

**Connecting school leadership to student learning in
Cameroonian Presbyterian schools**

By

Grace Emade Mokoko

Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree

PHILOSOPHIAE DOCTOR

in the

Department of Education Management and Policy Studies

Faculty of Education

at the

UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA

Supervisor: Prof RN Marishane

August 2023

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY

I, **Grace Emade Mokoko**, declare that this thesis, titled ***Connecting school leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools***, which I hereby submit for the degree Philosophiae Doctor in Education Management and Policy, is my own work. I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work for a degree to this or any other tertiary institution.



.....
Grace Emade Mokoko

August 2023

ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE



Make today matter
www.up.ac.za

FACULTY OF EDUCATION
Ethics Committee

RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	CLEARANCE NUMBER: EDU041/21
DEGREE AND PROJECT	PhD Connecting school leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools
INVESTIGATOR	Ms. Grace Mokoko
DEPARTMENT	Education Management and Policy Studies
APPROVAL TO COMMENCE STUDY	21 June 2021
DATE OF CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	12 May 2023
CHAIRPERSON OF ETHICS COMMITTEE:	Prof Funke Omidire

Mr Simon Jiane
Prof Nylon Marishane

This Ethics Clearance Certificate should be read in conjunction with the Integrated Declaration Form (D08) which specifies details regarding:

- Compliance with approved research protocol,
- No significant changes,
- Informed consent/assent,
- Adverse experience or undue risk,
- Registered title, and
- Data storage requirements.

ETHICS STATEMENT

The author whose name features on the title page of this thesis declares that she has observed the ethical standards required in accordance with the University of Pretoria's code of ethics for research and policy guidelines for responsible research.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this PhD thesis to my late parents, Rev. Mokoko Eugen Linonge and Mokoko Sarah Mejane, who valued girl child education despite their humble backgrounds. I also dedicate it to my late husband Che Titus, who inspired my dreams, and to my children Eugene and Mike: May you emulate Mom.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Acquiring this breakthrough of the highest degree awarded would not have been achievable without the faithfulness of God, who “is not slack concerning His promise” (2 Peter 3:9 KJV) for our lives. Take all the honour and glory, Lord, for this accomplished mission!

My heartfelt gratitude goes to my supervisor Prof. Marishane for his continuous feedback, guidance, encouragement, and determination to bring this dream to reality. I will forever appreciate his expertise that has sharpened my research skills.

I acknowledge the contribution of the PCC Moderator Rt Rev. Fonki, who believed in me and permitted me to investigate PCC schools. My desire to attain this PhD would have been futile without him.

I recognise the Faculty Dean Prof. Sehoole, Departmental Head Prof. Mothiyane, and Faculty Manager Dr Phatlane for ensuring my welfare and academic success in South Africa. Their deep concern for their students, irrespective of their nationality, is very laudable.

My humble thanks go to the principals who allowed me to conduct the research in their schools. To the teachers and students: I value their openness. This work will enable principals to improve teaching and learning in their schools.

I am indebted to Miss Busi for her technical and moral support towards my research in the Research Commons at the Merensky 2 Library on Hatfield campus.

Special thanks to my children Eugene and Mike, and siblings Francis, Oscar, Thomas, Hannah, and Frida for their support and sacrifices during my studies. I thank you for being part of such a challenging yet worthwhile journey that has led to the achievement of this milestone, which we shall forever cherish as a defining experience of our unique family.

ABSTRACT

Student learning is the main reason educational institutions exist. It explains why one of the main ingredients of successful schools is high-quality leadership, which allows principals to significantly and positively impact student learning and outcomes. Despite the emphasis on the crucial role of principals in ensuring effective teaching and learning, school environments are seldom conducive to student learning owing to the poor performance of principals. This situation shows a disconnect between principals' leadership and student learning. This study investigated how principals connect their leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools. This research followed a qualitative approach based on a case study design. Data collection strategies included interviews and documentation. The participants were principals, students, and teachers from six Presbyterian Church secondary schools in three regions in Cameroon. Collected data were manually coded, and analysed using thematic analysis.

