders.

This report drew attention to the educational leadership preparation programs and encouraged scholars to highlight the standards. One of the earliest efforts to initiate standards was the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) project. It initially focused on rebuilding school administration by refining or extending the recent foundations and expanding the current ladder-shaped reinforcement of the profession (Sergiovanni, 1990). In 1994, the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA) approved the ISLLC. The NPBEA was comprised of representatives from 24 states and key stakeholders from many nationwide stakeholder groups (Murphy, 2005). The ISLLC standards aimed to guide policy makers toward the transformation of the role of school leadership and the reshaping of university school administrator programs.

The establishment of ISLLC and its subsequent development of the ISLLC standards for the professional practice of school leaders had positive outcomes for education. With the adoption of these standards, a new professional discourse among leaders in the field began about the knowledge, skills, and dispositions required for effective school administration. Moreover, it provided more authentic measures of evaluation in terms of licensure standards and effective leadership. The framework for each standard is built around the “knowledge, dispositions, and performances” required for practicing school leaders (Council of Chief State School Officers [CCSSO], 2008, p. 8). While the greatest amount of discourse centered around reaching consensus on the dispositions, the consortium ended by agreeing with David Perkins’s belief that

“dispositions are the soul of intelligence, without which the understanding and know-how do little good” (Perkins, 1995, p. 278). As a result, these dispositions were key components of ISLLC standards.

The ISLLC consortium was based on the research that asserts that the principal plays a vital role in setting the direction for successful schools. More than ever, in today’s atmosphere of heightened expectations, principals are the key to improving school achievement. Today’s leader is expected to be the “chief learning officer,” an individual who is responsible for developing and supporting a collaborative school culture focused on teaching and learning (Green, 2010). The six ISLLC standards are designed to develop school principal leadership and strengthen preparation programs that in turn would impact student outcomes. Each standard begins with the phrase “The school administrator is an educational leader who promotes the success of all students by”:

- Facilitating the development, articulation, implementation, and stewardship of a vision of learning that is shared and supported by the school community.
- Advocating, nurturing, and sustaining a school culture and instructional program conducive to student learning and staff professional growth.
- Management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment.
- Collaborating with families and community members, responding to diverse community interests and needs, and mobilizing community resources.
- Acting with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner.
- Understanding, responding to, and influencing the larger political, social, economic, legal, and cultural context. (ISLLC, 1996, p. 8)

ISLLC traced significant trends for emerging views of leadership and standards that gave meaning to a new perspective. The ISLLC honors the reality that leadership in

schools is a complex and multifaceted task, while simultaneously acknowledging that effective leaders espouse different patterns of beliefs and act differently from the norm in the profession. Effective school leaders are anchoring their efforts on essential issues of learning, teaching, and school improvement. School administrators are moral agents and social advocates and have strong networks. They value and care for others as individuals and as members of the educational community.

In terms of the changing nature of society, the ISLLC identified a handful of power dynamics that will shape the future of education and school leadership. In relation to diversity, the fabric of society is often dramatically changing racially, linguistically, and culturally. The challenges of a shift to post-industrial society, the advance of the global marketplace, and the increasing reliance on technology (CCSSO, 2008) require a new kind of school leader who makes student learning a high priority. There were seven principles that oriented the work to initiate the ISLLC standards. These principles are that standards should:

- Reflect the centrality of student learning;
- Acknowledge the changing role of the school leader;
- Recognize the collaborative nature of school leadership;
- Be high, upgrading the quality of the profession;
- Inform performance-based systems of assessment and evaluation for school leaders;
- Be integrated and coherent; and
- Be predicated on the concepts of access, opportunity, and empowerment for all members of the school community (CCSSO, 2008).

These guiding principles provided two functions: they (a) served as a touchstone to return to test the scope and focus of the emerging product; and (b) gave meaning to standards and indicators. In a study investigating the value of the ISLLC standards in preparing principals, Peel, Mobley, McFadden, and Burham (2002) found that the knowledge, disposition, and performance indicators were critical for a principal's success. By 2008, when ISSLC released an updated set of standards, the standards had been adopted by at least 43 states. By 2011 assessments and evaluation tools, based on the ISLLC standards, were also in place and had either been adopted or were being piloted (Glenewinkel, 2011). The ISLLC standards present the knowledge, attitude, and performance needed by school administrators to support progress in education. Each member of the consortium, including the North Carolina Standards Board, developed its own standards, taking into account the special needs and interests of their particular state (CCSS, 2013).

The Development of NC Standards for School Executives

Currently school principals' leadership responsibilities not only include the traditional task of efficiently managing students, staff, and grounds, but also deep engagement in instructional and community issues (Whitaker, 2002). Current school principals are required to build professional communities of reflective practitioners who critically consider how schools can improve learning and achievement of all students (Lambert et al., 2002). On the issue of school leadership and its impact on school reform, M. Christine DeVita, President of The Wallace Foundation, said, "The national conversation has shifted from 'whether' leadership really matters or is worth the

investment, to ‘how’—how to train, place, and support high quality leadership where it is needed the most: in schools and districts where failure remains at epidemic levels”

(DeVita, 2007, p. 5). Therefore, there are many efforts to develop school principal skills to meet the new challenge that schools face.

In the 1980s we witnessed the most thorough and sustained effort to reform the public educational system in the U.S. (Murphy, 1990). Beginning with largely unnoticed district and state efforts in the late 1970s (Firestone, 1990), and crystallizing with the publication of *A Nation at Risk*, in 1983 efforts to improve education have been occurring at an unbroken pace for nearly three decades. Early analyses, critiques, suggestions for improvement, and resulting reform measures dealt primarily with teachers and students. Although the role that principals and superintendents would need to play to ensure implementation of reforms was vaguely outlined, little direct attention was devoted to school administration in the 1970s (Murphy, 1990).

In the past two decades, increased attention has emerged regarding principal standards because of the important role they play in developing students’ achievement. Effective school research has established a link between effective principals and improved student achievement (Brewer, 1993; Eberts & Stone, 1988; The Wallace Foundation, 2012). Frampton and Hirth (2003) asserted that school effectiveness is dependent on a strong and visionary principal. Thus an abundance of national and state initiatives to create contemporary standards for school administrators have been developed. These efforts were aimed at describing “competent, capable, efficient, and effective school leadership and captured the awareness of influential public policy and

educational decision makers” (NC State Board of Education, 2008, p. 6). In fact, the reform movement has at its core the call for developing a new generation of school leaders (CCSSO, 2008). These new leaders are “required to be deeply adept at responding to the dramatically changing landscape and urgency for the 21st century K–12 public education system” (NC State Board of Education, 2008, p. 6).

In addition, the reform movement calls attention to administration preparation programs and standards for administrators. Therefore, in response to the pressure of this reform movement of the 1980s, the preparation programs in educational leadership have begun to make three related sets of changes: improving education across the board, general critiques and calls for improvement in educational leadership, and specific analyses and demands for change in administrator preparation programs (Murphy, 1991). Continuous restructuring of these programs is part of the next wave of educational reform to ensure that university systems are sharing the responsibility for preparing school administrators to lead in this new millennium.

The landmark report in 1983, *A Nation at Risk*, and the signature work in 1987 of the University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA), are the catalysts of both the national and North Carolina endeavor for new principal standards (UCEA, 1987). The reports offer a foundational framework for the contemporary standards for school principals over the past two decades (Williams, 2010). This report established a suggested framework for policy and educational leaders at both the national and state levels, to advance the pursuit of developing and implementing contemporary standards for school administrators in an ever-changing global economy. The report emphasizes

the critical role of the university preparation programs and the importance of continuous professional development. The report cites specific recommendations that should be addressed by the education leadership community. These recommendations impact both the policy arena and support advanced standards for the preparation of future school administrators (Williams, 2010).

The final report of the UCEA Commission reveals that the field of education needs improvement in the following ten areas (UCEA, 1987):

- Definition of good educational leadership,
- Leader recruitment programs in the schools,
- Collaboration between school districts and universities,
- Participation of minorities and women in the field,
- Systematic professional development for school administrators,
- Quality candidates for preparation programs,
- Preparation programs relevant to the job demands of school administrators,
- Sequence, modern content, and clinical experiences, in preparation programs,
- Licensing systems which promote excellence,
- National sense of cooperation in preparing school leaders. (p. 19)

In addition to the previous efforts to develop standards, two early companion publications, the first prepared by the National Commission on the Principalship (1990), *Principals for Our Changing Schools: Preparation and Certification*, and the second developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (1993), *Principals for Our Changing Schools: The Knowledge and Skills Base*, provide a research foundation for contemporary principal standards. These publications have influenced changes in university preparation programs, thereby serving as one of the primary references for Educational Leadership Departments (ELD), as well as leaders in

the standards movement, nationwide (National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2009).

As an ongoing response to needed changes in the preparation of school leaders for the 21st century, in January 2002 the National Policy Board for Educational Administration published its Standards for Advanced Programs in Educational Leadership for Principals, Superintendents, Curriculum Directors, and Supervisors. These standards, developed by the National Policy Board for Educational Administration (NPBEA), Educational Leadership Constituency Council (ELCC), established the course of action and guidelines for preparing school leaders for the 21st century. These standards and processes are aligned with and meet the requirements for university degree and licensing programs as part of the National Council for the Accreditation of Teacher Education (NCATE) (Williams, 2010).

Furthermore, the Report to the National Commission on Excellence in Educational Administration (1987) provides additional insight into the relationship between the multiple efforts to improve the relevance of school principal standards at the university level and the licensing of school principals in North Carolina. The state has responded with a particular focus on principal standards, specifically the skills that future school leaders should have in order to meet the challenges they face in schools across the state.

In order to substantially reform leadership preparation in the early 1990s, all school administration programs in the state were eliminated by the North Carolina State Legislature. Subsequently, universities were forced to revamp their programs and apply

for permission to offer the Masters in School Administration (MSA) and precise various requirements for the degree including a year-long internship. Moreover, they eliminated an “add-on” principal licensure for advanced degree holders (Buskey & Topolka Jorissen, 2010).

North Carolina is recognized as a national leader in this area of focus as illustrated by legislative, policy, and licensing standards beginning as early as 1991 (CCSSO, 2008). The state realized the emerging urgency of addressing the need for new kinds of knowledge and skills required of school administrators in the 21st century in addition to the rapidly changing global and state economy. On July 7, 1992, the NC General Assembly ratified House Bill 1361, “An act to create an educational leadership task force to study the preparation, licensure, and on-going professional development of public school administrators.” As a result of this legislation the Education Leadership Task Force Report in 1993, *Leaders For Schools: The Preparation and Advancement of Educational Leadership* recommended the creation of the North Carolina Standards Board for Public School Administration (Appendix 1).

Later, HB 284, approved in February 15, 1993, “an act to implement a recommendation of the Educational Leadership Taskforce and the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee to establish an independent Standards Board for School Administration and to allow that Board to charge examination fees” (Appendix 2) further advanced North Carolina’s journey into establishing contemporary standards for school based administrators. These two events set the stage for creating consistent, statewide

standards for school leaders, and at the same time have paved the way for current school administrator executive standards.

In May 1994 the newly created North Carolina Standards Board for Public School Administration (NCSBPSA) hired Dr. Michael E. Ward as Executive Director. Dr. Ward declared at the time that “It has become increasingly evident that school success is closely linked to effective leadership. North Carolina’s new emphasis on administrator standards will help to ensure the kinds of leaders we want for our public schools” (as cited in Williams, 2010). Dr. Ward served as a catalyst for creating new standards, particularly because he believed that standards were critical in developing leaders in administration preparation programs. Dr. Ward emphasized that

These standards will help to shape the kinds of university programs in which school administrators are prepared. Moreover, the standards will help to ensure that administrators have the knowledge and professional skills necessary to lead positive reform efforts in North Carolina. (as cited in Williams, 2010, p. 13)

In July 1996, this same board adopted North Carolina’s Standards for School Leaders. The Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) Standards were developed by the CCSSO in collaboration with the National Policy Board on Educational Administration (NPBEA) to help strengthen preparation programs in school leadership (Van Meter & Murphy, 1997). Programs in Educational Leadership used the ISLLC standards as a requirement for the student’s Learning Portfolio. There are six standards, each followed by the Knowledge required for the standard, the dispositions or attitudes manifested by the accomplishment of the standard, and performances that could be observed by an administrator.

North Carolina Standards for School Executives

North Carolina was among the 24 states that participated in the ISLLC process along with the following professional associations: American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education, American Association of School Administrators, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development, Association of Teacher Educators, National Association of Elementary School Principals, National Association of Secondary School Principals, National Association of State Boards of Education, National Council of Professors of Educational Administration, National Policy Board of Educational Administration, National School Boards Association, and the UCEA (ISLLC, 1996).

These standards, as required by the legislation of HB 284, helped to create the framework for both university MSA programs as well as licensure standards for school leaders in the state. As a result, beginning in 1998 aspiring school leaders were required to pass the School Leader Licensure assessment, which was aligned to the ISLLC Standards, to become certified school administrators (North Carolina Standards Board for Public School Administration, 2000).

In 2003, the Center on Reinventing Public Education published *Making Sense of Leading Schools: A Study of the School Principalship*. The study concludes that “regardless of school type, schools need leadership in seven critical areas: instructional, cultural, managerial, human resources, strategic, external, and micro-political” (Portin, Schneider, DeArmond, & Gundlach, 2003, p. 1). In September 2005, a recommendation from the Chairman of the NC State Board of Education, Howard Lee, to establish an ad hoc Committee further advanced the progress toward the creation of new principal

standards statewide. The goal of the Committee was to investigate the New Leaders for New Schools Project. This initiative was a new approach to identifying public school administrators. Additionally, the project reviewed current university-based school leadership preparation programs and other non-university administrator training programs with regard to their effectiveness in developing the skills and competencies needed to supervise 21st century schools. The committee met regularly from October 2005 to July 2006. In deliberations, the committee considered national initiatives and research related to effective school administration (NC State Board of Education, 2006).

These standards were devised largely due to the efforts of the Partnership for 21st Century Skills Framework that focuses on the needs of today's student to assure that they all graduate from high school with the skills, knowledge, and expertise required to compete in a global economy. As a result of these emerging requirements, the organization declared that the overarching responsibility for all principals is to provide the necessary leadership to assure proper conditions exist in schools to achieve these student outcomes.

The study emphasized four critical elements that all students should master to be successful in work and life. They are (a) Core Subjects and 21st Century Themes; (b) Learning and Innovation Skills; (c) Information, Media, and Technology Skills; and (d) Life and Career Skills. The four elements represent the skills, knowledge, and expertise all students should have to compete nationally as well as globally. Moreover, mastering these skills will not be achieved without innovative support systems that guarantee student gains (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009).

The Partnership for 21st Century Skills suggests five support factors for these skills, which include Standards and Assessment, Curriculum and Instruction, Professional Development, and Learning Environments (Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2009). These 21st century standards serve as a support system that will enhance student skills and principal expertise. These non-traditional skills that are mentioned in the study will not be achieved without teachers and school leaders developing a deeper understanding of how these skills are intertwined within the core disciplines. The demands that these new standards place on administrators and teachers are beyond what they have been prepared for in university preparation programs. Subsequently, principals must have strategies for transforming teaching and learning within schools in order for students to be sufficiently prepared for 21st century skills.

Based on rapid change in school administrators' requirements in general and in North Carolina in particular, the scope and charge of the ad hoc committee expanded to include the current and changing school principal responsibilities for 21st century schools, which largely included the expectations of school principal roles and responsibilities, as well as continuing professional development opportunities, the licensure system for school administrators, and administrators preparation standards and evaluation. The concluding work of the committee aimed to enhance innovation and student achievement within North Carolina schools by focusing on professional development and evaluation standards (Williams, 2010).

