

## **The Principalship: An Imperative for Successful Schools in Cameroon**

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**ABSTRACT:** Principalship is fundamental to the successes of schools in Cameroon. Organization outcome has been greatly subjected to leadership effectiveness. The roles of principals have been identified as primary factor to school success. Cameroon's educational system is experiencing waves of changes like technology, globalization, cooperative learning, and critical thinking and greater call for accountability. This makes the role of principals to be very complex given that their functions are accredited as the most significant in enhancing school performance and student achievement. Principals therefore, have to brace up to acquire new strategies and update their skills to safeguard their schools to be successful in meeting up with the goals of the country. This paper takes a look at the General Functions of Principals in Cameroon. The study also scrutinized these General Functions to determine the extent to which it can provide a platform for principals to provide efficient and effective leadership for successful schools in Cameroon. The study also provides an opportunity to principals to review four major theories of organizational change. They were selected based on their potential to support change. The study also examines educational change, the principal and change leadership. This study, also proposes a shift in the functions of the principal from managerial to instructional functions. This shifts their role to that of establishing a positive school culture, supporting instructors in their profession development, maintaining a professional learning community, administering curriculum assessment and evaluation as principalship for successful schools in Cameroon.

**KEYWORD:** Principalship, Successful schools, Educational Change, Leadership

### **INTRODUCTION**

Leadership is imperative to the success of schools as it determines the culture, climate, progress and improvement plan. This is substantiated by (Madanchian, Hussein, Noordin, & Taherdoost, 2017) who ascertain that organization outcome is subjected to leadership effectiveness. The functions of the principal centers on all aspects of the school system, this makes their job very demanding and challenging especially in the context of school success. The role of the principal has been identified as a primary factor to school success (Zigarelli, 1996). Cameroon like the rest of the world is experiencing waves of changes like, Information, Communication and technology, globalization, democracy, collaborative education, Constructivism, Cooperative Learning and Critical Thinking. Hence, the demands, needs and aspirations of the society regarding what the outcome of schools

should be, have changed. Education is seen as a prime agent to the achievement of Cameroon's Vision 2035 that is Cameroon becoming an emerging economy by 2035. This will demand a shift in Cameroon's educational system from knowledge production to knowledge-based where schools are expected to change from theoretical-based to practical-based learning to meet the needs and aspirations of the nation. To achieve such a vision, school leadership is very paramount. Schools in Cameroon are greatly held accountable for the success of students; as a result principals need to be aware of what is expected of them to successfully administer schools in order to meet the societal needs and aspirations. Their role in an era driven by knowledge-based economy cannot continue to be like in the past. The principal is seen as a key agent in school improvement, success and progress. They are expected to promote a healthy climate and culture, support teacher leadership, build and sustain school improvement (Zepeda, 2013). Principals are expected to serve as instructional leaders in their schools, helping to translate standard-based changes into practice and as well as unite teachers into high functioning teams (Sawchuck, 2008).

As the most ranking administrator in a secondary school, the principal's role is fundamental to how well teachers teach and how much students learn (Kurland et al., 2010). The role of a school principal has become increasingly complex as the nature of society; political expectations; and schools, as organizations, have changed (Valentine & Prater, 2011). Leithwood et al (2004) states that among school-related factors; leadership is second only to classroom instruction in its contribution to student learning. The principal's fashion in which he manages the school influences the climate and culture of the school in terms of how teachers teach, and how much students learn and the overall success of the school. This is because the significant properties of key decisions made within the schools are made with the consent of the head teacher (Charles et al, 2012). Many scholars have acknowledged that the role of school principal is the most significant in enhancing school performance and students achievements (Walker and Stott, 2000; Fisher & Frey, 2002; Mulford, 2003; Dinham, 2004; Kearney, 2005; Gamage, 2009). It has been found that effective leaders develop school climates and cultures that help motivate both the students and teachers leading to the creation of better teaching and learning environments (Gamage et al, 2012).

Besides, in most school systems, the principal is required by the systematic authorities to improve student learning and is held accountable for it by building commitments in developing a shared vision for motivating and energizing the teachers and students (Ross and Gray, 2006, cited in Gamage et al, 2012). Lydiah and Nasongo, (2009) say that the quality of leadership makes the difference between the success and failure of school. In successful schools, principals have the objective of motivating students and teachers, organize the curricular and instructional programs and establish clear learning objectives. Here the principal is seen as an instructional leader. Effective principals are effective instructional leaders (Grissom, et al, 2013). Instructional leadership generally is defined as the class of leadership functions directly related to supporting classroom teaching and student learning (Grissom, et al, 2013). Most commonly, instructional leadership is operationalized as defining and communicating the school's mission; managing the school's instructional program by supervising and evaluating instruction, coordinating the curriculum, and monitoring student progress; and creating a learning climate by for example, protecting teacher instructional time and providing incentives for learning (Hallinger, 2005). The principals, as instructional leaders, should ensure that the school's instructional program coheres with the curriculum, envisions the instructional goals, sets high academic standards, stays

informed of education policies and legislation, is sensitive to the educators' instructional problems, makes frequent classroom visits to monitor the quality of instruction, creates incentives for learning, and maintains student discipline so that an orderly environment for instruction is maintained (Gumus & Akcaoglu 2013).

### **The General Functions of Principals in Cameroon**

According to ARRETE No336/14/MINESEC/CAB of 12<sup>th</sup> of September 2014, instituting the Guide for Secondary School Administrative Personnel in Cameroon, the roles and responsibilities of the School heads are:

#### **The School Head (Principal)**

He is in charge of the administration of the school and has administrative, pedagogic, educative and financial responsibilities:

His responsibilities are found in Article 34 of Decree No 2001/041 of 19<sup>th</sup> February 2001 bearing on the organization of public schools and prescribing the duties of school administrative personnel.