The study identified a gap between leadership and student learning because of unethical and substandard leadership measures. The study results indicate that principals and teachers of Presbyterian Church secondary schools in Cameroon lack professional skills, which contributes to their inability to relate appropriately with students. The study findings show that some principals do not understand the relationship that context has with student learning. The findings also show that principals do not have the best interest of students at heart as students' rights are physically and emotionally abused regularly. The findings further reveal that, mostly, poor interpersonal relationships between employers and employees, principals, teachers, and students result in unsafe learning environments that negatively affect student learning. They further show that principals and teachers face challenges in executing their work, including policy and administrative issues. A framework was designed to assist leadership effectively and directly connect to student learning. Various recommendations were made to the government, Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, and principals.

Keywords: alternative strategies, challenges, conducive environments, connection, context, positive relationships, school climate, school leadership, secondary school, student learning, teaching

LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR



KARIEN HURTER
Copy Editor and Proofreader
Email: karien.hurter@gmail.com
Tel: 071 104 9484

29 June 2023

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is to confirm that *Connecting school leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools* by Grace Emade Mokoko was edited by a professional language practitioner. It requires further work by the author in response to my suggested edits. I cannot be held responsible for what the author does from this point onward.

Regards,



Karien Hurter

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ACPA	American College Personnel Association
DDSE	Divisional Delegate for Secondary Education
LMX	Leader-member Exchanges
PCC	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon
PCCSS	Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Secondary Schools
PEA	Presbyterian Education Authority
PTA	Parents-Teachers Association
UN	United Nations
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Science and Cultural Organization
UNICEF	United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION OF ORIGINALITY	i
ETHICS CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE.....	ii
ETHICS STATEMENT	iii
DEDICATION.....	iv
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT	vi
LETTER FROM LANGUAGE EDITOR	vii
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS.....	viii
TABLE OF CONTENTS	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	xvi
LIST OF TABLES.....	xvii
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION.....	1
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Background to the Study.....	1
1.3 Rationale for the Study.....	4
1.4 Statement of the Problem	6
1.5 Research Questions	8
1.5.1 Primary research question	8
1.5.2 Secondary questions	8
1.6 Aim and Objectives of the Study	8
1.7 Significance of the Study.....	9
1.8 Organisation of the Thesis	10
1.9 Chapter Summary.....	11
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	12
2.1 Introduction.....	12
2.2 Overview of Formal Education in Cameroon	12
2.3 The History of Presbyterian Schools in Cameroon	14
2.3.1 The administrative structure of Presbyterian Church in Cameroon secondary schools	14
2.3.2 The Presbyterian Education Authority organ and membership.....	15
2.3.3 Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and Presbyterian Education Authority	16
2.3.4 Goals of the Presbyterian Education Authority	16

2.3.5	The general objectives of Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in education.....	16
2.4	The Legal Structure for Private Education in Cameroon.....	17
2.5	The Duties of School Principals in Cameroon	18
2.6	Duties of Presbyterian Secondary Schools' Principals	19
2.7	School Leadership	20
2.8	Student Learning.....	22
2.9	Leadership for Student Learning	23
2.10	School Climate.....	27
2.10.1	Social and emotional support.....	31
2.10.2	Structure	31
2.10.3	Engagement	31
2.10.4	Feeling of safety	32
2.11	Leadership Factors that Influence Successful Student Learning	32
2.11.1	Setting directions	35
2.11.2	Developing people	36
2.11.3	Redefining and realigning the organisation	37
2.11.4	Improving the teaching and learning programme	37
2.12	Chapter Summary.....	39
CHAPTER 3 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....		40
3.1	Introduction.....	40
3.2	Relational Leadership Theory	40
3.2.1	Relational leadership as a way of being in the world.....	42
3.2.2	Dialogically working out what is meaningful with others	42
3.2.3	Relational integrity: Responsiveness and responsibility	42
3.2.4	Relational leadership, knowing-from-within, and practical wisdom	43
3.3	Positioning the Study in Relational Leadership Theory.....	44
3.4	Chapter Summary.....	45
CHAPTER 4 RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN, AND METHODOLOGY.....		46
4.1	Introduction.....	46
4.2	Philosophical Assumptions of the Study.....	47
4.2.1	Ontological assumptions.....	48
4.2.2	Epistemological assumptions.....	48
4.2.3	Axiological assumptions.....	49
4.3	Research Paradigm	49
4.4	Research Approach: Qualitative Research Approach.....	51