Based on the prediction of a principal shortage in early 2006, the NC State Board of Education re-authorized the add-on licensure for principals and agreed to allow

universities to define administration programs with slight stipulations. In fall 2006, NCDPI decided to use a set of standards developed by the NC Department of Public Instruction—the 21st Century Standards for School Executives (NCSSE) that would replace the ISLLC. In July 2007, all principal programs in the state were required to restructure their requirements and training after the North Carolina Legislature passed, and the governor signed House Bill 536 (Buskey & Topolka Jorissen, 2010). This bill required the university educational leadership programs to align their instruction with the 2006 newly-created NCSSE. This legislation contained some statutory mandates that did not exist in many programs (Williams, 2010).

On December 7, 2006 the NC State Board of Education approved the new standards. The standards became effective beginning with the 2008–2009 school year. Subsequently, all public school principals in North Carolina were and continue to be evaluated on the NCSSE using the corresponding evaluation process and new instrument (NC State Board of Education, 2008). The evaluation process helps administrators, as well as district and education leaders, to monitor future programs and help them focus their goals and objectives to enhance professional development and create effective mentor programs. This process will enhance the implementation of the standards in a way that impacts schools leaders and student achievement (NC State Board of Education, 2009).

In 2005 almost half were 50 years of age or older and were being replaced with younger, less experienced educators (NC State Board of Education, 2006). This happened during a time when school leaders were expected to do more than manage, as

their job had largely been based on their ability to manage school operations. In addition, there was a sense of urgency for improved student achievement like never before due to the emergence of high stakes testing and the enactment of *No Child Left Behind* legislation. In 2005, an ad hoc committee was established by the NC State Board of Education to study alternative preparation programs for school leaders. The committee met from October 2005 to July 2006. The end product of the ad hoc committee meetings was the introduction of newly-proposed standards for school executives. The standards reflected the new skill set that school leaders should acquire to prepare all students to successfully participate in the 21st century economy after graduation. Moreover, the committee identified 17 recommendations that should be discussed in the State Board of Education meetings.

The new standards based on the new vision of school leadership dictated the need for a new brand of school leader—an executive instead of an administrator. The North Carolina School Executive Standards are more focused on school leadership skills that are in demand in the current era. The Standards for School Executives originated from a study funded by the Wallace Foundation, *Making Sense of Leading Schools—A Study of the School Principalship* (Portin et al., 2003). The purpose of the study was to help school leaders improve student achievement through new innovation, and to create the conditions necessary to allow those leaders to succeed (Portin et al., 2003). The report was based on in-depth interviews with principals, assistant principals, and teachers in 21 schools from four different cities across four states. Based on the interviews, the study identified seven critical areas of school leadership: instructional, cultural, managerial,

human resources, strategic, external development, and micro-political. The study was motivated by the desire to conduct research to uncover what school leaders actually do. This was very much the goal of the ISLLC standards as well, providing a set of “outcome-based measures with a strong assert on critical behavior to reach a broad goal of educational success of all students” (Hart & Pounder, 1999, p. 119).

Summary

The new North Carolina standards are based on the view that no longer can school leaders simply maintain the status quo by managing a complex operation, but they must also be able to create schools as organizations that can learn and change quickly to improve performance. The new standards are also based on the view that there is a need for a new type of leader who is adept at creating systems for change and at building powerful relationships with school staff that stimulates their passion for their work with pupils. Furthermore, school leaders should create among school personnel a common shared understanding for the purpose of the work of the school (NC State Board of Education, 2013). Thus, empowering school personnel to build a strong partnership with students, parents, and community stakeholders will enrich their ability to enhance student achievement.

The NC State Board of Education (2006) points out that the “North Carolina standards for School Executive have been developed as a guide for principals and assistant principals as they continually reflect upon and improve their effectiveness as leaders throughout all of the stages of their careers” (p. 11). Among other influences on school principals, these standards are a critical instrument for school leaders that will

impact their growth and skills as executives who are leading schools (NC State Board of Education, 2013). In addition, these standards will help to develop principal preparation programs and guide professional development.

In November of 2006, the NC State Board of Education voted to discontinue the use of the Interstate School Leadership Licensure Consortium (ISLLC) standards as the guiding and foundational knowledge base for the training of future educational leaders in North Carolina. In December of 2006, a new set of benchmark standards was established in the form of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. Philosophically, the new executive standards addressed the growing demands of the principalship and the responsibility of school leaders to contribute effectively to student achievement and students' ability to successfully acquire and demonstrate the skills of the current century.

Standards Comparison

The North Carolina Standards for School Executives present 11 talking points that comprise the philosophical foundation of the new standards (NC State Board of Education, 2013). Each point advances the philosophy of the education leader as an executive, rather than an administrator or manager. The intended purposes of the standards state, "The main responsibility of the school executive is to create aligned systems of leadership throughout the school and its community" (NC State Board of Education, 2013). The ISLLC standards focused on growing educational leaders who were grassroots and hands-on leaders. Examples of this can be found in Standards 2, 3, and 7 requiring educational leaders to have a working knowledge and ability in the areas of teaching and learning, operations, and a pragmatic internship (CCSSO, 2008). The

language and spirit of the North Carolina Standards for School Executives indicate the intention of these standards is quite different from the ISLLC standards. The seven standards for School Executives include strategic leadership, instructional leadership, cultural leadership, human resource leadership, managerial leadership, external development leadership, and micro-political leadership (NC State Board of Education, 2006).

The Standards for School Executives includes a summary and examples of artifacts for each new standard as well as a list of competencies at the close of the document. Several of the listed competencies for school executives include change and conflict management, customer focus, delegation, results orientation, and systems thinking (NC State Board of Education, 2013). These new standards were approved by the NC State Board of Education in December 2006 and became effective with the 2008–2009 school year. In studying the new North Carolina Standards for School Executives, the NC State Board of Education intends to lead professional development for school executives and reform school leadership perspectives.

If the two sets of standards are set side by side, an understanding of how much these two standards overlap is evident. Toth (2009) lines up each ISLLC standard with its corollary in the North Carolina Standards Executive. Some of the standards have almost a direct correlation such as ISLLC Standard 1, Vision, and North Carolina Executives Standard 1 and Strategic Leadership. Other connections are looser and more indirect, like ISLLC Standard 3, Operations, and NC Executives Standard 5, Managerial Leadership. The North Carolina Standards for School Executives have obvious

references and imagery that connect more to the business model. The term school administrator is replaced with “executive.” Moreover, the new standards use language such as “stockholders” and “investing resources,” other indicators of the influence of the business world on these particular standards (Toth, 2009).

Williams (2010) points out that the language that was used in the recommendation of NCEEAA was related to the study of administration, while the language that is now used relates to the study of leadership, which focuses on understanding theory and practice of future leadership; this is obvious in the seven standards of the 2006 North Carolina Standards for School Executives. Another significant shift in the new standards is the emphasis for principals to demonstrate 21st century leadership behavior instead of effectively performing managerial tasks.

Williams (2010) mentions that while the 2006 North Carolina Standards for School Executives include seven standards and the July 1996 North Carolina Standards Board for Public School Administration Standards include ten standards, a comparison of the two sets of standards and accompanying descriptions disclose a high degree of alignment between the two. While the ad hoc committee indicated that they did not review the 1996 standards, their set showed little new in what was determined 14 years previously.

In his study, Williams (2010) asks the participants the question, “What is the relationship of the 2006 North Carolina Standards for School Executives to any previous standards work?” His finding from 55 responses was that there is a high degree of agreement among the participants that there was limited or no relationship or reference to

the previous North Carolina Principal Standards in the development of the 2006 NCSSE. There were 12 responses with the category, *Some Relationship or Reference*. Among these, one participant commented, “If you were to go from purely the language of the new Standards and the language of the old Standards you could probably achieve a fairly, I’d say, 85%–90% crosswalk between the two.” Another participant responded, “If you looked, I mean look at the ISLLC Standards and these Standards . . . probably find stuff that’s similar.”

Two responses were categorized as *Strong Relationship or Reference* to the previous standards. One such response read,

When you lay the Standards that were done in 1996 or the Standards for previous school administrator programs versus the current Standards (2006) there are lots of similarities between them. So, like, you can lay the two sets of Standards for the programs down now side by side and you can go oh yes, you know, this is . . . but in terms of did we consciously look at the Standards (1996), not at all.

That means the two standards have some similarities and some differences.

While both of the standards goals are to enhance leadership skills that will impact student achievement, the tools, language, and focus is quite different in each standard.

What Research Suggests Is Necessary for Principal Effectiveness Not Included in Either Set

The number of states that adopted standards into their administrative certification program requirements reveals how the standards have moved the field of school leadership forward and increasingly influenced the design of the administration preparation program. However, a meta-analysis research that examined the features of leadership associated with student achievement suggests that the ISLLC standards may

underemphasize some features of effective leadership practices. These include the ways in which leaders (a) directly participate in curriculum design and implementation, (b) support and promote effective instructional and student assessment practices, (c) recognize individual and school accomplishments, and (d) adapt their leadership to address the context-specific needs of teachers, students, and other stakeholders (Waters & Grubb, 2004; Waters, Marzano, & McNulty, 2003). It is critical to apply the findings of the research that spotlights the importance of different leadership development strategies on student achievement to refine current standards and licensure criteria (Davis, Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, & Meyerson, 2005). The profession needs a coherent set of performance standards that reflect the most current research on school-level leadership, which is not found in current standards.

Even though the use of the ISLLC standards is widespread, a number of scholars have criticized them for a variety of reasons, including their lack of depth, breadth, and research-based foundation. Waters and Kingston (2005) describe the finding from McREL's comparative analysis of the Balanced Leadership Framework and the ISLLC standards and provide insights into what future standards for school-level leaders should encompass. McREL conducted a comparative analysis using the six key findings in McREL's Balanced Leadership Framework: (a) principal leadership is positively correlated with student achievement and has an average effect size of .25; (b) 21 leadership responsibilities are positively correlated with student achievement; (c) principals can have a differential impact on student achievement, meaning that just as principals perceived as strong leaders can have a positive impact, others can have a

marginal, or worse, negative impact; (d) change, expressed as first-order and second-order, is associated with and influences all 21 leadership responsibilities; (e) all 21 leadership responsibilities are positively associated with first-order change; and (f) 11 leadership responsibilities are associated with second-order change, of which seven have positive and four have negative associations. McREL's analysis compared the 184 ISLLC indicators to the 66 leadership practices associated with the 21 leadership responsibilities identified in the meta-analysis. The McREL study found that there were 17 leadership practices not included in the ISLLC standards (see Appendix B).

The study points out that the effort of establishing standards such as ISLLC resulted in a wide range of school principal responsibilities without distinction between important and essential responsibilities. In addition to being overwhelming in scope, the ISLLC standards offer no guidance as to which standards should receive primacy or what is essential for principals to know and be able to do to improve student achievement, which in turn dissuades the prospective and aspiring principals due to the intensified and complex demands of the profession. The 21st century challenges that school leaders face demand critical development of clear, functional performance standards for what principals should know and be able to do (Owings, Kaplan, & Nunnery, 2005), which will make school leaders' responsibilities more specific and guide leaders so they know their priorities.

The study called for a set of standards that explicitly identify essential leadership standards. The study highlights the lack of clarity about which of the six standards or the 184 indicators are essential. For example, 36 references to community in the ISLLC

standards may mistakenly lead one to assume that leadership responsibilities related to community take primacy over others, regardless of their effect on student achievement (Waters & Kingston, 2005). As long as responsibilities are clear and simple, the principal will be able to provide direction and focus on student learning.

In addition, the McREL comparative analysis found a significant gap between the findings in the McREL Balanced Leadership Framework and the ISLLC standards related to change leadership. Two of the 184 ISLLC indicators related to change: (a) the administrator has the knowledge and understanding of the change process for systems, organizations, and individuals; and (b) the administrator has the knowledge and understanding of models, strategies of change, and conflict resolution as applied to the larger political, social, cultural, and economic contexts of schooling (CCSSO, 2008) are not aligned with this framework.

Related to change, the McREL study identified two main conclusions. First, effective change leadership means that the leader has the ability to precisely estimate the magnitude of a change and adjust their approach to leadership accordingly. McREL's magnitude of change assumes that the order of a change (first or second) is based on the implications and individual's perceptions of the change. For example, in the McREL study, some principals were perceived by teachers as strong leaders while student achievement was below average. Second, one leadership responsibility "change agent," the extent to which the principal is willing to and actively challenge the status quo, has a 0.25 correlation with student achievement (Waters & Kingston, 2005). It is critical that

there be a connection between leadership and student achievement to reach the desired changes and goals needed today.

According to Fullan (2005), the existing principal standards are inherently biased toward individualism, which reinforces the notion that school leadership is the sole responsibility of the principal. The ISSLC standards reflect this bias and provide no guidance related to shared leadership. Distributive leadership is an important way to develop leadership in others and help principals focus on essential needs of the school. Waters and Kingston (2005) asserted that future standards should focus on responsibilities rather than a position. As a result, generations of school administrators will be able to facilitate distributive leadership practices and concentrate their efforts in other areas that will develop their skills so they can be an asset to the school community.

Due to the continuous development in the field of education and the rapid change in the new century, scholars continuously critique the current standards. Hoyle (2005) points out that “the ISLLC standards do not systematically identify specific competencies and skills needed to identify and apply expert knowledge and skills for development of high performance school leaders” (p. 32). The new draft of the ISLLC standards was a significant improvement, but it was too focused on student achievement and not focused enough on the collaborative leadership and strategic leadership behaviors needed to promote and sustain continuous growth in schools (Bossi, 2008).

Summary

The NC State Board of Education intends to lead professional development for school executives and reform school leadership perspectives. The language and spirit of

the North Carolina Standards for School Executives indicate the intention of these standards is quite different from the ISLLC standards. The language that was used in the recommendation of NCEE 1987 was related to the study of administration, while the language that is now used relates to the study of leadership, which focuses on understanding theory and practice of future leadership; this is obvious in the seven standards of the 2006 North Carolina Standards for School Executives. Another significant shift in the new standards is the focus of principals to demonstrate 21st century leadership behavior instead of effectively performing managerial tasks.

That means the two standards have some similarities and some differences. While both of the standards goals are to enhance leadership skills that will impact student achievement, the tools, language, and focus is quite different in each standard. The standards have moved the field of school leadership forward and increasingly influenced the design of the administration preparation program. Even though the use of the ISLLC standards is widespread, a number of scholars have criticized them for a variety of reasons, including their lack of depth, breadth, and research-based foundation, despite the flaws in the ISLLC standards. Without the adoption of these early efforts to develop consistent standards to guide the profession, we would not have the evaluative standards that we have today. These standards, though they have not been perfect, have served as a foundation for professional development for school leaders and have helped principals to diversify their leadership skills.

In the next chapter the focus is on exploring principals' perspectives and gained insight about principals' effectiveness, and understanding the gap between what the principals believe and their reality.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Rice (2010) stated that empirical studies on the effectiveness of school principals have been undermined as a result of the lack of data to study principals, their complex work, and their impact on school outcomes. School leaders should advance their knowledge about what kind of leaders they are, what roles they play, and their impact on school personnel. Successful schools require leaders who are able to perform at optimum levels and who have the skills to meet present and future complex challenges.

To the researcher's knowledge there are no studies about principals' effectiveness in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Qualitative research will help to gain better insight about principal effectiveness in schools of the Kingdom of Bahrain. In addition, the study will help discover some reasons behind the low scores that schools received in the national report.