#### **II.1.1. The Administrative responsibilities**

The School Head should:

- Make sure the school strictly respects the terms of the inter-ministerial decree fixing the calendar of the academic year;
- Make sure that the instructions related to registration and admissions in circular No 17/09/MINESEC of 20<sup>th</sup> April 2009, are respected in order to eliminate anarchy and corruption during the admission of students and reduce overcrowding in classrooms;
- Wage a permanent war against drug, violence, influence peddling, and collective hysteria on campus;
- Make sure that the prevention of STIs, HIV/AIDS and cholera in particular is effective in schools;
- Make sure that the hygiene and sanitation rules are practiced in school and should invest on the systematic planting of flowers on campus;
- Make sure that students are well taken care of health wise by having a strict sanitary policy, systematic health check-ups, and the buying of drugs, medical equipment and other equipment for first aid for the school infirmary;
- Carry out sensitization programs on good governance and wage a permanent war against corruption on campus;
- Ensure the respect of the secular nature of the school;
- Ensure the growth of the education community through involvement of the various stakeholders in the harmonious functioning of the school council;
- Ensure the strict respect of the calendar for forwarding periodic documents;
- Obligatorily uphold and respect the dispositions in the different texts;
- Ensure the administrative follow up of all departmental councils as well as actual teaching;

- Summoning regularly administrative meetings of the school once per week with his various collaborators in order to follow up and evaluate their activities and results obtained during the period;
- He is solely responsible for signing and certification of documents going out of the school.

### **II.1.2. Pedagogic responsibilities**

The school head should:

- Give priority to teaching in every action and lay emphasis on both qualitative and quantitative coverage of syllabuses, particularly on the effective take –off of classes upon reopening, and the avoidance of the interruption of classes without authorization from hierarchy in the course of the year;
- Ensure a close pedagogic follow-up activities related to teachers, guidance counselors and students in the school;
- Ensure that the library is well equipped with recent books and these books must be in conformity with the syllabuses;
- Ensure the quality of sequential evaluations by according more seriousness to the elaboration of questions and marking of scripts;
- Make sure the moral and civic education is regularly emphasized during morning assemblies;
- Ensure that workshops and laboratory equipment are efficiently used, and make available training materials for practical exercises by the end of the month of September;
- Ensure that regular meetings are held at all levels of responsibilities in the school;
- Make sure that there is a strict respect of texts reorganizing the teaching of physical education and sports;
- Put in place measures to bring about an improvement in school results;

### **II.1.3. Financial responsibilities**

The School head should:

- Ensure the transparent use of finances, by opening an account in the treasury where all income and expenditure transactions are made;
- Make sure that the regulations for the management of PTA are strictly followed, in line with the instruction in letter No1315/11/L/MINESEC/SG/DRH of the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011;
- Abstain from collecting any illegal funds and from authorizing the sale of objects within the school campus in conformity with the instructions in circular No21/11/C/MINESEC/CAB of 27<sup>th</sup> June 2011;
- Deposit without delay and in its entirety all regulations and examination funds;
- Make sure that the money allocated for the buying of stationaries and training materials for technical education, teaching of sciences, for drawing and computer are used for that purpose;

- Ensure the strict respect of instructions in circular No25/12/MINESEC/SEESEC-EN/CAB of 23<sup>rd</sup> August 2012 bearing on the modalities of managing funds received as registration fee in teacher training colleges.

#### **An Examination of the General Functions of School Heads in Cameroon**

After a careful examination of the above general functions of School Heads (Principals) in Cameroon, one will come to the conclusion that the roles and responsibilities of principals in Cameroon strongly adhere to the scientific management theories of Frederick Taylor, Max Weber, Henri Fayol and Luther Gulick. This Ministerial circular stipulating the general functions of the school heads in Cameroon are concomitant to what Frederick Taylor (1920) suggested as the scientific way the best way to ensure efficiency of work. In this circular, principals are expected to provide the leadership utilizing methods of scientific management' (Whitehead et al., 2013). Great number of principal's job titles stems from the responsibilities or roles that are expected from him as a school head and administrator. It also arises from the expectations that the society places on the school as an institution as well as a preserver and transmitter of societal norms and values. It is linked to the proposition that effective administration is the best way of enhancing workers' performance. The functions mentioned above can be summarized to what Fayol (1916) identified as the seven administrative functions of managers which are: Planning, Organizing, Staffing, Directing, Coordinating, Reporting, Budgeting (POSDCoRB). This falls within the traditional approach of describing principalship wherein, principals are seen as an administrator, whose function is to run the school activities smoothly and effectively (Sergiovanni 2014). The function of a principal from this traditional perspective is practically bureaucratic, managerial and leader-centered.

Looking at the general functions as postulated in the circular, it is difficult to achieve maximum outcome for schools in Cameroon. This explains the poor performance of schools in Cameroon. The reason for this is, under this circular, principals are exhibiting bureaucratic and personal authority. By applying the bureaucratic principles, there are sets of rules, regulations, instructions and guidelines that principals have to uphold and teachers are expected to abide by, thus resulting to formality and standardization in schools. Personal authority on the other hand, principals command obedience and compliance from teachers in the execution of his duties. Both authorities only insinuate extrinsic motivation from staff. This is because the principal adhering to such function causes the teachers to respond to external stimuli not internal stimuli resulting to lack of commitment, involvement and dedication on the part of the teachers. As Sergiovanni (2014) puts it, the teachers see themselves as subordinates who only have to respond to external authority and not followers who respond to ideas, values, beliefs and purposes. The functions of the school heads in this circular entails strict standardization and formality in school in Cameroon which makes it difficult to attain efficiency in the schools. Schools are bound to have closer relationship between the administrators, teachers and students to achieve school multiple goals. This circular basically requires principals to maintain the status quo through managerial approach to leadership. This managerial approach to leadership focused on the functions of the principal and assumed that if this managerial approach were carried out competently, the schools would operate effectively (Leithwood & Duke, 1999). Research in educational organization and leadership is constantly changing which modifies our understanding of best leadership practices for successful schools including Cameroon. As a developing nation Cameroon is also subjected to external influence, for example the World Bank have recommended that the education sector move from a more centralized system to a decentralized system, in a bid to increase the quality, equality and efficiency of the education system (Amirrachman et al., 2009). This

managerial and administrative approach to leadership leaves the principal with limited options to develop a set of values, beliefs, and principles to guide him or her in developing effective strategies and actions in an ever-uncertain future (Owens, 2004). He finds it difficult to build and share the school vision, acts as a change agent, empowers others; develop an appropriate work climate thus an autocratic leadership style. In addition principals in Cameroon have limited formal leadership preparation and are selected on political *inclination*.