4.5	Research Design	53
4.6	Research Methodology	54
4.6.1	Research population	54
4.6.2	Sampling techniques.....	55
4.6.3	Research sites	57
4.6.4	Data collection instruments	58
4.7	Data Analysis.....	61
4.8	Trustworthiness of the Study.....	64
4.8.1	Credibility	64
4.8.2	Transferability	65
4.8.3	Dependability	66
4.8.4	Confirmability	66
4.9	Ethical Considerations	66
4.9.1	Privacy and confidentiality.....	67
4.9.2	Informed consent	68
4.9.3	Anonymity of participants.....	68
4.9.4	Voluntary participation	68
4.9.5	Risk and mitigation.....	69
4.10	Chapter Summary.....	69
CHAPTER 5 RESEARCH FINDINGS		71
5.1	Introduction	71
5.2	Theme 1: Principals' Perceptions of Context and Student Learning	73
5.2.1	Sub-theme: A function of leadership practices that promote enabling learning environments	74
5.2.2	Sub-theme: Practising appropriate leadership that provides teacher support for learning.....	75
5.2.3	Sub-theme: Monitoring students' activities for students' success	76
5.3	Theme 2: Teachers' Understanding of Student Learning	76
5.3.1	Sub-theme: Proper use of pedagogic approaches to enhance students' understanding.....	76
5.3.2	Sub-theme: Having qualified teachers.....	77
5.3.3	Sub-theme: Students' different abilities to assimilate information	77
5.3.4	Sub-theme: Use of the learner-centred approach to teaching	77
5.3.5	Sub-theme: Executing academic activities within a specified period	77
5.4	Theme 3: Creating Viable Conditions for Student Learning	78
5.4.1	Sub-theme: Making teachers duty conscious and providing their needs	78

5.4.2	Sub-theme: Maintaining good principal-teacher relationships	79
5.4.3	Sub-theme: Establishing a friendly atmosphere between principals and students	80
5.4.4	Sub-theme: Fostering positive teacher-student relationships	81
5.4.5	Sub-theme: Staff involvement in decision-making	82
5.4.6	Sub-theme: Availability of modern infrastructure and facilities.....	83
5.4.7	Sub-theme: Identifying students' needs and challenges.....	84
5.4.8	Sub-theme: Use of flogging, bullying, and insults to maintain discipline	85
5.5	Theme 4: Challenges Faced by Principals and Teachers.....	86
5.5.1	Sub-theme: Inappropriate school location	86
5.5.2	Sub-theme: Lack of qualified services.....	88
5.5.3	Sub-theme: High teacher mobility rate	89
5.5.4	Sub-theme: Poor working conditions.....	90
5.5.5	Sub-theme: Inadequate accommodation amid insecurity	93
5.5.6	Sub-theme: Resistance from students	94
5.5.7	Sub-theme: Employer-employee relationships	94
5.5.8	Sub-theme: Principals being unwelcoming to teachers	95
5.5.9	Sub-theme: Coping measures for challenges.....	96
5.6	Theme 5: Unsafe and Insecure Conditions for Student Learning in Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Secondary Schools	96
5.6.1	Sub-theme: Use of obsolete and humiliating punishments	96
5.6.2	Sub-theme: Poor interaction and communication between the staff, guests, and students	98
5.6.3	Sub-theme: Low student engagement in decision-making processes	101
5.6.4	Sub-theme: Low-quality meals	102
5.6.5	Sub-theme: Insufficient social activities.....	103
5.6.6	Sub-theme: Lack of social and emotional support.....	103
5.6.7	Sub-theme: Insufficient sanitary, health, and security care.....	104
5.6.8	Sub-theme: Lack of other resources	105
5.7	Theme 6: Proposed Alternative Strategies to Ensure Safe and Secure Learning Environments	106
5.7.1	Sub-theme: Improving learning and environment.....	106
5.7.2	Sub-theme: Reviving work conditions and relationships.....	107
5.8	Chapter Summary.....	108
CHAPTER 6 DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS		110
6.1	Introduction.....	110