To understand school principal effectiveness from the lived experiences of school principals, I employed a phenomenological qualitative study methodology to explore principals' perspectives and gain insight into principals' effectiveness. Using the phenomenological approach helped me to understand in depth the principals' perspectives about school principal effectiveness and also understand the gap between what the principals believe and their reality.

Based on my experience in schools, the preparation programs for principals and assistant principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain are focused on management skills. The name of the program is Management Diploma. It is taught at the University of Bahrain. Most of the school administrators enroll in the Management Diploma program after several years as a teacher, but some are refusing to enroll. Furthermore, the University of Bahrain does not offer any school leadership programs.

Research Setting and Participants

The participants were school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain who work at the Ministry of Education main office, public schools, or have left the field to pursue other jobs. I interviewed 15 principals who had at least five years of experience, as well as retired principals. Based on the Ministry of Education rules I had to get permission to interview the principals, which I had already done. From my experience as a principal I knew many principals who were recognized as good principals. I contacted them directly and acquired their permission to participate in an interview. I contacted some principals who had good reputations but who were no longer in the field. In addition to getting permission from the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain to interview school principals, this study was also approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at UNCG to ensure that human subjects involved in this research were adequately protected.

This selection was carried out in coordination with managers at the Ministry of Education. I followed the Ministry of Education's procedures for conducting principal interviews and the selection. During my time as a principal, I have managed to be in

good standing with many managers at the Ministry of Education, who gladly helped me acquire the information that I needed about the principals and other related issues.

As we stated earlier, the principals should have five or more years of experience, because I believed that they would be the ones who had a richer experience in the field. I chose principals who belonged to different school levels and a mixture of males and females. The principals volunteered for the research without getting any kind of monetary compensation. Criteria for participant selection included a willingness to participate in a tape-recorded interview and availability and willingness to participate in a follow-up interview, if necessary. Arabic should be and was their primary language, and they had to have the ability to articulate the perspectives of an effective principal and leader. See Table 1 for a description of select participant demographics.

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Participants Pseudonyms	Sex	Years of Experience	School Type	Work in or Have Experience in	Principal Status
Ali	Male	6	Boys	Elementary	
Saad	Male	12	Boys	Elementary Middle	
John	Male	7	Boys	Elementary Middle High	
Salem	Male	8	Boys	Middle	
Yousif	Male	7	Boys	High	
Rashed	Male	15	Boys	High	Retired

Table 1

(Cont.)

Participants Pseudonyms	Sex	Years of Experience	School Type	Work in or have experience in	Principal Status
Fahad	Male	16	Boys	Middle High	
Jana	Female	5	Girls	High	
Sana	Female	9	Girls	Middle High	
Lulu	Female	7	Girls	Middle High	
Amal	Female	9	Girls	High	
Fatima	Female	19	Girls	High	Retired
Hesa	Female	6	Girls	Elementary middle	
Shahad	Female	14	Girls	Elementary High	Retired
Mariam	Female	5	Girls	High	

Data Collection

To explore principal effectiveness in the Kingdom of Bahrain's schools from the principals' perspectives, data were collected by the researcher through individual in-depth interviews with school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Interviews lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. The follow-up questions that I asked enabled me to gain further clarification while also providing a deeper insight into and better understanding of the participants' responses. The interviews were recorded and transcribed. I used two recorders to ensure that the interviews were adequately taped,

thus avoiding data loss due to technology reasons. In addition, I took detailed notes during the interviews to assist with data collection regarding non-verbal communication not captured by the recording device. This served as an extra component of quality control to ensure the data collected was extensive and reliable (Patton, 2002). Moreover, it helped me to write down any idea, analysis, or themes that emerged through the interviews as well as to categorize the information.

I conducted one interview each day for 15 days and transcribed them. Each participant was asked to read and sign a formal consent form before the interview began. Enough information about the researcher and the purpose of the interview was introduced to the participants before the interviews were conducted. In addition, the participants were informed as to how the interview data was to be used and that they would get a copy of the transcript to review for accuracy.

In-depth interviews helped the researcher to get live information from the principals. Lichtman (2010) mentions that “the purpose in this style of interviewing is to hear what the participant has to say in his own words, in his voice, with his language and narrative” (p. 143). The voices of school principals are not always heard in the Kingdom of Bahrain due to lack of studies related to school principals. I used the Arabic language because it is the native language in the Kingdom of Bahrain. In addition, using the principals’ language helps them to talk in-depth about their perspectives. I Then translated the transcriptions for data analysis. I reviewed my translations with professional translators to ensure that I had the right translations.

Semi-structured guidelines were used to help the interviews progress smoothly. Using a semi-structured interview approach with participants enabled me to collect predetermined categories of data while also providing me the flexibility to access a greater depth of information as opportunities arose (Patton, 2002). The major question for the interview was: “How would you describe a day in the life of a principal?” When the interviewer perceived that the experience had been fully articulated the interviewee was asked the following question: “Do you have anything that you want to add that we have not already addressed?”

The interviews were constructed and occurred as semi-structured conversations. The intent was for the participant to discuss the school leadership criteria in Bahrain with as little prompting as possible. The following questions and prompts were used when the participant needed some encouragement to discuss the issues embedded within them:

- What does the term “effective principal” mean to you?
- What are your major challenges as a principal?
- What does the term “principal quality” mean for you?
- What factors affect your leadership as a principal?
- What organizational policy factors influence your practice as a principal?
- What knowledge do principals need to be good school leaders?
- What skills do principals need to be good school leaders?
- What personal qualities do principals need to be good school leaders?
- What resources do you need to be an effective principal?

- What standards or expectations influence how you are evaluated as a principal?
- What have you learned about principal effectiveness from your experience as a principal who is being evaluated?

In addition, I used the concrete and the comparison questions technique. All interviews were conducted in the principals' schools except for the retired principals whom I met at a community office. I read the national evaluation for each school before the interviews because it gave me comprehensive information about the school and the principal. The principals were asked to clarify and elaborate on phrases and terms that were not familiar to the researcher and that were ambiguous or lacked clarity. The researcher remained as unobtrusive as possible, thus allowing the principals time to elaborate.

Data Analysis

Data organization was based on the research questions, each question having many categories based on the topics that the principals share and repeated in their responses. Each answer relating to the question topic was filed in a folder. Each question had subfolders inside the main folder.

Tapes were transcribed verbatim and checked for accuracy by a second individual and the participants. Reading the transcripts and writing thoughts and comments were daily activities. The date was written beside each thought. The researcher used a computer to help organize the notes with the dates. To move from the raw data to meaningful concept analysis of the transcribed interviews, I followed a modified pattern

outlined by Giorgi (1985, 1989) and demonstrated by Wertz (1983, 1985). The essence of this pattern was to break down transcribed interviews into units that could be more easily analyzed. These units are called meaning units. Each analysis consisted of examination of the descriptions until patterns of effective principals could be discerned. After each participant's perspective was analyzed, all participants' perspectives were examined to ascertain the essence of effective principals and North Carolina Standards for School Administrators. Thus my analysis steps, as Merriam (2002) mentions, were:

- Get a sense of the entire interview within its context through listening and reading transcriptions two or three times before analysis. This included comments and concepts relating to effective principals.
- Identify meaning units. This consisted of identifying meaning units by listening to the recordings, reading the transcriptions, and discerning any meaning relating to the effective principal that impacts principal leadership. These meanings were marked on the transcript. Outlier experiences and perspectives were also marked.
- Define relevant perspectives. All meaning units were examined for the relevancy of the effective principal and National Evaluation Criteria. All relevant meaning units were grammatically rephrased to more directly express the effective principal. The relevant meaning was written on a separate sheet.
- Articulate the meaning units. This step consisted of translating the participants' words into English and then into academic descriptions of effective principals. This consisted of moving back and forth from the data to

meaning. Derived meanings were tested against the raw interview data that were in the different language to determine whether they were supported by the data (Merriam, 2002).

- The essence of perspectives of effective principals. Derived meanings were integrated in a third person narrative retelling the events as expressed in a more explicit language. Then a meaningful description and analysis of principal perspectives of effective principals was conducted. This description was compared to the National Evaluation Criteria and school reality to see if the perspective of effective principals met the National Criteria and the research findings.
- Descriptions helped to reveal how school principal lived experiences in the Kingdom of Bahrain informed effective or good principal leadership.

A comparison of commonalities and differences between each of the interviews was performed. This allowed general findings to emerge regarding the effective principal. After a careful review of all the participants' responses, many themes were found in light of the North Carolina Standards of School Administrators.

After gathering the data, the researcher performed multiple readings of the transcripts. Grounded theory was used because it helped the researcher to better understand the experiences of the school principals and provide opportunities for deep analysis. Open coding, axial coding, and selective coding were used to identify the emerging patterns, categories, and themes. The first step was open coding, which was made after listening to the interviews several times for significant words and phrases.

Moreover, the researcher reread every word and sentence of the transcripts to determine the overarching meaning of the data.

The second step was axial coding that converged on the significant words and phrases that recurred throughout the principals' interviews. The researcher listened to the interviews and reread the transcripts to determine the overall themes by analyzing similarities and differences and possible relationships among categories.

The third step was selective coding for dominant and subordinate themes. All of the individual transcripts were merged into one and corresponding categories were determined. The data were separated according to the research questions.

Researcher Subjectivity

It is important for the research that the researcher subjectivity is clear for the reader. This will help the reader to understand the researcher's stance and the researcher's description and interpretation of the data. My previous school was one of the extraordinary schools that had three levels—elementary, middle, and high school. It is considered a religious school because the school has an extra curriculum that is focused on Islamic law. My position in this school helped me to have a good relationship with most managers at the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs because they supported the school's activities.

I have a scholarship to study in the U.S. from the Ministry of Education, but this did not inhibit me from taking a critical look at the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain if there were any issues in the way in which they dealt with schools or principals. I chose to study in the U.S., although most students gain their higher

education degrees from British schools. I am impacted by the American education perspective. I am eager to improve my country's education system based on my new research and experience in the U.S.

I have experience as a principal facing the central power of the Ministry of Education. I have no choice if the orders come from a superior. I have experience in superiors ignoring the school's needs. I have experience in superiors who are afraid to transfer teachers who have power outside the school. There is no particular program that prepares the principal before he becomes an assistant principal or principal. The only mandatory program called Diploma in Management is focused on management, and most of the professors have no experience as school principals. Through my experience in the U.S. there is a significant difference between the preparation program in my country and in the U.S.

The Kingdom of Bahrain is a small island, so all schools in Bahrain are connected. Many principals gain their bachelor's or master's degree from outside the country. This means it has an impact on their perspectives and thoughts. For example, I got my bachelor's degree from Saudi Arabia. I was impacted by the Saudi culture because I had lived there for four years. I remember I brought books, audio, and research that had been done in Saudi Arabia to implement in my school in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

I am influenced by the "culture of complain or complaint habit" in my country. Most of the educators complain about the school job, salary, lack of professional development, and the ignorance of superiors. I witnessed the "complain habit" among

my school's principal, teachers, secretaries, superiors, Ministry of Education managers, and on the sidelines of official meetings. The common expression is "if you find any other job, immediately leave the teaching profession." I heard the same expression from an assistant principal last year during a phone conversation. This does not mean everyone but it reflects a preponderance of principals' beliefs. Thus, many competent leaders left the education field in the past ten years. As a researcher I will not engage in any way in the "complain habit" but will use it to correct, to my best ability, the mistakes in the educational field in my country and that will be identified after the interview.

Trustworthiness

In an effort to ensure this study's trustworthiness, the researcher scheduled follow-up interviews to gain greater insight into principal perspectives about an effective principal. In addition, the researcher reviewed the national school evaluation for each particular school and the principal assessment. This helped clarify the principal's perspective.

All interviews were transcribed and the analysis was shared with the participants and reviewed for accuracy. Soliciting the review of other professors at the University of Bahrain and colleagues from different disciplines allowed me to see if I had collected, analyzed, and interpreted the data professionally.

I compared the data that I gained through the research procedure with the National Evaluation about the school and the principal, which helped me to gain greater insight into the principals' perspectives. Having members of the National Evaluation critique the proposal proved beneficial.

Benefits and Risks

This study will benefit the participants by being part of the improvement of the education system in the Kingdom of Bahrain, particularly as it relates to the school principal. It will help the principal to identify the school leadership skills that will meet the National Evaluation Criteria. In addition, principals can recognize new skills that are missing in their leadership. The principals will be exposed to new standards and school leadership skills that are in demand in the 21st century. The principals will have an opportunity to identify themselves as school leaders and will articulate issues related to their leadership.

There is no apparent risk for the participants while they participate in this study unless they reveal confidential information about the school or the Ministry of Education and the researcher reveals it to the public. This risk is small as it would be beyond the scope of this study.

Limitations

This study was conducted to investigate principals' perspectives about principal effectiveness. It answers the following question: "What is the principals' perspective about principal effectiveness in the Kingdom of Bahrain?" The principals were chosen based on the researcher's experience, the Ministry of Education's experience, and the National Evaluation rating in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The interpretation and analysis is based on the principals' words and expressions and the researcher's understandings. The findings of the effective principals' skills are derived from the school principals' experience in the Kingdom of Bahrain. This study will not cover all effective principals'

skills or answer any other questions about effective principals. This study will use the North Carolina Standards for School Executive as tools to analyze principals' responses.

Summary

The goal of this research was to study school principals' perspectives relating to effective principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain and to compare it to the North Carolina Standard for School Executives. Through the use of a qualitative phenomenological approach, the researcher focused on delving deeply into principals' experiences in the Kingdom of Bahrain, what they think about school principal effectiveness, and the tools they need to be effective. In addition, the standards or evaluations they used at the current time, and the impact of the evaluation systems on their leadership skills was explored. The interviews helped to arouse principals' emotions and private perspectives that have accumulated through years of experience which may not have been heard before. This information is significant because it explores the leadership practices in the Kingdom of Bahrain and principals' experience, which helped in developing school leaders' proficiencies. The interview provided rich information, which helped the researcher gain a better understanding of the causes of low scores in leadership on the national evaluation, and discover effective principals when compared to NC Standards for School Executives. Furthermore, the lack of training for school principals, the current principal evaluation system, and what the principal needs to be effective were examined. In addition, there is no current research about school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. School principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain will be exposed to other countries' efforts and standards which will provide a foundation for developing

leadership skills that are in demand in the 21st century, as well as developing their own standards. In the next chapter an analysis of the data regarding principals' perceptions toward effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain is presented.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS OF DATA

This study examined the perspectives of school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain and how they described effective school leaders, and compared them to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. These new standards were approved by the NC State Board of Education in December of 2006 and became effective during the 2008–2009 school year (NC State Board of Education, 2013).

The perception of school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain focusing on effective school leadership takes place at the same time that many new projects are occurring focusing on school development. The new projects have an impact on principals' viewpoints. During the interviews, most of the principals mentioned the new projects that have been implemented during the last six years. To identify the school principals' perspectives, interviews were conducted on 15 principals from 15 schools in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Principals' ages ranged from 33 to 55 years. They were from different areas in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The principals represent high, middle, and elementary schools; eight were female and seven were male. Three of them retired last year, one of whom was male.

In this chapter, analysis of the data about principals' perceptions toward effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain is presented. In addition, there is a

comparison to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives. This study focused on addressing five main research questions:

- What are the perspectives of school principals about effective school principals?
- What organizational policy factors influence the effective principal practice in Bahrain?
- What are the perspectives of school principals about the current roles of the school principal in Bahrain?
- What skills do principals need to be effective school leaders?
- How does principal practice in Bahrain compare to the North Carolina School Executive standard?