### **Theoretical Framework**

Change constitutes an integral part of the educational landscape. Recently, educational leaders are under enormous pressure to adopt practices designed to enhance teaching and learning to promote school success. Unfortunately, most leaders fail to link planned organizational changes with an appropriate theory of change and this forfeits opportunities to facilitate more effective and sustained school improvement efforts (Evans et al, 2012). Fullan (2008b) noted that many schools suffer from “initiativitis” which is the implementation of change efforts without regarding how such efforts interact with the existing situation ending up in creating confusion and producing minimal improvement. Spillane (2000) contended that these initiatives fail because of lack of knowledge/skills by those implementing change with regards to the purpose of the change effort. In addition, many educational leaders lack the understanding of the underlying theoretical structures associated with successful change (Evans et al, 2012). This is true for principals at the heart of organizational change in our public schools.

Central to leader’s ability to understand and implement change is a solid foundation in the theory of change. Organizational change is greatly influenced by theoretical frameworks. An appropriate theoretical framework provides the basis to study interactions, key factors, assumption and the collection of interrelated constructs to guide research, implementation and evaluation (Evans et al, 2012). A firm understanding of change theory provides educational leaders with an appropriate means to facilitate meaningful school improvement. This paper presents four theories of organizational change to guide principals in their school improvement efforts. These theories are; Continuous Improvement Model by W. Edwards Deming, organizational learning by Chris Argyris and David Schön, learning organizations by Peter Senge, and appreciative inquiry by David Cooperrider. These theories are selected based on their relevance in the field of education, possible adaptability to school systems and the potential to support organizational change. These theories provide a clear guideline for successful organizational transformation and effective change management.

### **Continuous Improvement Model by W. Edwards Deming**

His model is based on his work with Japanese companies in a post-WW II environment and the application of the 14 key principles. Several scholars have contributed to the theory of continuous improvement and have enhanced its usability across social science fields (Keleman, 2003). Deming (2000) offered 14 strategies to support continuous improvement in an organizational setting. These are (1) create constancy and purpose toward improvement of product and services, (2) adopt a new philosophy, (3) cease dependence on inspection, (4) end the practice of awarding business on the basis of price, (5) improve the system of production and service, (6) institute training on the job, (7) institute leadership, (8) drive out fear, (9) break down barriers between departments, (10) eliminate slogans and targets for production, (11) eliminate quotas and management by objectives, (12) remove barriers to pride in workmanship, (13) institute a program of education, and (14) include everyone in

the transformation of the organization. He postulated that if applied consistently by upper management, a shared vision representing these core values would evolve within the organization and would serve as a foundation of resulting quality organization. Most of his points are greatly relevant in education. The first point of constancy purpose (vision) asks leaders to be forward thinking and to envision the future of organization. This is applicable to schools where leaders are expected to set up a vision for students and the vision becomes the guide by which decisions are made. Deming (2000) strongly encourages organizations to eliminate the reliance on inspection to force quality. He believes quality comes from improvement of the production process and not through inspection. He therefore encourages school leaders to support and encourage distributed leadership, professional development, collective inquiry and professional learning community. When educators collectively analyze student's outcomes, make adjustments and create a plan of action, it positively affects student's achievement (Militello, Rallis, & Goldring, 2009). In point 6, Deming insists on employees being afforded with appropriate training so they can perform well. Educational scholars link this to job-embedded professional development and are related to improved school performance. Effective job-embedded professional development can increase the capacity of individual teachers, which in turn, enable teachers to effectively meet the needs of students. Deming point 13 encourages organizations to support continuing education of its managers. He believes that through education, managers can broaden their understanding of various concepts that add value and promote continuous improvement. Within the educational setting, this is associated to ongoing professional development for system- and school-based leader which is critical to school improvement efforts. Given the above, leaders can support collaborative inquiry, develop structures to support collaborative and build the capacity of new leaders to enhance the leadership capacity of the system (Reeves, 2010). Eliminating fear is another strategy that Deming (2000) suggested for transforming organization. Fear in workplace is usually associated to fear of knowledge, losing one's job, fear of reprisal for offering suggestions and fear of making mistakes. Deming suggests effective leaders should use data and provide continuous open feedback to drive out fear. An effective principal should identify the source of fear and address its source to reinforce a culture of learning from mistakes thus promoting effective change. He equally challenges principals to develop a positive culture throughout the school to promote the effective use of data-based decision making to improve learning outcomes (Wellman & Lipton, 2004). Deming (2000) also promotes the development of teams that incorporate members from all departments to work on issues. He encouraged a system-wide approach to improvement linking it to the fact that it contributes to a greater cohesiveness, act as a catalyst for deep and lasting improvement, advance equity and innovation and increase motivation (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2009). Finally, Deming (2000) promoted a transformation process through which all members contribute to promoting a shared vision of the organization. He recommended an improvement cycle to provide a framework to guide change referred to as the Plan-Do-Study-Act Cycle. Principals can use this cycle to promote continuous improvement of instructions.

#### **Organizational Learning by Chris Argyris and Donald Schön**

Argyris and Schön (1996) introduced the theory that organizations possess the capacity to learn and grow in ways that mirror the learning of individuals. According to Argyris and Schön, organizational learning and individual learning are closely linked. However, in order for organizational learning to occur, an organization must employ strategies to systematically integrate individual and collective learning into skills and knowledge that will deeply affect the organization (Evans et al, 2012).