6.2	Principals' Perceptions of Context and Student Learning	110
6.2.1	A function of leadership practices that promote enabling learning environments	110
6.2.2	Practising appropriate leadership that provides teacher support for learning	112
6.2.3	Monitoring students' activities for students' success.	115
6.3	Teachers' Understanding of Student Learning	116
6.3.1	Proper use of pedagogic approaches to enhance students' understanding.....	117
6.3.2	Having qualified teachers.....	117
6.3.3	Students' different abilities to assimilate information	118
6.3.4	Use of the learner-centred approach to teaching	118
6.3.5	Executing academic activities within a specified period.....	119
6.4	Creating Viable Conditions for Student Learning.....	119
6.4.1	Making teachers duty conscious and providing for their needs	120
6.4.2	Maintaining good principal-teacher relationships.....	122
6.4.3	Establishing a friendly atmosphere between principals and students	123
6.4.4	Fostering positive teacher-student relationships	124
6.4.5	Staff involvement in decision-making	125
6.4.6	Availability of modern infrastructure and facilities.....	125
6.4.7	Identifying students' needs and challenges.....	126
6.4.8	Use of flogging, bullying, and insults to maintain student discipline	127
6.5	Challenges Faced by Principals and Teachers	129
6.5.1	Inappropriate school location	129
6.5.2	Lack of qualified services	131
6.5.3	High teacher mobility rate	131
6.5.4	Poor working conditions.....	132
6.5.5	Inadequate accommodation amid insecurity	135
6.5.6	Resistance from students.....	136
6.5.7	Employer-employee relationships	136
6.5.8	Principals being unwelcoming to teachers	137
6.5.9	Coping measures for challenges.....	138
6.6	Unsafe and Insecure Conditions for Student Learning in Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Secondary Schools	138
6.6.1	Use of obsolete and humiliating punishments	139
6.6.2	Poor interaction and communication between the staff, guests, and students....	140
6.6.3	Low student engagement in decision-making processes	143

6.6.4	Low-quality meals	144
6.6.5	Insufficient social activities	145
6.6.6	Lack of social and emotional support	145
6.6.7	Insufficient sanitary, health, and security care	147
6.6.8	Lack of other resources	148
6.7	Proposed Alternative Strategies to Ensure Safe and Secure Learning Environments	149
6.7.1	Improving learning and environment	149
6.7.2	Reviving work conditions and relationships	155
6.8	Chapter Summary	159
CHAPTER 7 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS		161
7.1	Introduction	161
7.2	Summary of Key Findings	161
7.3	Responding to the Research Questions	161
7.3.1	Primary question: How do principals connect their leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian school context?	161
7.3.2	Research question 1: How do principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools understand the connection between context and student learning?	165
7.3.3	Research question 2: How do school principals create viable conditions for effective student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?	166
7.3.4	Research question 3: What challenges do school principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools experience when creating an environment that enables them to connect directly with the students?	167
7.3.5	Research question 4: What alternative strategies can be implemented to ensure a safe and secure learning environment in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?	169
7.4	Study Limitations	170
7.5	Contribution of the Research	170
7.5.1	Relevance of the investigation to policy and practice	171
7.5.2	Proposed effective relational leadership model for secondary schools based on principal-student-teacher exchanges	175
7.6	Conclusions of the Study	177
7.7	Recommendations for Future Research	180
7.8	Chapter Summary	180
REFERENCES		183
ANNEXURE 1: LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH		210
ANNEXURE 2: LETTER AND CONSENT FORM TO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON HEAD REQUESTING AUTHORISATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH		211

ANNEXURE 3: LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS	214
ANNEXURE 4: LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS	217
ANNEXURE 5: LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS	219
ANNEXURE 6: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS	221
ANNEXURE 7: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS	223
ANNEXURE 8: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS	225
ANNEXURE 9: AUTHORISATION NUMBERS FOR PCCSS	227

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 2.1 A map of the regions of Cameroon (https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Cameroon-showing-the-10-administrative-regions-Source-Author_fig1_358593849).....	13
Figure 2.2 Administrative structure of PCCSS (Source: Adapted from the Education Secretary's 2020/2021 report to the Ministry of Secondary Education)	15
Figure 3.1 The vertical dyad (Source: Bratton, 2020, p. 171)	44
Figure 4.1 Map of Cameroon show the research sites (Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2021; Indications: Author)	58
Figure 7.1 Effective relational leadership model for secondary schools based on principal-student-teacher exchanges	177

LIST OF TABLES

Table 4.1 Summary of study population	55
Table 5.1 Categorisation and contextual background of the selected schools	72
Table 5.2 Categories of participants.....	72
Table 5.3 Summary of the identified themes and sub-themes	72