The questions and interviews were designed to give the principals an opportunity to provide in-depth perspectives and enabled them to share their experience while answering the questions. The data were organized in a way that enabled those voices to be heard. The principals' responses were analyzed and categorized based on the research questions. The questions were designed to look for more information on principals' perceptions of effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. There is no research about effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Therefore, I looked for any themes, trends, commonalities, and differences related to effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the knowledge they gained about it that affected their perception and role as well as what they perceived as necessary for their success.

Principals' Responses

The school principals spoke about their perceptions of effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the organizational policy factors that influence effective school principals, the current role of the school principal, and the skills school principals need to be effective. Moreover, the researcher gave the participants opportunities to enlighten particular career-long experience that helps to enrich the perception of school principals. The principals interviewed served many years as teachers, chief of teachers, assistant principals, central office personnel, and in other roles in the field of education and outside the field of education before becoming a school principal. In addition, they have to sit for several oral and written exams before they can acquire the principal position. All these steps affect principals' perspectives in the Kingdom of Bahrain as shown in the following sections.

Effective School Principals

This section focused on principals' understanding of effective school principals and their background about it, together with whatever criteria or foundation they have in relation to the international studies, including North Carolina.

I read the transcripts and my notes during the interviews for relevant comments and concepts that emerged from the data. I constructed specific criteria related to effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain that emerged from the data.

Most participants mentioned two to eight aspects of effective school principals. Principals' perceptions interwove and linked to their previous experiences, as well as to school culture in the region. Participants shared their perceptions about effective school

Table 2

(Cont.)

Principals' Views of Effective Leaders	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
Professional development				*				*		*	*				
Optimistic												*			*
Strategic leader					*										
Work on priority									*						
Creativity									*					*	

Note. 1=Ali; 2=Saad; 3=John; 4=Salem; 5=Yousif; 6=Rashed; 7=Fahad; 8=Jana; 9=Sana; 10=Lulu; 11=Amal; 12=Fatima; 13=Hesa; 14=Shahad; 15=Mariam

Ali shared,

A principal who has knowledge in different aspects such as technical, social, and intellectual is capable of knowing the environment that he works in and the people's abilities, competencies, and skills which guide him to create a good and effective school community.

An issue that was raised during the interviews was the need for a principal network. A principal network helps principals to share information about school leadership that enhances their knowledge and performance. The principals have in fact received documents from the Ministry of Education relating to their job or professional development. However, this is not enough. They need to express themselves and contribute with personal ideas. So, during the official meetings with the director or superior, they can share their views, concerns, and problems. Many of the participants shared the pressure on them to read about the culture of school leadership along with the

many responsibilities of a school principal. Many principals asserted that gaining knowledge about leadership is an important factor for effective school principals.

Fahad shared,

Whoever has knowledge of planning, appreciating, and solving problems knows how to build relationships. In addition, he possesses the power of self-control, time management skills, and is able to balance between administrative and technical responsibilities. We have many projects implemented in our school and many committees follow up these projects with the school principal, so I have to be ready for all these committees in conjunction with follow up of school responsibilities.

Focusing on technical skills is the hard part of a principal's daily responsibilities because the Ministry of Education's plan is to enhance principals' knowledge about leadership and drive them to focus on developing the teaching and learning process instead of administrative issues. Some principals do not have enough knowledge to improve the teaching and learning process. It was evident from the data that knowledge is the third issue mentioned in relation to the first question about effective school principals. Principals' responses reflect the need of knowledge for school principals.

The ability to communicate. The second issue mentioned by the participants is the ability to communicate. Eight out of 15 believed it is a critical skill the principal should have due to the different views, backgrounds, and cultures the school personnel carry. Developing communication skills can help in all aspects of school life. Principals asserted that the ability to communicate information accurately, clearly, and as intended is a vital skill and an important factor for effective principals. The ability to speak appropriately with a wide variety of people while maintaining good eye contact,

demonstrating a varied vocabulary and tailoring your language to your audience, listening effectively, presenting your ideas appropriately, writing clearly and concisely, and working well in a group all require good communication skills. Many of these are essential skills that principals need. As school progresses, the importance of communication skills increases; the ability to speak, listen, question, and write with clarity and conciseness are essential for effective school leaders.

John shared,

He possesses good communication skills and has the ability to establish strong relationships with the school personnel and community which will help solve all problems as well as create a healthy environment. This relationship will support the principal to achieve his goals.

Communication skills allow the principal to participate effectively as a member of a team, satisfy school personnel and community expectations, negotiate, make decisions, manage time efficiently, take responsibility, and work effectively with teachers. Well-honed communication skills allow principals to empathize and build a rapport with colleagues and school personnel, leading to a better working environment, which can be less stressful.

Shahad shared,

Whoever has good communication skills can affect the school team, can discover strengths and weaknesses of school personnel, encouraging and motivating them to lead school development. All of us have strengths and weaknesses; effective school manager should enhance this strength. He has the ability to develop teachers' performance and students' outcomes; he is a good listener and solves school problems with his team.

At some point, participants shared the essential of communication skills, and pointed out that it is an important tool to empower school personnel, lead school activities, and achieve its goals.

The spirit leader. The third issue mentioned by seven of the participants is the spirit leader. They asserted that it is an imperative issue that contributes to the success of school principals. Inspiring faculty and supporting the staff to perform their best is a key factor in developing a school culture that helps students thrive. The principal should work hard to inspire teachers to keep learning and improving their skills. Principals should keep up staff morale, make their schools fun places to work, and keep teachers motivated. Jana shared,

An effective principal is one who can spirit his team with ideas that lead the school to reach its goals, be an example in everything (commitment, performance, and sacrifice). Show self-esteem and appreciate the others and work with the school team and has the ability to unify. He supports his team and protects them from any external factors. He would attribute school success to his team.

Many participants mentioned the need for an inspiring school leader, because the pressure on principals forces them to focus on completing paper work instead of motivating school personnel. Some participants shared that there is no time to inspire the staff because you are busy all the time, and the superior always submits an order to fill out documents or attend a meeting. It is extremely difficult for most principals to do substantial things to motivate and inspire teachers. However, sometimes little things can make a big difference. Despite all these circumstances and administrative pressure, an effective school principal can still inspire school personnel.

Lulu shared,

He is the one who leads the school personnel to concretize school goals and achieve effective education. He possesses leadership qualities that inspire teachers. His main objective is raising the efficiency of teachers in the teaching and learning process, although he faces complex work pressures. He is skillful in planning, organizing, monitoring, and evaluating.

Many principals shared a similar viewpoint that as expectations and pressures have continued to rise, being an effective school principal becomes increasingly imperative. Effective principals are capable instructional leaders and skilled site-based managers. Their leadership is pivotal in the improvement of educational opportunities for school members. The principal's values, beliefs, and personal characteristics inspire people to accomplish the school's goals. Principals communicate these values to their internal and external audiences. They work in partnership with others to develop effective learning communities. They ensure that school members have the support and resources they need.

Rashed shared,

He is humanitarian, healthy, and inspires school personnel. He possesses change skills and always works hard and optimistically on school development. He supports school staff besides working on professional self-development. The principal's inspiration and support will lead the school to achieve its mission. He is always concerned about students' achievement along with preferring common core over his own interests.

Saad shared,

He knows his roles well and is able to inspire the school personnel. Besides, he delegates responsibilities.

Many principals mentioned that inspiring school personnel is the key to having a successful school year and motivated staff. Most of the participants at some point implied inspiration to be important for an effective school principal.

Professional development. The fourth issue mentioned by the participants was professional development. Most of the participants asserted the importance of professional development. The Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain has a prerequisite Diploma in School Management, which is required to apply for the position of principal. Most principals have this diploma, except for some old principals who have master's degrees in education or any equivalent certificate. In addition, the Ministry of Education offers and encourages principals to attend training courses to develop career skills. Throughout the interviews, most of the participants were concerned about the time they need for professional development. Many of the participants work at home to finish school paper work, which prevents them from attending any training offered by the Ministry of Education or other institutes.

Rashed shared,

He possesses change skills and always works hard on school development besides working on professional self-development. In addition, he is always optimistic about school goals achievement.

As I knew most of the principals, they shared the viewpoint of the difficulty in finding time to attend training courses offered by different institutes related to professional development, because they have job pressure at school and family waiting for them after school. Many of them have big families of four to eight children in

addition to their responsibilities for their parents. Families in the Kingdom of Bahrain are still well-connected, which puts more pressure on principals' shoulders. The culture in the Kingdom of Bahrain is to have children who carry your name and they are blessed. This belief comes from the Islamic religion. Yousif shared,

Whoever performed his duty with high efficiency is an effective leader. I knew a school principal who deleted the term school manger and wrote school leader, but currently his performance is as a school manager. School principals should be change agents and development leaders instead of implementing superiors' orders or requirements. He always dedicates time for professional development.

Principals mentioned that time is critical and that school principals should dedicate time for professional development, as everything is constantly changing and developing. Effective school principals should update their knowledge and skills so they can deal with school issues professionally. The issue most principals face in the Kingdom of Bahrain is their belief about professional development and the quality of the training they are offered to attend. Moreover, the number of projects that have been implemented during the last seven years have put a heavy weight on principals' shoulders and prevented them from attending professional developments. Many of the principals complain about the time in addition to the documents, files, and reports that they are obligated to submit on time.

Works for the sake of God. The fifth issue mentioned by the participants is that the school principals work for the sake of God and not for their own personal interest. Everything they face at school can be afforded because he works for the sake of God. Three of the principals mentioned the issue directly, but many of them mentioned it

indirectly as well. The school curriculum includes a religious subject that is taught twice weekly and some principals have bachelor's degrees in Islamic studies. In addition, the Islamic culture has an impact on people's lives and thoughts, so it is normal to hear that I work here to satisfy the God, not the superior. The participants confirm that it is a critical issue and motivates the principals to work effectively and honestly. Rashed shared,

He should satisfy himself and be proud of his performance while satisfying the demands of God in his work, he should also be humanitarian, healthy, and spirited.

Principals asserted that work for the sake of God is an essential factor for principals, particularly under the pressure of disappointments because principals constantly complain about principal authority, many projects, and complexity of the job. Principals are always on the hot seat for investigation for any mistakes, and they can be fired. However, little care is given to honor principals for a successful semester or a successful story.

Fatima shared,

Work for the sake of God, have a good relationship, be optimistic, believe that nothing is impossible, delegate responsibilities, be change leaders, be present in all school aspects, be close to the teachers, challenge the status quo, and work in the spirit of the law, not the law strictly.

Under the sake of God the principal feels relaxed, enthusiastic, and views dilemmas as opportunities for developing his/her skills and experiences. Moreover, he contributes with new ideas, thoughts, and ways to deal with school problems.

Many characteristics of effective school principals were not mentioned by participants. As Table 1 shows, it is an indicator that the principals were not exposed to enough training related to school principal standards or experienced an effective principals criteria's

Organizational Policy Factors That Influence Effective Principal Practice in Bahrain

After analyzing the principals' responses related to Research Question 2, initial categories were determined based on the deep review of the transcripts, recordings, and comments that were written during the interviews. The main issues in the categories are:

- The Ministry of Education decisions,
- Islamic law,
- Principal conscience,
- Ministry of Education policy, and
- Cultural value.

The Ministry of Education decisions. The principals asserted that the Ministry of Education decisions have a huge influence on effective principal practice. The Ministry of Education always supports the principals; however, some decisions need more study based on different schools' needs. Each school is a unique case so the decision that works for one school may not be appropriate for others. The Ministry of Education controls all schools in the Kingdom of Bahrain, so many decisions may not work for some schools that impact effective school principal practice.

Fahad shared,

The Ministry of Education always supports us. However, some decisions hinder our work. For example, we are not allowed to accept donations from community organizations. On the other hand, the Ministry of Education requests to increase the connection between the school and the community. Sometime community organizations send a donation or call to donate, but we cannot accept that without the permission of the Ministry of Education. Moreover, it sets certain contractors to deal with them, which determines the freedom of the principal for school purchases. The school budget is limited and the requirements are huge, particularly with the new projects. Therefore, the Ministry of Education is very restrictive in school budget.

All principals expressed similar views in regard to how the school principal has limited authorization as well as being restricted by the Ministry of Education rules. Even though the official stated that the Ministry of Education has taken many steps to give school principals wide authorization, principals look at all aspects of the impact of decisions on students, teachers, and schools. These principals realize the pressure of maintaining the balance between school needs and implementing the Ministry of Education decisions. Some principals explained the change that happened after the Kingdom of Bahrain conjuncture. They believe that many rules are implemented to restrict the principals' authority. Principals look critically at decisions because they have a great impact on students, budgets, and school societies. Hesa shared,

There are central decisions made by the Ministry of Education that I cannot override, because I have elementary and middle school, so I have to consult with its administration. We belong to elementary and middle school administration so we deal with two departments that cause us a problem.

The Kingdom of Bahrain has six types of schools, elementary school only, elementary and intermediate school, intermediate school only, intermediate and high school, and high school only. Some participants talked about the issue of being supervised by two departments and getting conflicting decisions from both of them. Moreover, the principal is under the pressure of two policies and rules, and different kinds of students' needs in the elementary as well as intermediate schools. This kind of complex influence affects school practice. It leaves heavy responsibilities on principals' shoulders and leads them to spend more time and effort to achieve the Ministry of Education's objectives.

Islamic law. All principals expressed similar views about the impact of Islamic law on the principal's practice and attitude. Many Islamic values influence principals' practice such as the value of work, justice, commitment, discipline, honesty, respect, trust, and cooperation. Each value has its own influence on the principals' practice and school success. Many principals shared that these values set the tone for a healthy school environment. Fahad shared,

The value of respect, justice, honesty with oneself and with others, the value of love, and of course the fear of God who created the worlds, in addition to sincerity, make the criteria that I used to manage my school.

Islamic values have a huge impact on principals' decisions. They mention that all decisions they make related to school, students, and teachers should conform to Islamic law. Many decisions that conflict with Islamic values or law can cause problems within the school and society.

The issue that arose during the interviews was ignorance of the beautiful Islamic values because the principal wants to gain personal interest, satisfy the superior, or achieve a higher position and higher grade level. They believe their experiences provide them with better understanding and that they know what is better for schools, students, and teachers. Everyone should obey their decisions because the principal is older than school personnel. Moreover, the superior order went in parallel with their decisions. In addition, the organization objectives will be achieved through these decisions. Amal shared,

What influences me is the philosophy of the Ministry of Education, our education goal, and our beautiful Islamic values which we sometimes neglected such as the value of work, the value of treating others well, and the value of self-respect and respect for others.

Principals asserted that the Islamic values are critical for the effective school principal and it is a foundation for successful school leaders. Everyone must work together for the greater good of the school and share these values to ensure that all decisions that are made in the students' best interest have a great underpinning and acceptable shared ground.

Principal conscience. Many principals mention the importance of principal conscience in leading success and future practices. Principals shared their thoughts based on their experiences about the influence of their conscience on the decisions they made in this high stakes testing environment. The principals' decisions are always linked to all previous experience and the status quo. It is important for the principal to reflect on their past, examine their current practices, and formulate their future decisions. The effective

school principal is aware of all these previous and current issues in school, which affects the way in which they think and how they manage their decisions for greater school success.

Lulu shared,

The well-prepared principal will be able to control his management by the knowledge and basic skill that he gains from trainings and experiences.