Argyris and Schön (1996) identified three types of organizational learning: single-loop learning, double-loop learning, and deuterio-learning. Single-loop learning is a process designed to correct errors within an organization that does not impact beliefs, values, and policies that guide the organization. Schools commonly engage in single-loop learning (Evans et al, 2012). Double-loop learning is a generative process that affects an organization at its core. Action plan are not only evaluated as in single-loop learning, but also core values of the organization are equally evaluated. When double-loop learning occurs, the values, beliefs and policies guiding the organization equally shift. Deuterio-learning, a third way organizations learn, Argyris and Schön (1996) described as the manner in which organizations learn how to learn. . Leaders of organizations actively aware of and committed to the learning process create structures for learning (Evans et al, 2012). According to Argyris and Schön, several environmental factors affect an organization's ability to learn effectively (lines of communication, information systems, the physical environment, procedures for engaging in inquiry, and incentives) and these structures either encourage or inhibit organizational learning. However, the individual is regarded as the key to promotion of organizational learning (Evans et al, 2012). Current theorists and practitioners in education have championed the concepts represented within Argyris and Schön's theory of organizational learning. Fullan (2008b) also contended that organizational success depends on a system-wide approach to growth and learning and suggested that gains in student achievement will continue to occur in isolation unless leaders throughout school systems can embrace and effectively promote organizational learning.

### **Learning Organizations by Peter Senge**

Senge provides a theoretical framework for learning organization wherein members of that organization create structures designed to facilitate learning and adaptability to changing conditions. The first four components of the learning organization are personal mastery, mental models, shared vision, and team learning (Evans et al, 2012). The fifth component, systems thinking, pervades all aspects of Senge's learning organization model. The components are interdependent; a learning organization cannot exist without each component working in concert, creating a culture where individual and organizational learning is normalized (Evans et al, 2012). When organizations function as learning organizations, their members are attuned to each of the elements and can respond to an ever-changing environment (Evans et al, 2012). Personal mastery represents leadership within an organization seeking to support personal development and fulfillment of workers. It develops when a clear vision emerges and the vision becomes the roadmap to guide and inspire people to reach the ideal state. Organizations should have a clear articulated vision which serves as a great generative power for all members in the organization. Principals can promote personal mastery through three main strategies: (1) supervisors can use teacher evaluation tools to assist teachers to develop long-term goals for their own professional development. As principals continuously encourage their staff to grow, learn and develop as professionals, motivation for personal mastery is enhanced (Evans et al, 2012). These processes with inquiry based on collaboration with principals and alignment with school goals can prove to be a powerful tool to develop mastery and expertise (Danielson & McGreal, 2000; Marzano, Frontier, & Livingston, 2011). (2) Principals can support collaborative inquiry based on an authentic data to promote truth seeking among educators. Wellman and Lipton (2004) explained, "Data are necessary to calibrate perception. Data and forums for rich dialogue about the data, illuminate frames of reference and surface individual assumptions, creating space for new ideas and new ways of understanding". Principals play critical roles in establishing these forums and norms of collaboration to ensure that personal mastery is nurtured by examining long-held

beliefs and assumptions (Evans et al, 2012). (3) Finally, leaders can foster personal mastery in their staffs by acting as role models. Mental models which are the second component are beliefs and assumptions that individuals hold about concepts and events that impact behavior. Senge (2006) suggested, shape the manner in which organizations view reality. When stakeholders do hold mental models contrary to organizational goals, the organization fails to move forward. Principals can develop structures that encourage the discussion of mental models. Senge (2006) contended that both inquiry and reflection are critical skills necessary to explore individual and organizational mental models. Shared vision constitutes the third component. Establishing a shared vision is critical for effective change. Shared vision, according to Senge (2006), is the collective caring behind the organization. When all members of an organization carry the same vision, this acts as a positive force for change. Senge (2006) suggested that individuals range in their response toward the vision of an organization from “commitment” to “apathy”. Principals aware of this continuum can monitor their staffs, enrolling those deeply committed to the vision into key positions of distributed leadership. At the same time, principals can find strategic ways to communicate and reinforce the vision of the school with those staff members at the other end of the spectrum (Evans et al, 2012). Team learning is the fourth component, where individuals deeply inquire into the organization to create a positive impact. Senge (2006) observed, “Team learning is the process of aligning and developing the capacity of a team to create the results its members truly desire”. Teams function together, align efforts towards shared vision and capitalize on the strengths of each member resulting to a positive change within the organization (Evans et al, 2012). Systems thinking, the final facet of learning organizations, pervades all aspects of learning organizations and is the foundation from which all other disciplines evolve (Evans et al, 2012). Senge (2006) asserted that as conditions in the world become more complex, the need for systems thinking becomes greater. Systems thinking is the ability to see situations from a holistic perspective. Every decision made and action taken within an organization impacts other elements of that organization. As systems thinking develops, members of an organization frame decisions in light of possible impacts on the rest of the system (Evans et al, 2012).

#### **Appreciative Inquiry (AI) by David Cooperrider**

David Cooperrider, postulates that organizations change in the direction from which they inquire. Cooperrider, Whitney, and Stavros (2005) stated, “AI is based on the simple assumption that every organization has something that works well and these strengths can be the starting point for creating positive change”. This truly embodies a fundamental shift in thinking from problem-solving approaches. Five principles of human systems and change guide appreciative inquiry: (a) the constructionist principle, (b) the principle of simultaneity, (c) the poetic principle, (d) the anticipatory principle, and (e) the positive principle (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2007). The constructionist principle asserts that social knowledge and its construction are intricately woven with organizational change. The questions that members of an organization ask directly impact the direction the organization develops. The principle of simultaneity illustrates that the process of inquiry cannot be separated from change processes. Cooperrider et al. (2005) asserted that the nature of inquiry directly impacts change efforts organizations choose to engage. The poetic principle provides guidance for appreciative inquiry by stating the framework, the organization then becomes the source of inspiration, the past, present and future guides the inquiry process. The anticipatory principle, illustrates having a shared vision is critical to creating the future. Discussion, dialogue, and inquiry are tools that help members of any organization develop and sustain an effective shared vision (Evans