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND ORIENTATION

1.1 Introduction

One of the most important factors in successful schools is high-quality leadership wherein principals exhibit a significant and positive impact on student learning and outcomes (Bezzina et al., 2018). Day et al. (2011) revealed that successful leadership links with student learning and achievement. The authors indicated that school heads must be able to implement their practices appropriately in accordance with their contexts to positively impact student learning. They insisted that failure by principals to understand and respond suitably to the prevailing context is an indication of weak leadership. Such inadequacies are common in schools where principals rather overlook problems than solving issues affecting the learning environment (Kelley & Shaw, 2009). This explains why high academic student achievement is strongly connected to effective leadership, and vice versa (Kilinç, 2014; Tubin, 2011). This supports the idea that leadership is an important variable in building schools' ability to improve student learning, which results in the improvement of student performance (Leithwood & Seashore-Louis, 2011; Thoonen et al., 2012). It is therefore important to ask how principals can connect their leadership to the context in which students learn for effective student learning.

1.2 Background to the Study

Since student learning is at the centre of educational institutions (Day et al., 2011; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007), principals must pay attention to it. Although some research on successful school leadership holds that school principals cannot directly influence student learning, Day et al. (2020) stated that leadership is a fundamental variable of the school environment that has direct and indirect links to student learning. Additionally, though Marishane (2016)'s study has not stated in detail what principals should do to initiate an enabling environment, he asserted that school leadership can directly influence student learning through the context in which student learning takes place by creating an enabling environment in the school because the school context and its interaction with leadership are continuously changing, and school leadership cannot be disconnected

from the context in which it operates. The assumption is that the inability of leadership to know, understand, and respond appropriately to students' interest, needs, backgrounds, experiences, abilities, and challenges may affect their welfare, which may lead to bullying, violence, failure, depression, and dropout in schools (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) explained that for students to achieve in schools, they must learn under conditions that are safe and secure and that principals must create conditions that allow teachers and students to form healthy relationships. In addition, Thornton (2010) pointed out that it is important for school principals to invest in developing relational trust that enhance student learning. Principals are also urged to create an academic climate in which students are listened to (De Maeyer et al., 2006) by being approachable and ensuring that students are treated equally in accordance with the student rights enshrined in many conventions and declarations (UN, 1948, 1989, 2000; UNDHR, 1948, cited in Momen, 2022; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Therefore, everything that is done in a school must be in the students' best interest. It cannot be overemphasised how important it is for school leaders to create healthy relationships, pay particular attention to the concerns of students, and involve them in the improvement process (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). It is assumed that principals' abilities to ensure a safe learning environment will have a positive impact on student learning and this can be achieved only when principals understand the relationship that context has with student learning.

Internationally, leadership connection to student learning has been supported in England. According to Day et al. (2011), an investigation carried out on the impact of leadership on learning outcomes revealed that connecting leadership to student learning is implemented by successful secondary school leaders in England because the school heads focus on academic achievement and student engagement. The authors noted that among the practices, school heads of successful schools focus on creating safe and secure environments for their staff and children, which greatly improves student learning and performance. Leithwood et al. (2017) and Bezzina et al. (2018) indicated that school leadership contributes to student learning through high-quality interactions with students and staff in North America and Italy. However, none of these studies exclusively investigated leadership connections to student learning in private secondary schools. In addition, these investigations were for the most part directed towards successful public

schools headed by principals with a broad focus on student-related problems (Goldring et al., 2008). Furthermore, the researchers' focus seemed to be more on the perspectives of school heads rather than that of students, which calls for a study that examines how principals can create viable conditions for student learning in a different setting that considers students as active participants.