Fatima shared,

Nowadays we look at the policy and regulation before we issue any decision that has a big influence on relationships with others. In addition, my conscience for example, I implement the spirit of the policy and not the policy itself. For example, when I have two teachers with lateness issues but different excuses, I usually treat them differently, whether I like it or not. I do not want to be unfair to anybody in school. Particularly when I leave school. We have one staff dead after he left school last year. I am satisfied with the decision I made for him because we treated him fairly all the time. Moreover, job interest has a big influence on decisions, even though change is not always accepted by the school staff. For example, when we divided the student's morning line many teachers disagreed with the idea, but after we implemented the idea and they realized the positive results, they changed their minds about it.

School principal awareness of the Ministry of Education policy as well as the awareness of all students' needs will lead to effective decisions and success for all. The principals believe that with school principal awareness, many issues within school that might prevent the process of teaching and learning can be treated with appropriate choices.

Ministry of Education policy. Most of the principals agree that the Ministry of Education policy influences their practice. It is essential for the principal to follow the

direction of the Ministry of Education even if he/she sometimes does not agree with it.

Moreover, principals' decisions, practice, and mission should abide by the policy. Saad shared,

The principal represents the Ministry of Education and he has power as a part of it, which means he is obligated to follow the policy and guidance of the Ministry of Education to govern his practices and decisions.

What is observed in schools is that some principals articulate their refusal of some of the Ministry of Education policies, and many teachers repeated this view about the Ministry of Education policies. This behavior spread a negative view about the Ministry of Education policies. One principal mentioned that people have the choice to accept or refuse any policy that they are not comfortable with, but at the same time, they must obey the job guidance and rules because it protects them. In addition, the policy is generated for the public interest as well as for achieving the organizational objectives.

Shahad shared,

My practice is influenced by the general education policies; it is my reference in all school issues. When implementing the Ministry of Education policies, the principal protects himself from the accountability and protects school personnel from any future responsibilities.

It is critical that the Ministry of Education policies be the guidance for school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Principals' views are considered, but when it comes to education policy that should be implemented in school and enlighten principal practice, all principals should obey the policy even though they do not agree with all of it.

Cultural value. Principals shared their ideas about the impact of cultural value on effective school principal practice. The school principal practice should support and value the traditions, artifacts, symbols, and positive values and norms of the school and community that result in a sense of identity and pride upon which to build a positive future.

The Perspectives of School Principals about the Current Roles of the School Principal in Bahrain

This section focuses on principals' understanding of present duties and tasks in the Kingdom of Bahrain schools, and to identify principals' beliefs and thoughts about their daily responsibilities, as well as the pressure they face to play their roles as school leaders. After reading the transcripts and reviewing my notes for relevant comments and concepts that emerge from the collected data, three concepts were found in the analysis of principals' responses:

- The new direction and tendency of the Ministry of Education.
- The reality of school principal's role.
- Barriers to transforming the current roles of school principals.

The new direction and tendency of the Ministry of Education. Many principals indicated that the new trend of the Ministry of Education is to direct the principal to focus on the process of teaching and learning instead of administrative issues. The Ministry of Education instructed principals to make more visits to classrooms and develop teachers' professional skills. To achieve the ministry's goal and direct the principals to play the instructional leader role, a new job was created at schools titled

Head of Administrative and Technical Services. The new job aims to help free principals from administrative tasks. Saad shared,

The Ministry of Education created a new position titled Head of Administrative and Technical Services to help principals to focus on teaching and learning processes as well as students' achievements.

Shahad shared,

As required by the Ministry of Education, the principal's role in school should be technical. I prefer the technical works as well as dealing with students and being in touch with them on a daily basis. I believe this change in the direction of the Ministry towards school principals is the gate for uplifting the educational process to higher level.

All principals expressed similar views about the new trend of school principals' roles and the need to focus on the process of learning inside the classroom. To shift the role of school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the principals need to be prepared, supported, and trained to play the instructional leader role because for a long time they were forced to be school managers. This new role may take time and effort because the new job position that aims to help principal to focus on student learning is still in a probationary period and the appointed person is new in carrying out his new functions. The principals concurred that the new trend will shift the school principals' role in school and will have a positive impact on students' outcomes. Fahad shared,

The new trend in the Ministry of Education is that the principal is not a manager anymore but a leader. I expect that the success of the principal will be more with the new trend that links between the leadership and student achievements.

In this context, many researches asserted that there is a connection between school principals and student achievement (Wallace Foundation, 2013). In other terms, there is a link between the effectiveness of school principals and students' outcomes. Therefore, the new tendency undertaken by the Ministry of Education is in line with the new research findings.

The reality of the school principal's role. The principals shared optimistic viewpoints about the Ministry of Education's new direction, but simultaneously stated that the reality is not what they had hoped for concerning principals' characteristics. Cuban (1988) indicates that school principals desire to focus on instruction but managerial activities consuming the bulk of their time (p. 30). Moreover, the principals mentioned that this new trend places a heavy burden on their shoulders, in addition to administrative responsibilities. In fact, some principals also said that the new tendency can make you a nervous person and cause you to believe that you cannot manage these entire tasks. Hallinger and Murphy (2013) point out that there is a gap between the intention of school leaders to focus on learning and the daily professional practice. It can be taxing because many projects are associated with the new trend, which complicates the principals' roles. Fahad shared,

In light of the developments that took place in education in the Kingdom of Bahrain and the ability of the principals to manage these issues, the principals attempt to get out of the administrative matters and focus on technical leadership. Nowadays, principals carry a huge responsibility and pressure in a way they have never experienced before. Therefore, the principals tend to focus on administrative matters, but are convinced that they should play the role of instructional leadership.

Hallinger and Murphy (2013) expounded on three factors that impact the role of principal as instructional leadership: expertise, time to lead, and the normative of environment of the school. Principals shared the idea that the ministry personnel always ask for the principals' sign and authority even though the ministry appointed an employee to follow up on technical and administrative issues. They also point out that many parents insist on meeting the principal for issues that can be dealt with and solved or authorized through the assistant principal or the Head of Administrative and Technical Services. In our culture we still believe that the school principal is the only person who can cope with and solve all school problems and dilemmas. Moreover, he is the only person who has the authority and who is responsible for student success.

John shared,

The Ministry of Education created the new position of Head of Administrative and Technical Services with achieving all administrative responsibility to help the principal focus on the technical process. Practically, some Ministry of Education officials do not deal with any school staff except the principal. In addition, they do not rely on anyone in the school to achieve everyday school jobs; they feel that the principal is the only person responsible for all school matters. For example, when the maintenance supervisor comes to school and works in classrooms they called me because he requested to talk to me. The Head of Administrative and Technical Services is a new position and the person appointed to this job has little experience in the field and still depends on school principal in making decisions.

Fahad shared,

The problem is that some principals try to solve all school issues because the Ministry of Education want him to sign each paper in school and no one else has an approved signature, not even the assistant principal. The school personnel get the idea that all school issues should refer to the school principal. I have experience in delegating responsibility and it is successful to some degree. For the President of Administrative and Technical Services, the Ministry of

Education appointed some staff in the same school and transferred teachers for the position from other schools and they do not have enough experience in administrative matters.

The participants stated that principals carry huge responsibilities on their shoulders. Most of them try to achieve everything at the same time without getting help from school members because they believe there is no time to explain to the school staff the requirements of the ministry. This adds more pressure on the principal to submit the required documents on time. Bolman and Deal (2013) asserted that principals play a symbolic leadership role in school. Moreover, principals know that they will be under investigation if the documents are not received in a timely fashion. For that reason, principals sign every single document before submitting it to the Ministry. As schools began to be held more accountable for student achievement on national evaluations, the principal duties became more challenging.

For the position of Head of Administrative and Technical Services, the Ministry of Education has appointed some people to schools and transferred other teachers with little experience in administrative matters and from the same school position to other schools. This also put another responsibility on the principals' shoulders because they have to teach the appointed staff job responsibilities. The principals argue the balance that they need for submitting papers, projects, and training school staff. There is a need to prepare school personnel for new jobs and mentors that work with them in addition to on the job training courses. In reality, the principal is accountable for training school staff, including the Head of Administrative and Technical Services.

Barriers on principals' shoulders. Many issues facing school principals that prevent them from being school leaders focus on the process of learning and teaching. A study of five elementary school principals in the U.S. found that they consumed the majority of their time on administrative activities (Spillane & Hunt, 2010). Today principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain play administrative roles due to many barriers that work as constraints to transform the current roles of school principals. These restrictions have been drawn from the responses of school principals' interviews:

- Many projects.
- New position.
- Culture around background.
- Principal not trusting anyone.
- New experience.
- Try to finish quickly on time.
- Present himself as a good principal.
- Time to train others.
- Not being well prepared.
- No model (playing the new role).

Currently, many barriers and difficulties cause the principal to continue playing administrative roles and spending much time on school management. Throughout the interviews, principals hit on many issues that influence their effectiveness as school leaders. Talking about the Ministry's new projects, most of the principal asserted that many of the projects were imposed on schools by the Ministry at the same time and

should be carried out within a very short period of time. This forces school principals to spend most of their time following up with these new projects. In addition, principals should attend workshops, meetings, and training courses to understand the foundation of the new projects and their procedures as required by the Ministry. Many principals complain about the time that they spend outside of their school related to all Ministry projects, committee membership, and superior meetings.

Even though the Ministry has created this new job position with the aim of helping the principal focus on the teaching-learning process, the staff appointed for this position has little experience and lack of authority over school issues. Consequently, the principals have to train and work with the new staff to improve their skills to prepare them for the position.

The culture in and out of school is that the principal is the only person who has authority over all school issues. Many school personnel and parents are looking to the school principal to fulfill all their needs. When they are directed to the Head of Administrative and Technical Services they refuse and request a meeting with the school principal. Copland (2001) draws attention to the “myth” that the school principal is “everything to everyone.”

During their interviews, most of the principals talked about their experience with parents and school personnel. They believed that the school principal is the only person in their school who can address their needs. Parents expect every school leader to possess almost superhuman abilities (Peck, Rietzug, & West 2013). Principals asserted that this culture and these beliefs affect principals’ use of time and their effectiveness.

The principals mentioned that the pressure on principals relating to accountability leads them not to trust anyone with responsibility or job assignments. The deadlines for submitting school obligation reports push the school principal to work by himself and not to trust school personnel to finish it. School principals bear the responsibility of the delay in the delivery of the required report or error where they will be held accountable. The school principal spends time on administrative issues to avoid being accountable for the delay, error, or the shape of the documents.

Many principals have the goal and ambition for high position and grade levels so in all school tasks that require reports, principals present themselves as effective school leaders. In addition, they implement and follow the ministry instructions that result in achieving Ministry goals and a successful school year. That way they deserve a high position in the Ministry. It is such a sensitive part that some principals mention it indirectly because it affects the quality of the work and their reality. Principals work on all school reports to make them perfect and spends most of their time on administrative issues to show that they are very good principals. All the above barriers influence the principals' roles and prevent school principals from transforming to the new roles of school leaders that focus on teaching and learning as the Ministry plans.

Skills That Principals Need to be Effective School Leaders

The goal of this section was to determine the perceptions of the school principal relating to skills that principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain need to be effective school leaders. In addition, what criteria they refer to about principal skills. After hearing the recording and rereading the transcripts, it was apparent that principals focus on skills

based on their experience and on the job training without mentioning any criteria related to specific school principal standards.

Continuous training in leadership. Many principals mentioned that the trainings they had before or during their job did not fit the needs of school principal; moreover, it took much time and effort. There is even a form created for principals' needs, training, and workshops, but they are still not getting what they need. There is a need for a professional training institute focusing on developing school leaders' skills.

Ali shared,

Nowadays, there is no correct procedure for determining essential principal needs, which develop the desired principal skills. Principals' training today is an outcome of the developing programs but does not fit principals' needs. There is a form for principals' needs but the form does not fit the real needs of school principals and it takes a long time.

School leaders face new issues as well as dilemmas every day that need continuous on the job training and shared experiences. The rapid knowledge and worldwide network is changing school culture. Moreover, it challenges school leaders and forces them to develop leadership skills to deal with new school matters.

Salem shared,

The Ministry of Education creates training sessions under the development team for teachers and principals through periodic meetings, but in fact the meeting is short and most of it is a dialogue. I hope these training sessions were conducted by professional leaders from the development team.

Fahad shared,

The principal should continuously educate himself and be in constant contact with developments on the scene, pay attention to global developments in the field of education and what he can pass on to the field work, consult with experienced people in the field, and not to put himself in a closed circuit. He shares experiences with other people, either of less or more experience, which will give him great wealth that can be reflected in the field.

Working with others. Many principals indicated the importance of working with others and delegating responsibilities to others, particularly in our connected world.

Principals can make changes and develop their schools if they work together with staff as a team. Principals find answers to school issues when they work as a team with other principals and school personnel. Some principals talked about their personal experience of sharing successful stories when they met and discussed school matters with other principals. Many of them benefit from these stories and it works effectively as a solution in many different schools. Principals develop their leadership skills through sharing stories, particularly managing time, strategic planning, delegating responsibilities, patience, controlling emotions, inspiring school personnel, and communication skills.

Fatima shared,

The principal should have these skills: the art of persuasion, communication skills, delegation of power, how to make courageous decisions, and contagious, inspiring enthusiasm. These skills help principals lead their schools effectively.

Many principals mentioned the issue of delegating responsibility at some point. Peck, Reitzug, and West (2013) point out that the school principal has to share leadership responsibilities throughout their buildings. Many school principals said it is good idea to

delegate everyday jobs, but the issue is that the principal is ultimately responsible for all school issues. Any incidents that occur in school superiors will be blamed solely on the school principal. That drives principals to do all schoolwork by themselves to ensure accountability. However, this experience develops principal efficiency.

Qualified teachers, administrators, and technicians. All of the participants emphasized that the presence of qualified teachers, administrators, and technicians raised the level of efficiency of the school principal and the school. The school principal changes from administrator to school leader if he finds these competencies. On the other hand, the lack of these competencies reduces the efficiency ratio of the principal as a leader.

The Ministry of Education creates training sessions under the development team for teachers and principals through periodic meetings, but in fact, the meetings are short and more of a dialogue. Mariam shared,

He needs some training in leadership, knowledge, strategic planning for learning and teaching, and field practice. In addition, he should speak two languages, at least Arabic and English. He has the ability to create relationships, smiles, uses good words, and respects others.

Three issues are crucial for school principals: continuous training in leadership, field practice, and being bilingual. Speaking a second language would be of great importance. In the Kingdom of Bahrain, unless you speak English as a second language you may face many difficulties. The English language is a tool used to develop principal expertise. As most of the training in the Kingdom of Bahrain is performed in English with little translation available at times, principals who only speak Arabic will face

difficulties getting the most out of the training. In addition, many of the references are in English and some mentors and consultants in the Ministry of Education speak only English.

Principal Practice in Bahrain Compared to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives

This section aimed to provide a detailed description of the perspectives of school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The principals shared their beliefs and perceptions as it related to effective school leaders. The data collected throughout the interviews and the analysis helped the researcher to determine the point of convergence and consensus with the North Carolina Standard for School Executives. In relation to the view of principals concerning effective leaders, a number of concepts will be discussed in the following sections.

Knowledge. Of the 15 principals, only six articulated knowledge as an important tool for effective school principals, particularly in the 21st century. Many characteristics of the school have been changed. The principal cannot make effective changes in school without knowledge. Knowledge is the power that helps principals to develop all aspects of their schools. A majority of the principals did not make any reference to, or even mention knowledge.

Having said that, and referring to the NCSSE, the researcher found that in Standard 2, Instructional Leadership and Practices, it is mentioned that “the school executive practices effective instructional leadership when he or she demonstrates knowledge of 21st century curriculum, instruction, and assessment.” In another text in NCSSE the standard also mentioned, “The school executive must be knowledgeable of

best instructional and school practices and must use this knowledge to cause the creation of collaborative structures within the school.” When referring to the data analysis, the researcher basically found that the no-knowledge state is dominant among the principals in this study, which is ironic because they are convinced that they are content with themselves being school principals.