et al, 2012). The positive principle, the final principle that makes up the appreciative inquiry theoretical framework, emphasizes the importance of promoting joy within an organization. Positive inquiries lead to positive outcomes (Evans et al, 2012). Subsequently, positive outcomes promote creativity, energy, and joy within an organization. Cooperrider et al. (2005) asserted, “momentum for change requires large amounts of positive affect and social bonding, attitudes such as hope, inspiration, and the sheer joy of creating with one another”. Cooperrider et al. (2005) defined four stages of appreciative inquiry that guide organizations on a transformative journey. The first stage is the discovery during which members of an organization uncover and articulate areas they excel and value. It brings out the value and strengths of the organization. Cooperrider et al. (2005) explained that during the discovery phase, stakeholders identify the organization’s positive core. The positive core then becomes the foundation from which further inquiry occurs. Cooperrider et al. (2005) stated, “The positive core lies at the heart of the appreciative inquiry process . . . this is where the organization has an opportunity to value its history and embrace novelty in transitioning into positive possibilities”. The positive core can be evidenced in many ways including traditions, accomplishments, assets, and innovations. The second dreaming, members imagine possibilities based on value and successes identified in stage one. As they dream the possibilities of their organization, they equally set the stage for implementation. During this stage, members imagine ways the organization can possibly impact the world and this creates the framework for its purpose and highest potential. The intention to create formulates the key component of design, the third stage. Whitney (2004) maintained, “As members and stakeholders of an organization or community move from dream to design they are invited to an increased awareness of the power of intention and the relationship between intention and manifestation”. During this stage, members engage in dialogue to determine structures the organization will require to reach the shared vision. Destiny represents the fourth stage of appreciative inquiry whereby stakeholders collaborate and discuss contributions each can make to the vision previously created. Commitment to action is made as the organization transforms into one in which members view everything through the appreciative inquiry lens (Evans et al, 2012). Appreciative inquiry asks principals and school staffs to start with strengths then move to possibilities. This can be a shift for some, especially in the recent era of accountability where deficits and failures have been highlighted. As school staffs move more deeply into collaborative inquiry models, principals can encourage them to explore students’ strengths and excellence in instruction first (Evans et al, 2012). Once teachers experience success in a collaborative environment, the principal can invite the team to explore how to create and implement the school community vision (Evans et al, 2012).

#### **Educational Change**

Cameroon is a country faced by numerous challenges. The introduction of the Cameroon’s Vision 2035 has brought a paradigm shift in perspective, challenges and changes with regards to the role of education in national development and economic growth. Change is a phenomenon that affects all aspects of life and should be regarded as a process of growth. According to Hall (1988) change may be described as the adoption of an innovation where the ultimate goal is to improve outcomes-based through alteration of practices. Vision 2035, presents an educational change which is a fundamental process involving the national education system, curricula, teaching and learning in the classrooms, with emphasis on outcomes-based education if the country is to be an emerging economy by 2035. According to Ornstein and Hunkins (1993), the leaders of institutions should be the ones to experience a mind-shift as change is initiated, in order to avoid the resistance to change. People

usually resist change because they lack knowledge or understanding about the change being initiated. The success of outcomes-based education can only be determined by the degree of success in its implementation at school level, principals therefore play a key role and should take the responsibility for managing and supporting change in schools. Principals should lead the change process in schools, guide and support staff in initiating change. Principals play a pivotal role in the management of the institution and can exercise a considerable influence over its direction as long as they retain the confidence and support of their colleagues (Davis and Ellison, 1997). Principals need to be effective leaders and their strategic interaction determines and facilitates successful schools.

#### **The Principal and Change Leadership**

The role of principals in Cameroon is linked to the traditional model where they are viewed as managers with more managerial and administrative tasks, and fewer teaching duties. Given the demand for greater accountability and the call for successful schools, educational change requires a balance between principal's leadership and management duties. At the time of transformation, principals need to set the pace, take direction, motivate and inspire individuals to keep moving ahead in spite of resistance to change. Principals will need to encourage and empower staff; their conduct should be transparent and trustworthy so that there is a buy-in from all the stakeholders. The core responsibility is to act as an educational leader where he provides effective leadership and guidance regarding all aspects of the school (Kaapse Onderwysdepartement, 1982). According to Ornstein and Hunkins (1993), the principal must be a visionary leader who possess a clear vision and mission of their schools and manifest a strong belief in professional values. Effective leaders need to provide ongoing support and encouragement to staff, while monitoring the effective implementation of the curriculum. A clear strategic interaction by the principal, through his motivation and support to educators, guidance on teaching methods, effective communication, acting as role model and being visibly present can lead to higher level of learner achievement and contribute to the achievement of vision 2035 through the success of the envisaged change in school leadership and management. The principal as an effective leader is therefore required to nurture and guide staff members, provide for staff and development programs. He is also responsible for creating a democratic climate and builds a positive school culture. From the above, school principals in Cameroon, need the knowledge and skills to lead and manage schools effectively. They need to be aware of their roles as a changing agent to lead the educators in the process of change if schools are to be successful to contribute to the achievement of Cameroon's vision 2035.

#### **Principalship for Successful Schools in Cameroon**

The role of a school principal has become increasingly complex as the nature of society; political expectations; and schools, as organizations, have changed (Valentine & Prater, 2011). There is a massive shift in the functions of the principal from managerial and administrative to instructional function. The reason being that there appeared to be poor performance in Cameroon education, hence, there is the need for improvement of both teaching and learning in the school. The principals' major role in the school is to improve teachers' efficiency with a view to achieving excellent school performance. According to Hoerr (2005), a key component of the current role of the principal includes making changes, particularly with respect to school improvement and reforms. He is expected to develop a school strategic plan which sets the vision of the school and helping all within the school community to become more effective.