In the case of the Cameroonian educational system, connecting leadership to student learning is a new dimension in school leadership, and much still needs to be done in this domain. Most studies in Cameroon on school leadership were directed towards instructional supervision (Mufua, 2019), which focusses on principals' preoccupation with ensuring the implementation of the educational mission of a school by overseeing, equipping, and empowering teachers to provide meaningful learning experiences for students (Aburizaizah et al., 2019; Huguet et al., 2017; MacBeath, 2019; Msila, 2013). This type of leadership focuses less on student learning and more on teacher actions and expertise (MacNeill et al., 2003; Spillane, 2005). Chirichello (2004) stated that good leadership goes beyond delegation and supervision. The National Education Forum in Cameroon (Cameroon Ministry of Education, 1995; Mufua, 2019) revealed that inadequately trained personnel are a key problem in Cameroon's education system. This suggests that most secondary school principals lack the appropriate knowledge and skills to connect their leadership role practically and effectively to student learning. Transformational leadership is another area of leadership focus. Transformational leadership requires principals to exhibit inspirational and motivational skills that can influence teachers' organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Lyonga, 2019; Robinson et al., 2008). However, doubts were expressed as to the effective implementation of this leadership style by principals in Cameroon (Wirba, 2015). These lapses by principals may be the reason for deviant behaviours, such as violence, drug abuse, dropout, and failure, on campuses (Ngwokabwenui, 2015). These deviant behaviours could indicate a disconnect between principals' leadership and the context in which students learn. This goes against *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) and Article 3 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989) that posit that it is in students' best interest to be principals' first priority. Nevertheless, Guidelines for Education in Cameroon (Law No. 98/004 of

14 April 1998), which permits private providers of education, such as the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC), to support the government in the education of its citizens, also contains the purpose and objectives of secondary schools in Cameroon, which has the general provision to have education as a top priority of the nation (section 3(1). However, these objectives can only be effectively achieved when principals connect their leadership to student learning. Principals can connect their leadership to student learning by ensuring the effective promotion of learning content, process, context, and outcomes (Marishane, 2020), and these can be fostered when principals have a broad focus on student-related problems (Day et al., 2011) and provide a conducive learning environment (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). It is worth noting that Cameroon is a member of the United Nations (UN, 2021) and the African Union, which advocate for the best interest of the student. This study intended to address the gap between the leadership role of principals and student learning. The study attempted to find out whether principals are connecting their leadership to student learning, and how students and teachers view the leadership role of principals in connection with their learning.

1.3 Rationale for the Study

This study was informed by my personal experience as a teacher of the Presbyterian Education Authority (PEA) of the PCC. I had served the PCC for 22 years in various schools and various capacities, including the position of principal. Over the years, I observed that principals seemed reluctant to pay enough attention to students, let alone involve them in decision-making and development processes as advocated by UNICEF & UNESCO (2007), and this affects school climates (context) with regard to student learning. Principals seemed to focus more on teachers than learners, which creates a gap between principals and students, who become victims of severe destructive practices, which seems to be increasing (Ngwokabuenui, 2015). Some principals are reported to be completely unapproachable, even by teachers. In addition, obsolete punitive measures such as flogging are still being used. *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) reported that failure to adapt to the needs of students results in high levels of repeated grades, drop-outs, and violence in many schools. Marishane (2016) asserted that to improve student learning, leadership must be

linked to the context in which students learn. This implies that in order to improve student learning in PCC schools, principals must connect their leadership to the learning environment. Waters et al. (2003) stated that high-quality interactions with both students and staff initiated by the leader greatly contribute to student learning, yet reports from international bodies and researchers (Ashu, 2014; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007; World Bank 2020 education strategy, cited in Klees et al., 2012) revealed a disturbing picture of the academic outcomes of unsafe and insecure learning environments, which are linked to the poor performance of principals all over the world and in Cameroon. This suggests that some principals do not make connecting with student learning a priority of their leadership role, which may be due to lack of development programmes and a lack of knowledge of the effective application of *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All*, which emphasises the best interest of the student (Ashu, 2014; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007).

Apart from my personal experience in school leadership, this study was also motivated by gaps identified in the literature regarding school leadership and student learning. Much research is needed on principals' leadership and learner connectivity and how this connectivity affects students' learning outcomes in educational institutions. Gumus et al. (2018) found that the most studied leadership models continue to be instructional, transformational, and distributed leadership. Internationally, most findings concentrated on the influence of instructional leadership on students' learning outcomes (Blase & Blase, 2000; Costello, 2015; Fink & Markholt, 2013; Hung & Ponnusamy, 2010; Robinson et al., 2008; Urick, 2016). The concept of leadership for learning and change is another focus area (Bush, 2013; Hallinger, 2011; Walker & Hallinger, 2016). However, though research is gradually moving towards pedagogic leadership that requires principals to promote the learning and intellectual growth of students (MacNeill et al., 2003), no research is available that explicitly accounts how and what principals should do to connect their leadership role directly to student learning, and how it influences positive learning attitudes and outcomes. In Cameroon, Wirba (2015) and Mufua (2019) revealed that there is no difference regarding the availability of such research as most investigations on leadership are geared towards instructional leadership and the impact of leadership on students' academic achievement. These indications portray a likely gap between

principals and students and motivated me to find out how school principals connect their leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian school context.