While we see that the NCSSE stresses school principals’ knowledge as necessary in practicing their role to the fullest, on the other hand we see that lack of knowledge is disseminating among Bahrain’s school principals, which affirms the difficulty in leveraging the standards of education in the Kingdom of Bahrain, as principals are still falling behind current and future competencies necessary for raising the standards of Bahraini education.

Ability to communicate. Probably the most important concept and notion is communication; principals should have good communication skills to further boost the performance of their schools and other stakeholders as well.

Many authors in the field of business administration argue that inappropriate communication can cause major problems for the communicating parties, referring to people who fail to communicate properly or due to the processes that leads to confusion. Furthermore, it may cause further damage that could lead to the failure of organizational plans. Johann Wolfgang Von Goethe said, “No one would talk much in society if they knew how often they misunderstood others” (“Johann Wolfgang,” n.d., para. 1).

In describing the communication process, some writers emphasize that studying the process of communication is crucial, because throughout this process there is

coaching, coordinating, counseling, assessment, evaluation, and supervision. In another definition, researchers have said that communication is the chain of understanding that integrates the members of an enterprise from the inside out.

NCSSE and communication. Therefore, due to the importance of communication, we cannot detach it from any ISLLC or NCSSE standard. Taking a closer look at NCSSE standards and where the concept of communication may apply, we basically discovered that communication is in every possible standard, and that no standard can be applied correctly without proper communication.

Furthermore, communication can be found in strategic leadership where school principals transform situations that lead to re-imagining the vision, mission, and goals in a strategic way. It is also present in the instructional leadership standard, where the principals set a high standard for instruction and evaluation that lead to accountability. The communication process has a strong presence in cultural leadership, where school principals have an implied understanding the school and infuse passion, meaning, and purpose, which would not be possible without communication. If we were to go to another NCSSE standard, for example human resource leadership, it is definitely clear that people who interact with each other on daily basis cannot live without communication, as recruitment, assessment, and teacher support are all based on communication. It is crucial to engage in conversations with teachers and staff to plan career paths.

Of course, communication can be found in managerial leadership, external development leadership, and micro-political leadership, where again, without proper

communication these standards will not work properly and will be doomed to fail. In referring to our table of principals' views of effective leaders (see Table 1), unfortunately not all of principals mentioned the ability to communicate. Only eight participants of 15 (53.3%) shared an awareness and consciousness about the power of communication and the ability to communicate as a leader. However, more principals recognized the ability to communicate as a needed trait for effective principals than any other trait.

This poor ranking reflects the inadequate level of school principals' understanding and perception regarding the ability to communicate; it is clear that many principals have problems communicating with the Ministry of Education and stakeholders. During the interviews, some participants said superiors did not understand their view, and did not know how to convince superiors or help them understand what was going on in their schools. In addition, principals articulated that it was hard to cope with parents and stakeholders, which to a degree reflects the principals' inability to communicate effectively. Accordingly, most of the parents do not participate in school activities or share their views.

Self-development. It is alarming that principals do not desire—or are unwilling—to participate in self-development. Principals give many excuses for not being engaged in self-development, which serves as a barrier to their receiving available opportunities; only two of 15 principals were willing to seek self-development.

Reoccurring reasons for not engaging in a self-development scheme included lack of time, the belief that it is too late or that they were not physically and/or mentally fit for such training, the pressure is overwhelming, and that they were trying but could not find

a suitable program. Principals should have an awareness of self-development because it helps to advance their career and the school for which they work.

Personal responsibility for one's own learning and development is an important issue for school principals because it prepares them for new matters in school.

Furthermore, they will be able to develop all personal skills related to their school.

Additionally, any school principal or future leader should take a self-assessment to see if his/her skills, interests, self-vision, mission, and creation of a developmental plan meet their learning needs and goals.

If we were to compare this with the NCSSE standards, we would find that self-development is in each and every NCSSE standard. In every standard and every action to implement such standards, school principals go through a learning process to raise their knowledge and awareness, in addition to benefiting from work experience and practice.

In the interview that was carried out with a number of school principals, the concept of self-development of effective leaders seemed to be far beyond the understanding of school principals, so we see that only two out of 15 principals mentioned that the effective leader should have the desire for self-development, and were unaware that the working conditions and day-to-day experiences in every organization in general, and in schools in particular, is a true learning process through which principals can gain self-development practices. "Experience is the best teacher," according to Conrad and Hedin (1990).

Work for God's (Allah's) sake. The terminology was often repeated by some people to mean that they do the work only for the sake of God, as if they do it voluntarily

or without returns. Working for the sake of God is a common terminology used in communities; it used in volunteer societies, but in fact, it is a cultural issue as well. Normally you would find those who are unsatisfied with their job/position, superior, or Ministry of Education public policy saying this, as if they were doing this job to satisfy themselves with God or to be on good terms with their creator. I heard it repeatedly through the principals whom I interviewed, which meant they were not satisfied with the directors or how people monitored them.

In relation to NCSSE standards, there is no terminology for “working for the God’s sake,” so it basically does not apply. NCSSE standards are there to be followed to become an effective school executive, and would not be reached but for hard work, determination, and setting appropriate goals.

Good listener. Being a good listener is very much connected to the ability to communicate, which is connected to all standards of the NCSSE. No doubt listening is an art, but few people know how to listen. Bryant H. McGill (n.d) said, “one of the most sincere forms of respect is actually listening to what another has to say” (p. 1).

Therefore, listening is an important tool in everyone’s life, especially school principals, who must listen to become leaders of the future and to implement appropriate action to achieve the goals of the Ministry of Education. Part of solving school problems is listening to school personnel, stakeholders, communities, and directors.

In our sample, only four of 15 school principals thought that effective leaders should be good listeners. Some principals criticized superiors for not hearing them or responding to their requests to meet with them. Some school principals hide and do not

meet parents, even though there is a direct order to respond to parents' requests to meet with them. Principals should be aware that listening in any profession, or even in our social lives, is very important and a key issue for understanding and for opening further horizons and beyond.

Time management. It is crucial that principals grow real strategies for time management. Time management is the process of planning the amount of time to be spent on specific activities, particularly to increase effectiveness, efficiency, or productivity.

Time management is a series of skills, tools, and techniques utilized to manage time such that specific tasks, projects, and goals abide by a due date. A time management system is developed which is calculated by a mix of processes, tools, techniques, and methods. Time management is needed in any project development as it ascertains the end of the project's time and scope.

Despite the high importance of time management, the principals interviewed had no sense of it to a great extent, as only three of 15 stressed the significance of time management. This low ranking of three participants who had in mind the issue of time management and its importance supports the idea that school principals need to participate in proper training to help them realize the fundamental role of time management in any given project or organization. Through the interviews, most of them talked about the amount of work they have to do and the lack of time to do it. Again, time management applies to all standards of NCSSE, but specifically refers to the strategic, instructional, cultural, and managerial leadership.

Change leader. Due to today's rapidly changing education environment, we promptly recognize new opportunities and take action to capture them and help students to understand and deal with them. The principals mentioned that school leaders should be passionate about changing the world and making a difference. They are flexible and work tirelessly and relentlessly to create the social change they desire. In fact, this whole matter is all about how leaders are needed in every organization, that they are the doers and the agent of change, and that they are the hope for better status and improved situations, as well as gaining and making substantial achievements and accomplishments for the organization and its employees (Abbas & Asgar, 2010).

Our school principals recognized the need for change and for a change leader, but not many of them, as only five of 15 mentioned this subject. A majority of the participants believed in or were satisfied with the status quo, which does not seem to be a good indicator for their awareness to have a change leader.

As mentioned in the NCSSE, "the work of leadership is about working with, for, and through people. It is a social act. Whether we are discussing instructional leadership, change leadership or leadership as learning, people are always the medium for the leader" (NC State Board of Education, 2006, p. 1). This aspect can also be found in all the standards of the NCSSE; the change leader of agent is a prerequisite of an effective school executive. This actually is related to the next point, which is challenging the status quo.

Challenging the status quo. One principal out of 15 agreed that the effective leader should challenge the status quo. Any change leader or effective leader should be

strong enough to change for the better, know what is to be changed, know people's personalities, and make courageous decisions. This point is directly linked to the following NCSSE standards: strategic leadership, instructional leadership, cultural leadership, and human resource leadership. For example, in strategic leadership in NCSSE under practices,

The school executive practices effective strategic leadership when he or she:

- Is able to share a vision of the changing world in the 21st century that schools are preparing children to enter;
- Systematically challenges the status quo by leading change with potentially beneficial outcomes. (NC State Board of Education, 2013, p. 4)

Through the interviews most of the principals talked about the status quo and how it impacts the school work and school personnel, but only one respondent mentioned his role in challenging the status quo. Moreover, some principals articulated that it is hard to change because the principals have no authority. As always, the principals' excuse is that there is no time to lead changes under the current circumstances.

Delegating responsibility. The issue of responsibility delegation is very important indeed, as it disseminates tasks and duties to many school personnel to make work easier, alleviate the burden of executing bulky tasks, and make room for some innovation from school members who were assigned these tasks.

Delegation of responsibilities gives a sense of confidence to the employees, which in turn motivates them to carry out the designed tasks with the utmost commitment and dedication. Delegating responsibility is linked at some point to external development leadership and other standards. For example, under practices,

The school executive practices effective in external development leadership when he or she:

- Implements processes that empower parents and other stakeholders to make significant decisions;
- Creates systems that engage all community stakeholders in a shared responsibility for student and school success. (NC State Board of Education, 2013, p. 8)

As previously discussed, delegating responsibility is an art and all school principals need it because there are many benefits and advantages for both employees and leaders. For employees, they will be more involved and committed, more projects will be implemented and completed, and through the process employees can develop leadership skills. All of this will lead the school to operate more efficiently.

For school leaders, delegating responsibility will result in a lower possibility of burnout, giving a sense of satisfaction watching employees grow and develop, and leading to further experience in the executive's roles and functions. Returning to the interviews of principals regarding their views of effective leaders, three of 15 believed delegation of responsibility could be beneficial to any party; however, they also believed that it might lead to unsuccessful situations.

Spirit leader. To be a spirit leader means to discover one's own goals and uniqueness. People will be more productive in their created area of identity and strength than others. It is all about leading the process of transformation in people. Loyalty and morale would be generated by assisting employees in uncovering their own transformation.

Spirit leaders can affect their surroundings, effecting real change in tense situations, fear, interactions, apathy, or mutual relations. A spirit leader can fill a school

with love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, and gentleness. A spirit leader helps school personnel and students see things in a different way, and changing their way of thinking brings about meaningful change. One of the most important characteristics of a spirit leader is that he is able to influence, inspire, and empower students, teachers, communities, and stakeholders. At some point they inspire leaders linked to instructional leaders, cultural leaders, human resources leaders, and external development leadership since there is no direct term in NCSSE that mentions spirit leader.

Professional development. Some participants articulated the need for professional development for school principals. Four of 15 respondents mentioned it directly, and others mentioned it indirectly. The principals pointed out that the training they had did not fit with their needs as a school leader. In addition, it is out of touch with school reality. The first step in any successful professional development initiative is to identify principals' existing strengths and weaknesses that are not observable in the school principals' environment in the Kingdom of Bahrain such as self-assessment, peer assessment, and institute assessment. It does it mean it does not exist, but it does not spread and there is no public policy for it.

Of other characteristics of effective leaders as viewed by the school principals, only one of 15 principals believed that effective leaders should possess the following criteria: self-esteem, equality, strategic leadership, and work on priorities. On the other hand, the characteristics of optimistic and creative were supported by only two of 15 principals. These two principals thought these characteristics should be believed in and applied whenever and however necessary. Effective leaders should possess qualities such

as self-esteem, leadership skills, equality, strategic leader and work on priorities, professional development, optimistic, creativity, and balance.

NCSSE listed a number of competencies that school principals should be endowed with and characterized by, stressing that leaders should possess such competencies, recognizing the fact that some principals may not possess all of the required competencies and stating that “The principal may or may not personally possess all of these competencies but must ensure that a team is in place that not only possesses them, but can effectively and efficiently execute them” (NC State Board of Education, 2013, p. 10).

These competencies include communication, change management, conflict management, creative thinking, customer focus, delegation, dialogue, emotional intelligence, and environmental awareness, as well as judgment and sensitivity. There are also many other competencies such as global perspective, organizational ability, personal ethics and values, responsiveness, systems thinking, time management, and visionary.

Participants feel they are alone in leading schools and that at some point nobody really understands them. For that reason many of them were happy to be interviewed and felt it was time that they were able to express their feelings and perceptions on all issues relating to school. They complained about their reality; even though it is a challenge and may cause them to have a difficult time with accountability, they are trying to do special things and focus on positive things. They have made many efforts in order to lead successfully and achieve school goals.

Summary

This chapter provided details of the voiced perceptions of select school principals. These principals shared their perspectives about effective school principals. In addition, they shared how they manage their perceptions to create success. Their sharing was based on their experience as practicing school principals. These perspectives were different depending on the level of experience they had as school principals. Moreover, a comparison to North Carolina Standards for School Executives was presented.

Overall, findings answering Research Question 5 helped one to get a deep insight into the school principals' perspectives. Furthermore, an effort was made to provide an opportunity for participants to talk about their particular career-long experiences. This was important because their perceptions did not start when they became principals, but in some cases, it was solidified. These principals served many years as teachers, assistant principals, central office personnel, also worked in different school settings (elementary, middle, and high school). In addition, they worked in different areas and in other roles in the field of education before becoming school principals.

An interesting result was discovered based on the findings of this research. The participants mentioned several school principal concerns. In addition, principals discussed characteristics of effective school leaders and common practices and expectations.

In regard to principals' perspectives, the principals mentioned 18 skills that they believed are essential for effective school leaders. Some of them were repetitive such as knowledge, ability to communicate, delegate responsibility, spirit leader, and professional

development. Some of the skills were only mentioned once or twice. We assume that school principals are aware of all of the effective skills required to lead a school successfully. Unfortunately, participants ignored many important issues even though the NCSSE emphasized it, as criteria principals should have for future schools. It is amazing that none of the participants mentioned all the skills for effective school principals that are mentioned in NCSSE. The only skill that eight of the principals mentioned was the ability to communicate, and they articulated the importance of this skill for school principals.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

In this chapter, an interpretation of the data regarding principals' perspectives of effective school principals and the comparisons to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives is presented. Five questions were answered in this study through data collection and principals' responses to the interview questions to provide in depth principals' perspectives of effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. The major question is: What are the perspectives of school principals in The Kingdom of Bahrain about effective school principals? Sub-questions include:

- What organizational policy factors influence the effective principal practice in Bahrain?
- What are the perspectives of school principals about the current roles of the school principal in Bahrain?
- How does principal practice in Bahrain compare to the North Carolina School Executives standards?
- What skills do principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain need to be effective school leaders?

During the interpretation stage, one tends to draw conclusions from the data by focusing on the question, "What is to be made of it all?" (Wolcott, 1994, p. 12). Detailed

descriptions of the perceptions of school principals (elementary, middle, and high school) will be presented. The principals shared their beliefs and perspectives about effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain, what organizational policy factors influence effective principal practice, the current roles of the school principal, and the skills principals need to be effective school leaders. In addition, principal practice in Bahrain will be compared to the North Carolina School Executives standards. Later in this chapter, lessons drawn from the data, implications, suggestions for future research, and conclusions will be presented.