### Roles and Responsibilities

The roles and responsibilities of the school principal have changed throughout the years, and, with that, the face of the principalship has changed, too. The principal shoulders various roles and responsibilities to ensure a productive environment for teaching-learning activities. The role of the principal has been identified as a primary factor that contributes to desired growth and excellence of the school (Zigarelli, 1996). For this study, it's important to establish a basic understanding of the modern day principal's roles and responsibilities. Khan and Khan (2014) outlined the various roles and responsibilities of school principals for successful schools that are research-based and widely applicable to schools. The principal's critical roles and responsibilities can be sub-divided into the following: academic, participative, motivating, leadership, supervisory roles and managerial roles.

- 1 Plans and executes for the bright future of the students,
- 2 tries to achieve desirable standards for all students and staff,
- 3 Supervises effectively the functioning of the school as per the policies, norms and planning,
- 4 evaluates lesson plans, observes classes, and encourages the use of a variety of instructional strategies,
- 5 supervises general discipline, attendance and related issues,
- 6 displays the highest ethical and professional behavior,
- 7 serves as a role model for students and the teaching staff,
- 8 encourages all teachers to display high level of professionalism,
- 9 Assumes responsibility for the health, safety, and welfare of students, employees and visitors.
- 10 communicates regularly with parents, seeking their support and advice, so as to create a cooperative relationship with all the sectors,
- 11 Keeps the staff informed and seeks ideas for the improvement of the school through meetings and interactions etc.,
- 12 maintains positive, cooperative and mutually supportive relationships with staff, parents and their wards,
- 13 Oversees the development of Curriculum Committee and keep the Board apprised.
- 14 develops the staff and the institution. (Khan & Khan, 2014)

### Creating a Positive School Culture

Roles and responsibilities of a school principal are important. But a positive school culture is imperative for a successful school. School culture is the foundation for school improvement. This is because it is central to student's success and holistic school transformation, and as such principals must help schools to acquire the tools needed to develop and assess such cultures. Principals should focus their time on creating a positive school culture. School culture is the heart of successful schools as well improvement and progress. A positive school culture is broadly defined to include the school wide ethos and the culture of individual classrooms, high expectations for learning and achievement, a safe and caring environment, shared values and relational trust, a powerful pedagogy and curriculum, high student motivation and engagement, a professional faculty culture, and partnerships with families and the community (Character Education Partnership, 2010). In successful schools, principals create a culture that empowers and instills confidence in teachers, solicit professional dialogue and research, value their students and teachers and seek assistance from parents and community members to enhance school success. A positive school culture is the underlying reason

why the other components of successful schools were able to flourish. In creating a positive school culture, the principal can engage in two principal activities: creating a sense of belonging and providing a clear direction for all involved students, teachers, parents, and community.

### **Engaging in Action Research**

The shift in educational leadership has gone from instructional leader to the more appropriate term of “learning leader” (Schmoker, 2006). In the past, a principal or school administrator worked in isolation and was predominantly concerned with personal autonomy and the top down approach. This type of leadership practice will no longer work if schools are to create an effective environment for student learning and achievement. Schmoker (2006) asserts that schools will not improve until the building leader begins to work cooperatively with teachers. The role of the school administrator encompasses teamwork, exploration, creation, and the ability to “lead by doing the right things” (Lindley, 2009). Mills (2000) defines Action Research as a “systemic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, and other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment, to gather information about the ways that their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn”. Action Research is done to improve personal practice and is decided upon by the person conducting the research. Action Research allows school administrators to study their own schools or districts- for example student behavior, cafeteria issues, transportation concerns, specific curriculum, school improvement plans, assessments, and many other educational issues. Mertler (2009) states that when conducting Action Research “It focuses specifically on the unique characteristics of the population with whom a practice is employed or with whom some action must be taken”. One of the ways of addressing the barriers to school success and improvement plan is the application of Action Research. According to Mills (2000) there are four steps involved in the process of conducting Action Research and include the following: identifying an area of focus, collecting data, analyzing and interpreting the data, and developing an action plan. Brighton and Moon (2007) include more steps in the action research process to provide a clear-cut picture of the research development for the individual conducting the investigation. Their steps include the following: 1. Identifying the area of focus 2. Writing the action plan to guide the inquiry process: 3. Collect data to address the identified question 4. Organize the data 5. Analyze and interpret the data 6. Share the findings. Principals are encouraged to analyze school wide data to define the academic needs of all students. In order to meet the challenges, school administrators can utilize the process of Action Research to address professional development, student programs, behavioral issues, parental involvement, instructional strategies and many other issues or school concerns. Action Research is a model that promotes inquiry, collaboration, reflection of practice, and analysis of data. It is a process that allows administrators to address their own professional practice and improve student learning and achievement. “The idea of Action Research is that educational problems and issues are best identified and investigated where the action is: at the classroom or school level. By integrating research into these settings and engaging those who work at this level in research activities, findings can be applied immediately and problems solved more quickly” (Guskey, 2000).