1.4 Statement of the Problem

Over the years, much has been written about leadership in secondary schools, and the primary focus has been on issues, tensions, and challenges that are unique to secondary schools with very little emphasis on student learning (for example, Cameron, 2010; Highfield, 2010; Woods & Cowie, 2009). Marishane (2020) remarked that although leadership for student learning has become a point of discussions related to effective school leadership, leadership has been rarely linked to context. In support, Hallinger (2011) acknowledged that although his findings established that leadership impacts learning, he found it difficult to link leadership to its context. This may account for the outcry around the world, such as in America (Bear, n.d.), Turkey (Karal, 2011, cited in Tosun et al., 2015), London (Cowie et al., 2008; Raynor & Wylie, 2012), Kenya (Agboola & Salawu, 2011; Nabiswa et al., 2016), and particularly, in Cameroon (Ngwokabwenui, 2016), about school safety issues that result in high-profile violence. A major determinant of the facilitation of student learning is the ability of principals to connect their leadership to the context of student learning by providing a conducive environment (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). This implies that the context in which student learning takes place is of critical importance to school principals, yet very little attention is given to this very important aspect, which may suggest there is a disconnect between the leadership role of principals and student learning. Dike (2019) added that when principals use restorative practices as alternative measures to bring about behavioural change in students rather than the traditional sanctions of flogging, expulsion, and suspension, it improves the school climate, and consequently, student learning. Furthermore, Gentilucci and Muto (2007) asserted that principals must be approachable in order to have a strong influence on student learning. Leithwood et al. (2020) also expressed the urgent need for school principals to adopt leadership strategies that align with the learning and challenges of students and that create positive relationships among school members in order to improve student learning.

Although Article 29 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989) requires the development of education that is peaceful, student-centred, student-friendly, and empowering, the international community's adoption of the Millennium Development Goals from its inception (UN, 2000), which required that all children complete primary education, increases pressure on principals to ensure secondary school attendance, which may pose a challenge to leadership (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Furthermore, the 2012 and 2015 *Millennium Development Goals Reports* indicate a universal increase in access to education (Motala et al., 2015; UN, 2012) which by implication, increases secondary school attendance and leadership challenges. In Cameroon, like in other African countries, the lack of emphasis on leadership training for current principals (Mufua, 2019; Wirba, 2015) poses a greater challenge because principals mostly train on the job (Mbua, 2003). Oplatka (2004) concurred that one of the characteristics of principalship in Africa is a lack of innovation resulting from a limited knowledge of leadership and a strong focus on administrative functions. The fact that the World Bank is shifting attention from Education for All (UNESCO, 2000) to Learning for All in the 2020 education strategy (De Siqueira, 2012; Steiner-Khamsi, 2012) is proof that leadership connectivity to student learning requires focusing on the leadership role of principals. Lastly, Vision 2035 from the President of the Republic of Cameroon, HE Paul Biya, stated that in order to improve youth employment, secondary school education must urgently be increased (Mufua, 2019). Therefore, if principals do not take up the challenge to connect their leadership to the environment in which students learn, this vision may not be realised. Studies of Wirba (2015) and Mufua (2019) revealed that principals in Africa and Cameroon focus on instructional leadership due to lack of training which implies that little or no attention is given to the school context in Cameroon and Africa as a whole. Marishane (2020) and Kraft and Falken (2020) concurred that studies on effective leadership have been hardly linked to the context. Kraft and Falken (2020) added that over the years, educational reforms have focused on improving teacher quality and paid less attention to the contexts in which teaching and learning occur. Despite these observations, studies of the researchers mentioned above have not explicitly indicated what principals must do to connect their leadership to the context in which students learn. This study intended to fill this gap by investigating how principals connect their leadership

to student learning through the context, so as to increase awareness about the strategies that can help principals connect their leadership to the context in which students learn to ensure quality school performance, which is a critical call for educational reforms in Cameroon.

1.5 Research Questions

1.5.1 Primary research question

This study was guided by the following primary research question:

- How do principals connect their leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian school context?