This chapter is divided into five sections that present the interpretation of the following findings:

- Beliefs and perspectives about effective school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain,
- Organizational policy factors influencing effective principal practice,
- Current roles of the school principal,
- Skills principals need to be effective school leaders, and
- Comparison to the North Carolina School Executives standards.

Beliefs and Perspectives about Effective School Principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain

Most of the principals interviewed are doing everything in schools themselves. On the other hand, the philosophy of the NCSSE asserts that leadership is not about doing everything oneself but about creating collaborative processes and systems that will cause everything to happen in a proper manner. As the pressure on school principals mounts with new projects in place, it will be significant for principals to recognize the necessity

of building a leadership team that has complementary skills. Even though it is an important process for effective school principals and it is mentioned in the NCSSE standards, none of the principals talked about it or mentioned it during their interviews.

Principals asserted that there are no criteria or standards in place to evaluate their leadership, except for the end of the year assessment. This assessment does not reflect the reality of school principals' efforts. They mention that it is a routine process the superior performs without having any impact on developing principals' skills. There is another comprehensive evaluation that has not been officially adopted.

The NCSSE have been developed as a guide for principals and assistant principals as they continually reflect upon and improve their effectiveness as leaders throughout all stages of their careers. On the other hand, the evaluation form in the Kingdom of Bahrain is used only at the end of the year to evaluate the school principals, and it used for many years without any changes. Changing the evaluation form is critical if it is to be a tool for improving principals' growth and performance to lead schools in the 21st century. The Ministry of Education should take into consideration the importance of the standards in developing school principals' leadership. It is a critical step toward creating effective school principals.

Before adopting or creating new standards, a comprehensive evaluation is needed to determine school principals' effectiveness. Studying the reality of the school principals' skills in the Kingdom of Bahrain is needed. Many principals asserted that the school and the students will be more successful if the principals transform the environment of the schools by focusing on teaching and learning. To truly promote

substantive school reform that will have a positive impact, it is imperative that educational leaders adopt standards for school principals that focus on teaching and learning.

The school principals could benefit from NCSSE implementation as it would enrich the evaluation process and improve principals' effectiveness. In addition, both sets of standards have a vision, philosophy, intended purpose, precise organization, and research base. The practices they follow are not found in the annual evaluation in the Kingdom of Bahrain, which is a simple assessment that utilizes a Likert-type scale from one to five. During the interviews, none of the principals were aware of any standards or could suggest a particular set of standards.

The standards help principals to better assist schools in the 21st century. It helps them to better control pressure and to be effective school principals. Effectiveness of the school principals will influence teachers, students, staff, and the community. As long as the school principals are well prepared and have clear direction, the school will be successful and productive.

In Chapter IV, Table 2 indicated a lack of clear standards in the Kingdom of Bahrain. School principals focus on some critical issues for effective school principals while simultaneously ignoring important issues that both NCSSE and ISLLC mention. The high skills for effective leaders were brought the surface by only eight of 15 principal participants. It is an indicator that standards are a necessity in order to develop school principals' skills.

Only one principal mentioned strategic leader as a skill of effective leaders, one mentioned challenge the status quo, and three mentioned change leaders, even though they are critical skills cited in NCSSE and ISLLC. Most of the participants ignored the strategic leadership and its practice of challenging the status quo by leading change with potentially beneficial outcomes. School executives play an important role in creating conditions that result in strategically reimagining the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century. The limited number of participants who spoke about strategic leadership and its practice may be evidence that school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain are not aware about school executive standards. In addition, participants do not share language about school principal standards.

Only three of the 15 participants mentioned delegating responsibility, which reflects the way the schools are led. Most of the time school principals perform the school tasks that should be delegated. In NCSSE delegation is a competency that is inherent in the successful performance of all practices listed under each of the seven critical functions of leadership. Delegation is essential for school principals to possess to ensure their success. If we are to develop school principal skills, indeed standards are needed in the Kingdom of Bahrain since the standards represent tools that help principals develop their professional skills.

Organizational Policy Factors Influencing Effective Principal Practice

The principals believed that the Ministry of Education's central decisions, Islamic law, principal conscience, and cultural values have an impact on effective school principals. The principals focus on the Islamic and cultural values that have guided their

decisions and influenced their practice. Moreover, the restrictions placed upon principals from the Ministry of Education decisions increase the need for more qualified principals so we can produce schools that are more successful.

In addition, principals' practices are influenced by Ministry of Education policy while simultaneously being challenged by school personnel, since many teachers articulate their disagreement with ministry policies. During the interviews, some principals agreed with teachers' views of ministry policy. Effective school principal should be intelligent enough to cope with such an issue. The principal should implement the policy and obey the rules to achieve educational goals; this is essential to leading successful schools.

Many principals mentioned that the Ministry of Education policy protects the students and the community more so than the teachers and principals. The principals emphasized that currently the focus has shifted to student achievement and ignores principal leadership. Some of the principals did not get the degrees they deserved with their 20 years of experience and some of them were suddenly transferred to other schools without knowing the reason for the transfer. Some of the principals interviewed demonstrated their concern for job stability.

Current Roles of the School Principal

This study found that the principals felt that their voices were not heard by their superiors and officials of the Ministry of Education. Principals discussed some school issues during the official meetings, but it was not enough, and there was not enough time allowed to go into detail about critical matters in their schools. Many times the

principals' tone shifted to their reality and issues that concerned them as principals, but they had never been provided a forum in which to express their concerns. Most of the principals had never participated in a research study and had never been given the opportunity to voice their perspectives and concerns.

Principals as Rich Resources

This study has shown that the principals provided a rich source of knowledge related to the current role of the principal, what impacts school principals' practices, the skills school principals need, and the perspective of effective school principals. For this reason, school principals should be consulted more often for future decisions related to principal leadership. Many principals indicated that they are "out of the loop" in the Ministry of Education decision making process. Some decisions that have been made by the Ministry related to the principals' work were made without consulting the principals or including them in the decisions. School principals have extensive experience in the school system, which would make them excellent resources for creating or sharing trainings and to mentor novice principals and teachers, but unfortunately very few of them have been allowed to lead such trainings.

Principals' Reality

Many participants voiced the need to reform preparation programs for school principals, and asserted that the programs should directly relate to the daily reality they face in schools. Preparation programs should equip school principals with tools that help them to manage schools in the 21st century. This study demonstrated that school principals need help and support while they are coping with day-to-day school matters

due to weak preparation programs. One principal mentioned that he faces everything alone in school. According to Spillane and Lee's (2014) study, many principals feel "stress, solitariness, and loneliness" (p. 444).

According to the Ministry of Education, this system, which was implemented to create decentralized administration, will enhance efficiency in school systems and will allow daily follow up and facilitate school work through coordination and integration between the central administration and the education district. The school as an educational institution undertakes managing its administrative and academic affairs under the umbrella of the Ministry of Education. The Ministry has recently directed its concerns toward the development of the school and its mechanism to reform education and to further improve its quality in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

To develop school performance and upgrade their educational and administrative activity, the Ministry of Education introduced programs in 2008 with the intention of tackling the development of school performance and leadership. Among several programs created, there are five major projects (Annual Report, 2008):

- Model of an Excellent School: Provides criteria for excellence that enable schools to utilize it for self-assessment and outlining their priorities.
- School leadership: Aims to enhance school leadership. It comprises the assessment of leadership teams, strategic planning, budgeting, and monitoring the performance of school teachers, administration, and the technical staff.
- Teaching to Boost Education: Based on improving the effectiveness of the teaching process in schools.

- **School Performance:** Fosters the requirements for information and transparency through the use of key performance indicators; the challenging and supportive system, operations, and results; and the criteria the ministry uses to evaluate school performance.
- **Improving the Ministry of Education Performance:** Improve performance by pinpointing the required changes and their applications to further enhance school performance on a large scale.

Accordingly, the Ministry rushed the schools by approving the reformation plans by the government, which put pressure on the Ministry for rapid implementation, regardless of the preparations. Rushing principals into many projects without spending enough time communicating the vision and explaining implementation strategies reflects the Ministry's assumptions about school principals. In addition, the Ministry placed a heavy burden on principals' shoulders and directed them away from instructional leadership. Therefore, many principals and teachers complain about responsibilities which they are tasked to perform with little to no incentive or praise.

Skills Principals Need to be Effective School Leaders

The school principals interviewed had different views about effective principals, which reflects the lack of clear standards and the training principals need to develop their knowledge and practice. Additionally, the number of trainings or conferences the principals attend does not matter; it is the quality and the degree to which trainings or conferences meet their needs that is important.

The principals focused on knowledge, ability to communicate, being a spirit leader, and delegating responsibilities. This is based on experiences in their schools and reflects the training they need. Many of the principals asserted that without these skills they will not be successful in leading their schools. None of the principals mentioned studies or references related to effective school principals or criteria that were put in place by the Ministry of Education. It was surprising that some skills, such as being a strategic leader, challenging the status quo, working on priorities, and equality were each only indicated once by principals as critical talents for effective school principals to possess. There are many other skills principals are not aware of and which are not given enough attention, even though they are important for effective school principals to possess.

Cultural Impact

Many of the principals asserted that working for the sake of God is a critical skill that helps them to work even when they do not get enough support. There is an impact of the Islamic culture on participants in the Kingdom of Bahrain. When principals talked about working for the sake of God, the tone of the interviews always shifted to sharing more personal beliefs about their reality and critiquing the school system and the Ministry of Education practices. The principals needed a little prodding to get them to share their insight about the status quo and the heavy burden they are carrying, without being recognized for their efforts. Many times I kept redirecting the participants to the main question of the interview.

Talking about working for the sake of God has deep meanings for school principals; one of the meanings is that they are never waiting for higher positions or a higher salary grade. Another meaning is that they have no special services for them to cope with the many stressors and challenges they encounter on a daily basis. In addition, there is no long-term plan in the near future for them to develop as effective school principals. Moreover, the school leadership has an impact on their social, emotional, and physical well-being, and that cannot be explained or understood by their superiors unless they offer a forum or special meeting with the principals.

Principals asserted that they work to develop student achievement regardless of the support they receive and that it is for the sake of God. They are coping with teachers, students, school staff, the community, stakeholders, and other public and private schools to achieve school goals. Consequently, they do not always address their own needs. It is critical that principals enhance their profession skills to the fullest, which they are not always receiving.

Professional Development

This study found that there are limited professional developments for school principals. The Ministry of Education has a plan to develop school leadership, but in reality little effort has been made, as the principals mentioned. The Ministry of Education focuses more on student achievement than principal development, even though studies assert a positive correlation between effective principals and student achievement (Louis et al., 2010). Many important issues related to effective school principals the participants ignored, which reflects the weakness of the principals' preparation program

and on the job training. In addition, there is no indication that the school principals interviewed had knowledge about any standards in the area of principal effectiveness, or referred to one such as NCSSE or ISLLC.

The study found the need for principal networks that would help the principals to benefit from each other's experiences and shared perspectives, which could influence teacher development and student achievement.

Instructional Leadership

Still, the school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain have many managerial responsibilities even though the Ministry of Education created a new position to direct the principal to focus on the teaching and learning process. The principals complained about the authority that the Head of Administrative and Technical Services had to sign the Ministry of Education documents. There is a need to change the belief that the principal is the only person in a school who has the answer and authority for school difficulties. The principals understand the new principal's role shifted, but they cannot control the pressure on them to focus only on the process of teaching and learning.

Even though the principals are obligated to make two daily visits to a classroom, in reality it is hard for them to achieve this goal because of the many issues that disrupt these visits. The principals demonstrated that with all the managerial responsibilities that they have, they cannot perform such daily tasks. In addition, not all of the principals had been prepared for visiting classrooms and providing feedback for the teachers.

Leadership Skills

Today school principals must be equipped with skills in order to overcome obstacles that could hinder school success and student achievement. Programs and training should be designed to fit principals' needs and provide them with skills and knowledge that align with the schools they are serving, as well as the rapid changes occurring in school. School principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain should be willing to improve their leadership skills and look forward to finding better leadership programs that enhance their schools' performance. Many of the principals who were interviewed had a desire to benefit from successful school experiences in or out of the Kingdom of Bahrain, which will help principals to find new ways of leading and coping with dilemmas in school.

It is essential to spread awareness of the important role that the school principal plays in developing student achievement in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Moreover, many efforts could be taken to develop principals' skills. I agree that there are some programs for developing school principals' skills, but these trainings are not directly connected to current school issues, principal needs, and do not have long-term goals. In addition, no follow up or monitoring of the impact of these trainings is offered.

During the interviews principals mentioned that they improved some skills during the job and through the obstacles they have faced. However, principals' mistakes while dealing with school dilemmas may cost them greatly, as some of them indicated. Principals are concerned about this issue because even though they may develop much progress in their schools improving student achievement over the years, while getting no

recognition and praise they deserve, just one mistake may cost them a possible loss of position. Many principals' skills that interviews brought to the surface indicated a lack of focusing trainings and programs to help principals develop their professional skills and collaboration with colleagues.

Comparison to the North Carolina Standards for School Executives

The interviews with school principals from the Kingdom of Bahrain who have experiences as administrators would differ significantly from what principals in the U.S. would express in a variety of ways. First of all, while interviewees discussed the ideal principal who operates school-based programs on all the criteria I have cited, the reality is that their scope of work is largely in the area of management. Secondly, as in American school systems, the subjects were mostly able to identify with the lack of autonomy and the ability to make decisions based on the needs and culture of the school since the Ministry of Education controls all schools, and principals are not allowed to act independently of the desires of the Ministry of Education.

Additionally, the study found that the subjects also disagreed with the shared decision making model that is often practiced in schools in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Unlike principals in the U.S., principals in Bahrain are allowed to give executive orders based on their own judgment with little to no involvement from stakeholders within the school. As a result, few principals have the tools necessary to effectively engage the community in school decisions, thus creating isolation between home and school. While many parents may be interested in helping the school and being a part of the school

environment, without real opportunities to engage stakeholders in school issues, strong relationships between the two cannot be established.

The Ministry of Education prepares final exams for all students, and teachers must ensure that students are prepared for these exams by covering the curriculum thoroughly throughout the year. I believe this requirement created responses from the interviewees about the lack of preparation they have to be true instructional leaders in their schools. I have my doubts that school principals in Bahrain will communicate strong professional beliefs about school, teaching, and learning that reflect the latest research and best practices in preparing students for success in college or in work simply because there is no strong connection between higher education and school principals. Most of the schools have an improvement plan, student achievement data, and dropout data, but they lack documented use of formative assessment instruments to impact instruction.

Bahrain public schools are mostly filled with native students. Foreign students have their own schools, with the exception of a few private schools that have a multicultural environment. In recent years public schools were starting to include foreign students as well. With this shift in demographics, the administrators included in this study provided feedback regarding how this change is challenging their leadership skills, as well as their personal convictions and beliefs about cultures other than their own.

Therefore, principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain are not prepared to understand the important role of diversity as it contributes to the performance of their schools. Many teachers come to the Kingdom of Bahrain from other countries to work on a two-year

contract, subject to renewal, which causes some conflict with students' culture. For that reason, there is no visible support for positive, culturally-responsive traditions that build school community or a sense of efficacy and empowerment among staff, and principals are not prepared for this change.

Even though school principals' standards play an important role in developing principals' leadership in the 21st century, the Ministry of Education in the Kingdom of Bahrain provides no standards or future plans for providing standards. During the interviews, the school principals were not aware of any standards or references related to effective school leaders. For that reason, some skills like strategic leaders, challenging the status quo, working on priorities, equality, and self-development was mentioned only one time in all of the interviews. NCSSE standard number 1, Strategic Leadership, states, "School executives will create conditions that result in strategically re-imaging the school's vision, mission, and goals in the 21st century" (NC State Board of Education, 2013, p. 4). Only one principal interviewed mentioned strategic leadership, which reflects the reality that there is no unity focus for school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain on standards or any developing skills references.