### **Building a Professional Learning Community (PLC)**

The roles of principal and teacher have changed significantly. Principals are being “called on to lead in the redesign of their schools and school systems” (Levine, 2005), and teachers are asked to be active partners in supporting increased student achievement. Principal leadership is considered to be the catalyst for any successful turnaround or reform of schools (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Principals, once regarded as merely managers, are now considered central to the

task of building schools that promote improved teaching and learning for all students (Darling-Hammond, LaPointe, Meyerson, Orr, & Cohen, 2007; National Policy Board for Educational Administration, 2001; Peterson, 2002). DuFour, DuFour and Eaker (2008) “define a professional learning community as educators committed to working collaboratively in ongoing processes of collective inquiry and action research to achieve better results for the students they serve”. The key to PLC is a focus on learning, not a focus on teaching (DuFour, 2004). The premise of the PLC model is that students are not just taught but that they learn. PLC is an ongoing process of school reform to improve student success and it requires the entire learning community to work collaboratively and collectively to improve student performance. In building a PLC, principals must be aware of the essential characteristics of PLC as identified by DuFour et al (2008) as: (1) shared purpose and vision, (2) a collaborative culture with a focus on learning, (3) collective inquiry on best practices about teaching and learning, (4) action orientation, (5) a commitment to continuous improvement, and (6) results orientation. Principals are identified as playing a significant role in shaping the organization of the school. In most schools that are successful academically, principal actions demonstrated a belief that teacher and student learning are closely related (Fullan, 2010). Setting clear goals for student learning in successful schools was frequently found to be the result of principals who enable and ensure frequent opportunities for discussion among colleagues about the school’s instructional priorities (Green, 2010). The new role of the principal has transformed from being primarily a managerial position to an instructional, collaborative, distributed leadership position responsible for student and faculty learning and facilitating their successes. Many changes have occurred in the role of the principal in the last decades (Wilson, 2009). Creating a PLC requires an in-depth paradigm shift of the principal’s role. The responsibilities, roles and decision-making processes of principal are changing as a result of school reform and restructuring. A climate has to be created to support the effective development and growth of PLCs, and principals must be the first to understand the factors that contribute to organizational learning, the school improvement process, a culture of collaboration, and the importance of student and adult learning (Hord, 2009). Instructional leaders must utilize their leadership and problem solving skills to overcome the obstacles and create opportunities (Hsiao et al., 2011). The principal’s role requires a model that empowers shared leadership at all levels of the school. Principals need to see themselves as “learning leaders” responsible for helping schools develop the capacity to carry out their mission and reach their vision (Lashway, 2010; Mitchell & Sackney, 2009).

#### **Build and maintain a positive School Community Relationship**

School principal is a leader of a school. The role of principal is foremost in the development of positive school home relationship (Van Velsor and Orozco, 2006). Principals can play a crucial role in the promotion of school community relationship. The role of school principal is that of a bridge that connects school and community. This is crucial both for students’ development and success of schools (Payne, 2006). Effective schools have principals who keep close ties with communities (Epstein and Jansorn, 2004). Principals can play an effective role in the promotion of school family ties. Principals and parents need to know that parental involvement is essential for social, emotional and intellectual development of children (Anderson and Minke, 2007). School as an open system and a social organization thrives on the effective interrelationship within it and with its relevant communities. This means that community builds its schools and the schools build their communities (Sidhu, 2007). Therefore, school community interdependence is unbreakable. There is a reciprocal relationship. If schools are expected to be successful in their primary mission of educating the

community's children, they need to know a great deal about the community and the families from which the children come. This means that a school cannot exist in isolation but in cooperation with the community in which it finds itself (Ihebereme, 2008). According to Fiore (2006), "When families, schools and community institutions (e.g. local business, community colleges and health agencies) collectively agree upon their goals and decide how to reach them, everyone benefits." He identifies the following as the importance of school community relationship:

1. Schools enjoy the informed support of families and community members.
2. Communities can provide schools with a context and environment that can either complement and reinforce the values, culture, and learning the school provide for their students or negates everything the school strive to accomplish.
3. Communities can furnish schools with crucial financial support system as well as the social and cultural values necessary for success and survival in contemporary society.
4. Communities have the potential to extend a variety of opportunities to students and to their families-social, cultural and vocational.
5. Schools, in turn, offer communities a focal point of educational services for children. By working together, schools, families, and communities can prepare for a more promising future.

School principals should have some information about the community they serve. They should have information about the composition of the community such as the income, educational level and occupations of the majority of the residents. The principals should also know what community opinion is regarding both broad educational issues and day to day operation of the school itself. This will help them determine the major areas to be related to their communities. School administrators should acquaint themselves with educational resources available in the community in order that they can be utilized to enrich and enhance the school programs. Doing this could help school administrators identify and develop school resources that can be used to serve the community for better school community 'give and take' relationship. Principals may create and share the goals of education with the community. This will help develop sense of ownership of the teaching and learning among the community. They in turn will provide supportive environment for their children at home (Goldring and Sims, 2005). This will also develop a relationship of trust among parents, administrators and teachers. Establishment of goals, keeping expectations and determination of common values promote bonds among these stakeholders (Machen, Wilson and Notar, 2005). Principal may improve the process of parental participation in education through by improving the teacher parent relationship. Teachers are considered the primary connections between home and school. Their relationship is vital for the success of students in the process of education. For this purpose principals may provide relevant training to their teachers so that they could communicate with the communities effectively on issues of children in the process of education (Million, 2003).

#### **Curriculum Assessment and Evaluation**

A demand for greater accountability, and the appeal for the use of more outcome-based measures, requires the principal to be instruction oriented. The focus on results; student achievement, can only be possible if teaching and learning becomes the central focus of the school and the principal (Blankstien, 2010, Lunenburg, & Porter, 2008). As instructional leaders, principals need to clarify instructional goals and work collaboratively to improve and meet the teaching and learning goals. By doing this, principals help teachers shift their focus from what they teach to what students learn. The role of the principal helps the school to maintain a focus on why the school exists, and that is to help all students learn (Blasé, Blasé & Philip, 2010; Smylie, 2010). Shifting the focus from teaching to