To develop school principals' skills in the Kingdom of Bahrain, the Ministry of education could benefit from the U.S., a country that has spent much time and effort developing school leadership. Bahrain is a small country in the Arabic region. For a long time it only had one university and low effort and research in developing school principals' leadership. There are no standards in the Kingdom of Bahrain for school principals.

The U.S. has made excellent efforts in developing school principals' leadership and positive experiences throughout the huge education system in existence. Therefore, interviewing school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain exposed rich information about school principals and the need for standards to develop school principals' leadership skills. The interviews of school principals helps us to understand the causes of low scores in leadership in the national evaluation, discover effective principals when it is compared to NCSSE, analyze the lack of training for school principals, understand the complaint culture of teachers, review the current principal evaluation system, and recommend what the principal might need to be effective. This will provide a foundation upon which to develop leadership skills that are in demand in the 21st century as well as their own standards.

What Lessons Can Be Drawn from This Study?

Many of the implications of this study discussed in this chapter relate to school principals' practices. Interviews with school principals who have varied experiences enriched the research findings and helped one to identify the impact of effective school principals. Principals who had more years of experience shared additional practices, stories, and details related to school matters, especially the effective school principals. The principals shared information about skills that principals need to be effective. They shared a wealth of information about their perspectives of effective school principals, skills principals need to be effective, how policy impacts their roles, and the current role of school principals. The following section provides practical suggestions for addressing the issues raised by the participants.

Future Research

The findings of this study indicate a multitude of opportunities for further possible research in regards to principals' perspectives. Future research that could be relevant would be to get principals' perspectives on North Carolina Standard for School Executives. I would be interested in their perceptions and background about the standards and the impact of the standards on principals' leadership. In addition, it would benefit the education system to adopt a standard in the Kingdom of Bahrain or start the process to create one.

I would like to conduct research to investigate principals' views of preparing programs in the Kingdom of Bahrain, in addition to the impact of these programs on principals' practices. I would like to identify in detail all programs offered to develop school principals' leadership. The researcher could follow the Ministry of Education programs, trainings, and plans in place to enhance school principal leadership. Moreover, the researcher would like to connect the projects that the ministry implements with the reality of school principals.

All school principals are unique, and it would be helpful to study principals' leadership styles in the Kingdom of Bahrain. I would like to know in detail what principals think affect their leadership styles. I would like to know the impact of the principals' styles on student achievement, teachers' instruction, and community comparative. The Kingdom of Bahrain is small country. Therefore, it would be wonderful to study principals' leadership styles in the Kingdom of Bahrain and their

influence on school effectiveness. This would enrich educators' knowledge and research areas, which will improve school achievement.

Also, research could be conducted on school principals' perspectives of developing principals' leadership in the Kingdom of Bahrain and investigate the support they need from the Ministry of Education and Bahrain University to change the status quo. I would like to learn more about their perspectives on this topic. It would be ideal to draw up a long-term strategic plan for developing school leadership. I would like to know to what extent the school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain are involved in the decisions issued by the Ministry of Education. In addition, it would be important to determine what kinds of support principals receive from the Ministry and Bahrain University, and to determine if these supports line up with what the principals really need based on their self-reported realities. Lastly, the relationship between the principals and the University of Bahrain and the Teacher College merits investigation.

Finally, throughout the interviewing process, some participants mentioned the role of the principal and its impact on the success of the schools they serve. Future studies could provide valuable insight into the connection between successful schools and leaders in the kingdom of Bahrain. This type of research could help future principals to be more successful in leading their schools.

Conclusion

This research represents a long journey of exploring school principals' perceptions about school leadership, principals' effectiveness, policy that impacts the role

of the principals, the current role of the principals, tools that help principals to be effective, and the connection to NCSSE.

The findings of this study were aligned to many researches about effective school principals and school leadership, particularly to the practice of NCSSE standards. The emerging themes and categories supported recent research in the field that focused on identifying the practices of effective leadership that impact student achievement.

It is interesting to hear principals' voices that have never been heard, as one of the principals said, "I am glad that I have space to talk about school leadership, it is the first time I have been interviewed." They shared their experiences about their current role as 21st century school leaders. They all had different school circumstances; nonetheless, all of the participants provided valuable insight into the research questions of this study.

Even though the school principals interviewed have a challenge in the Kingdom of Bahrain schools, especially with the current events of asking for more freedom, the principals shared their views on how to effectively lead schools and enhance principal practices. They demonstrated a willingness to help in any effort to develop schools and train school personnel to better lead their schools.

An important point the principals shared was their desire to change the current role of school principals in the Kingdom of Bahrain. They asserted that the evaluation form should be completely revised as it does not reflect the current school principals' realities. Moreover, it is used as a routine process to evaluate the principals' practices, but does not affect or develop principals' leadership.

The principals interviewed pointed out that they are convinced that school leadership should be supported in the Kingdom of Bahrain School due to the pressure on school leaders to not only manage a complex operation and maintaining the status quo, but to also be able to create school organizations that can learn and quickly adapt. Spillane and Lee (2014) mention that principals' support, both pre-service and in-service, will help them manage stress and create a healthy work environment. The support comes from the Ministry of Education, University of Bahrain, Teacher College, and professional organizations.

Many school principals feel that they are working alone because of the nature of the school and the projects they are responsible for implementing in their schools. One principal stated that "many visitors come to the school every day related to the Ministry of Education projects that are implemented in the school" and principals have to meet them and provide needed documents.

School principals' voices that were heard throughout the interviews were valuable and critical for the Ministry of Education officials, University of Bahrain, Teachers College, and policymakers. They provided insightful information about leading schools in the 21st century. In addition, the need for school principal standards was voiced.

It is my hope that other school leaders in the Kingdom of Bahrain join in the study of seeking their perspectives about principal effectiveness. Each of the principals interviewed shared experiences and spoke about their current role in school, the organizational policy factors that influence effective principal practice, and skills principals need to be effective school leaders and effective school principals.

They all have served as school leaders from five to 19 years, and three of them were retired. I interviewed all of the participants and they spoke in their Arabic language, which helped them to feel comfortable. I translated the transcript to English. It was a long journey with many lesson learned. I spent meaningful time with the participants, and their transcripts allowed me to know them better in the context of the schools they served. For me it was a good opportunity to hear from school leaders after five years since I left Bahrain to study in the U.S. in 2007.

Many projects were in place in the Kingdom of Bahrain since 2007 and I expect that some of the projects focus on developing school principals' standards and skills. Currently there are no programs for effective school principals, and I found that there are no standards in places and projects under study. In addition, when I listened to the participants during the interviews none of them mentioned any standards and I did not find any shared language about school principal standards.

I expected that a majority of the participants would mention the strategic leader, work on priority, and instructional leader, but only one mentioned strategic leader and one asserted on priority as a skill for effective leaders. None of the participants focused on the instructional leader as an imperative standard for effective school principals.

When I compared what the participants shared and NCSSE standards, I found that the school principals had no background about any standards even though some did bring to the surface practice, skills, and competencies that are cited in NCSSE.

Throughout this research journey, I learned many lessons from the principals. First, the Ministry of Education should pay close attention and listen to educators in the

field, particularly school principals, due to the important role they play in developing school personnel leadership and creating new leaders. Second, the more practices the principals possess, the deeper the experiences they will share. Third, the reality that the principals shared was different from the theory about which the officials always communicate. Fourth, the principals described how to be better leaders in their schools. Fifth, I learned much about the reality of school principals and school matters in the Kingdom of Bahrain. I learned about the new projects that have been implemented in schools during my five years traveling overseas. Sixth, I learned that principals are not well prepared for all these new projects. Seventh, school principals do not get the attention and training that they deserve related to the critical role they are playing as leaders of their schools. Finally, even though the standards are important for developing school principal effectiveness, there is not one in place in the Kingdom of Bahrain.

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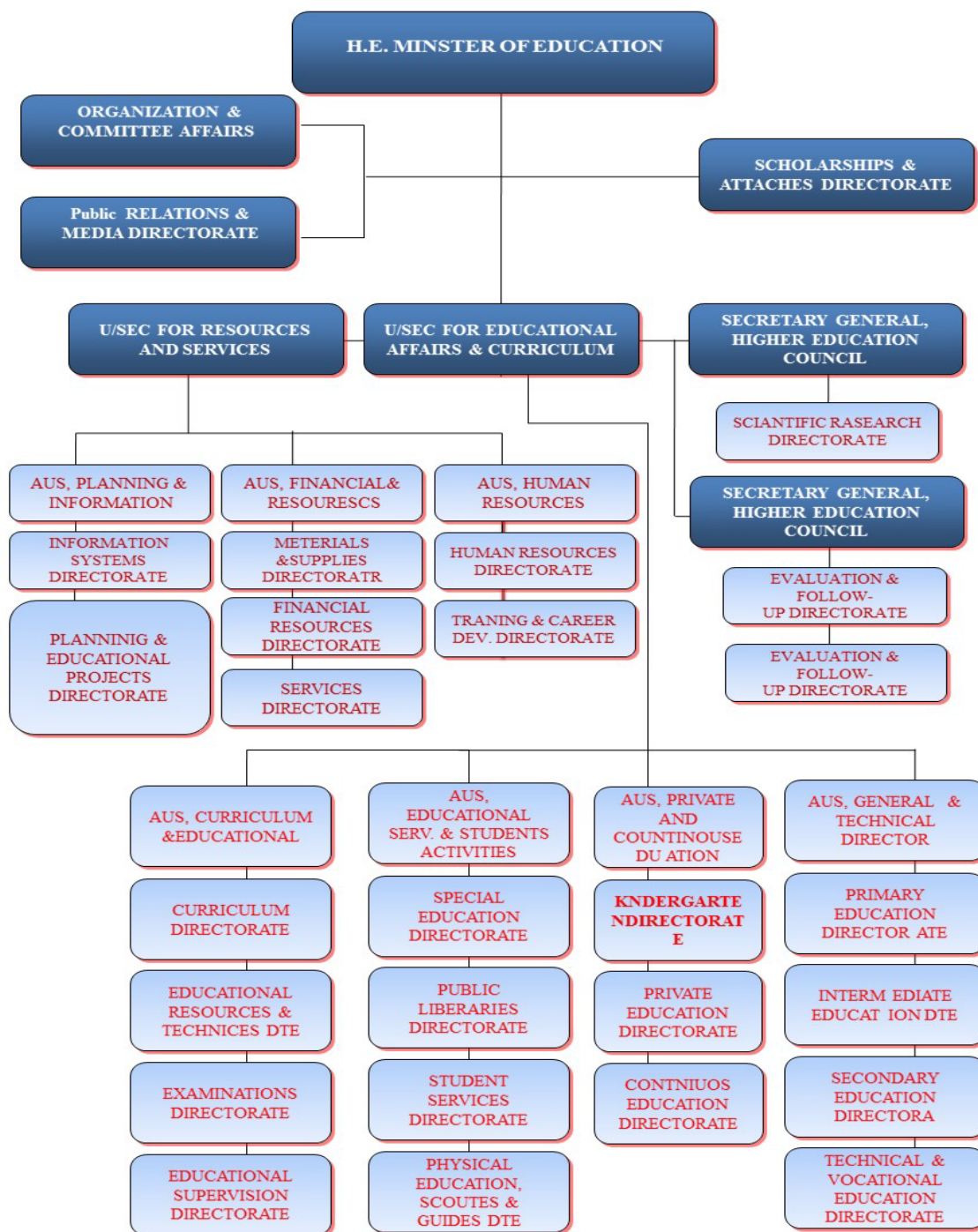
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APPENDIX A

ORGANIZATION OF THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



APPENDIX B

McREL BALANCED LEADERSHIP PRACTICES NOT FOUND IN THE ISLLC STANDARDS

Responsibility	Definition The extent to which the principle...	Associated Practices
Affirmation	...recognizes and celebrates school accomplishments and acknowledges failures.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Systematically and fairly acknowledges failures and celebrates accomplishments of the school
Contingents rewards	...recognizes and rewards individual accomplishments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses hard work and results as the basis for reward and recognition • Uses performance vs. seniority as the primary criterion for rewards and advancement
Curriculum instruction, & assessment	...is directly involved in the design and implementation of curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is involved with teachers in designing curricular activities and addressing instructional issues in their classrooms • Is involved with teachers to address assessment issues
Flexibility	...adapts his or her leadership behavior to the needs of the current situation and is comfortable with dissent.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adapts leadership style to needs of specific situations • Can be directive or non-directive as the situation warrants
outreach	...is an advocated or spokesperson for the school to all stakeholders.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interacts with parents in ways that enhance their support for the school • Ensures that the central office is aware of the school's accomplishments
Relationship	...demonstrates an awareness of the personal aspects of teachers and staff.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remains aware of the personal needs of teachers of teachers and staff • Acknowledges significant events in the lives of teachers and staff • Maintains personal relationships with teachers and staff • Is informed about significant personal issues in the lives of teachers and staff
Situational awareness	...is aware of the details and undercurrents in the running of the school and uses this information to address current and potential problems.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can predict what can go wrong from day to day
Visibility	...has quality contact and interactions with teachers and students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes systematic and frequent visits to the classroom • Has frequent contact with students • Is highly visible around the school

APPENDIX C

TIMELINE OF DEVELOPMENT FOR NCSSE

1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition of the emerging urgency of addressing the need for new kind of knowledge and skills required of school administrators.
1991	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Session of the General Assembly, discussing requirements for school administrators. • Creation of House Bill 1361.
1992	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • July 7, 1992 the General Assembly ratified House Bill 1361. • Creation of Educational Leadership Task Force. • Composition and naming of 18 members Task Force. • Charging the Task Force with Duties.
1993	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • February 15, 1993 Education Leadership Task Force presenting its official report "The Preparation and Advancement of Educational Leaders". • Joint legislative Education Oversight Committee of the general Assembly received the official report from the Task Force. • The Report of the Task Force included 10 Recommendations. • Contracting with Dr. Joseph F. Murphy of the Department of Educational Leadership, George Peabody College of Education, Vanderbilt University. • Further suggestions relative to the creation of an administrator's examination. • July 19, 1993 approving House Bill 284 by the North Carolina General Assembly, An Act for implementing a recommendation of the Educational Leadership Taskforce. • Establishing an independent Standards Board for School Administration. • Fall 1993, appointment of charter members of the North Carolina Standards Board for Public School Administration by Governor James B. Hunt, Jr. • Developing the job description and posting for the position of Executive Director.
1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May 6, 1994 selection of Dr. Michael E. Ward, Superintendent of the Granville County Schools, as the first Executive Director. • June 17, 1994 NCSBPSEA Board meeting, engaging in activity for "High Hopes and Worst Fears"
1996	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standards became a reality. • Standards for School Leaders as developed by the independent North Carolina Standards Board for Public school Administration.
1998	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1998 aspiring school leaders were require to pass the School Leader Licensure assessment in order to became certified school administrators
2003	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2003, the Center on Reinventing Public Education published, "Making Sense of Leading Schools: A Study of the School Principalship." • Which impact the NC standards
2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In September, 2005 a recommendation from the Chairman, Howard Lee, to establish an ad hoc Committee further advanced the progress toward the creation of new principal standards statewide
2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In fall 2006, NCDPI decided to use a set of standards developed by the North Carolina Department of public Instruction—the 21st Century Standards for School Executives (NCSSE), which would replace the ISLLC.