learning; improving instruction and ensuring professional development are key tasks principals must perform to be instructional leaders for school success (Lunenburg & Irby, 2006). School principals can accomplish this by (1) focusing on learning, (2) encouraging collaboration, (3) using data to improve learning, (4) providing support, and (5) aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment. Taken together, these five dimensions provide a compelling framework for accomplishing sustained district wide success for all children (Fullan, 2010; Lunenburg, 2003; Marzano & Waters, 2010). Principals can help shift the focus from teaching to learning if they insist that there are certain critical questions that are being considered in that school, and principals are in a key position to pose those questions (DuFour, DuFour, & Eaker, 2008). What do we want our students to know and be able to do? The focus in a professional learning community is not on: Are you teaching, but are the students learning? How will you know if the students are learning? That points to student progress. How will we respond when students do not learn? What criteria will we use to evaluate student progress? How can we more effectively use the time and resources available to help students learn? How can we engage parents in helping our students learn? Have we established systematic collaboration as the norm in our school? These are the questions principals need to pose in order to shift the focus in schools from teaching to learning. A key task for principals is to create a collective expectation among teachers concerning student performance. That is, principals need to raise the collective sense of teachers about student learning (DuFour, DuFour, Eaker, Karhanek, 2010). Then principals must work to ensure that teacher expectations are aligned with the school's instructional goals. Furthermore, principals need to eliminate teacher isolation so that discussions about student learning become a collective mission of the school (Elmore, 2005; Senge, 2001, 2006). The primary responsibility of the principal is to promote the learning and success of all students. School principals can accomplish this goal by focusing on learning, encouraging collaboration, using data to improve learning, providing support, and aligning curriculum, assessment, and instruction.

### **Supervision and Evaluation**

The leadership of principals is aligned with gains in student performance (Branch, Hanushek, & Rivkin, 2013; Marzano, Waters, & McNulty, 2005) and is second only to classroom instruction as a significant factor influencing student achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Whalstrom, 2004). Clearly, the leadership of principals is critical in creating and maintaining successful schools. Strong leadership from the principal is essential when maintaining a trusting climate and culture supporting effective teaching and student achievement (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Whalstrom, 2004; Louis, Leithwood, Whalstrom, & Anderson, 2010). Effective school principals establish clearly defined goals for academic achievement, and they concentrated their available resources and their operations on attaining them, provide adequate time-table for teaching, routine check of lesson notes and subject dairies, observation of classroom instruction, continuously monitor students' progress to determine whether their instructional goals are being met, provide feed-back on student performance, motivation of teachers for improved performance, reinforcement of students for excellent performance, maintenance and appropriate usage of physical facilities, enforcement of discipline to ensure peaceful atmosphere, capacity building of teachers for effective service delivery and provision of instructional facilities and materials to enhance quality teaching-learning processes. Instructional supervision is an internal mechanism adopted by principals for school self – evaluation, geared towards helping teachers and students to improve on their teaching and learning activities for the purpose of achieving educational objectives. The primary aim is to monitor the implementation of curricular and ensure desirable increase in teachers' capabilities, upgrade their conceptual knowledge

and teaching skills, give them support in their work to facilitate better performance in teachers' pedagogical practices and students' learning outcomes in the school settings (Wiles, 1975; Oyekan, 1997, Adepoju 1998; Olagboye, 2004; Adetula, 2005). The principal who is the driving force behind the school program needs to proactively mobilize all members of staff, teaching and non-teaching, the governing board, parents and the community towards identifying the schools strengths and weaknesses and take appropriate decisions on type of follow-up action required to improve teachers' inputs and students' learning outcomes in the school. In pursuit of these goals, the school principals make use of supervisory techniques: clinical supervision/classroom observation, micro-teaching, seminar/workshop and research to improve the conceptual knowledge, skills and competence of teachers, and students' learning (Ogunsaju, 1983; Peretomode, 1995). The clinical supervision technique is commonly used by principals; according to Goldhammer (1969) clinical supervision involves the following five-stage process: (i) a pre-observation conference between supervisor and teacher concerning elements of the lesson to be observed; (ii) classroom observation; (iii) a supervisor's analysis of notes from the observation conference between supervisor and teacher; (iv) a post-observation conference between supervisor and teacher; and (v) a supervisor's analysis of the post-observation conference. During observation, the supervisor takes note of the teacher's knowledge of the subject being taught, evidence of adequate planning and preparation for the lesson, lesson presentation, teacher's personality and the extent of students' participation or interaction with the teacher. These form the bases for providing constructive advice on how to improve the quality of classroom instruction. The visit may be repeated until the required improvement is achieved. The micro-teaching is a teaching situation which is scaled down in terms of time, class size and teaching complexity to allow the teacher to focus on a selected teaching strategy. It is designed to develop new skills and refine old ones. The lesson consists of two elements, namely, content (usually a segment of a topic in a subject area) and the skill which is a chosen specific teaching skill. The seminar/workshop involves a small group of people that is temporarily formed to discuss a specific topic, or work on a common problem and trying to find solution to a specific problem or resolve issues affecting teaching-learning process in schools.

### **Conclusion**

This paper addressed the fact that principalship is an imperative for successful schools in Cameroon. The role of principals has been identified as a primary factor to school success. The world and Cameroon not exempted is experiencing a shift in education from knowledge production to knowledge-based where schools are anticipated to change from theoretical-based to practical-based learning. The four organizational theories present a shift in thinking and behavior necessary for principals to possess, skills, knowledge, and a deep understanding of the concepts. Each of the approaches requires principals to engage in individual learning, group learning, ongoing feedbacks and transformational leadership. Thus leadership is very paramount. Principals are expected to provide leadership that improves student learning, build commitments in developing a shared vision for motivating and energizing teachers and students. After a careful examination of the General Functions of Principals in Cameroon, it leaves one to conclude that their roles adhere to the scientific management theories. It entails strict standardization and formality in schools making it difficult to attain efficiency. It also requires the principal to maintain the status quo through managerial approach to leadership. Research in educational leadership is constantly changing which modifies our understanding of best leadership practices for successful schools. This entails principals have to make a shift. They need to be aware of what is projected of them in this era in order to successfully

administer schools in Cameroon. The paradigm shift requires principals committing to shared values, selfless service to students, teachers and parents. They are also anticipated to rethink of their role and responsibilities, creating a positive school culture and engaging in action research for school improvement. They will also be expected to build a professional learning community, build and maintain a positive school community relationship and regularly engage in curriculum assessment and evaluation which aligns to gains in student performance.

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