1.5.2 Secondary questions

The primary question was guided by the following secondary questions:

- How do principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools understand the connection between context and student learning?
- How do school principals create viable conditions for effective student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?
- What challenges do school principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools experience when creating an environment that enables them to connect directly with the students?
- What alternative strategies can be implemented to ensure a safe and secure learning environment in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?

1.6 Aim and Objectives of the Study

The main aim of this study was to examine how school principals connect their leadership to student learning in the Cameroonian Presbyterian school context, and four objectives emanated from the main aim of the project. The first objective was to establish how principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools understand the connection between

context and student learning. The second objective was to identify Cameroonian Presbyterian school principals' experiences when creating a viable environment for effective student learning. The third objective was to examine how Cameroonian Presbyterian school principals deal with the challenges they experience when creating a viable environment for effective student learning. The last objective was to develop alternative strategies that the Cameroonian Presbyterian school principals could apply to effectively connect their leadership to student learning. In Chapter 7, recommendations are made on how best school leadership can connect to student learning.

1.7 Significance of the Study

Schools exist to equip students with skills that prepare them to lead successful lives in the future. If schools fall short of responding to changes and challenges, it may suggest that "our schools are broken and in need of repair" (Davidovich et al., 2010, pp. 4, 8). Therefore, if principals are not well equipped to drive students' dreams, it may hinder student learning. This study revealed a picture of how secondary school principals create enabling environments for students to learn easily and gives suggestions on possible leadership strategies that principals can use to improve their ability to carry out their role in student learning. The findings of this study are of value as they add to the existing body of knowledge, which can be referenced by future researchers in the field of educational leadership and student learning.

In addition, this study provides new knowledge on alternative leadership strategies that can be used by principals to connect their leadership roles directly to the context in which students learn for effective student learning in Cameroon and the world. This study may also help principals identify possible inadequacies in the learning environment that affect student learning and reveal ways to address these inadequacies. Principals may gain knowledge on administrative competence in the areas of appropriate attitudes and skills to create more productive learning environments.

This research provides principals in Cameroon and in Africa as a whole, the consciousness that promoting good relationships with students and teachers foster enabling school environments which have positive social impact on education, resulting

to increase student interest in learning, increase enrolment, low teacher turnover, and effective student learning.

Even though the study focused on the Presbyterian secondary education sub-system, the literature generated from this study will educate other secondary education principals, nationally and internationally, on possible techniques they can use to connect their leadership to student learning for improved performance. Furthermore, the findings from this study emphasised the importance of principals creating conducive learning environments for students, which may reveal a critical need for educational reforms in Cameroon.

Moreover, if principals implement this study's recommendations, it will allow students to learn in safe and secure environments that are free from discrimination, and this may increase their liking for schooling. Another important aspect of this study is that the outcome may lead to collective reflection by all educational stakeholders and policymakers at both private and public levels to create actions for improvement. Chapter 7 makes recommendations to the government and private education providers on how to improve practice.

1.8 Organisation of the Thesis

- Chapter 1 Introduction and orientation: This chapter opens with introduction and proceeds to give a background to the study. These are followed by discussions on the rationale for the study, statement of the problem, research questions, purpose of the study, significance of the study, and the organisation of the thesis.
- Chapter 2 Literature review: An overview of formal education in Cameroon and the history and structure of PCC secondary education in Cameroon are discussed in this chapter. The chapter also presents an extensive review of the literature on how school principals connect their leadership role to student learning and the leadership factors that influence successful student learning.
- Chapter 3 Theoretical framework: This chapter discusses the theoretical framework used in this study, which was relational leadership theory based on leader-member exchange and interpersonal trust.

- Chapter 4 Research approach, design, and methodology: This chapter begins with the presentation of philosophical assumptions in research and the research paradigm. This chapter also gives an outline of the research approach, research design, research methodology, data analysis procedures, trustworthiness of the study, and ethical considerations.
- Chapter 5 Research findings: This chapter presents the findings based on themes derived from the data obtained through interviews and document analysis as they relate to inductive evidence from the literature review. The chapter further presents the sub-themes that consolidate the themes for better understanding.
- Chapter 6 Discussion of research findings: The chapter discusses the findings, framed by the themes presented in Chapter 5, based on the research questions, review of literature, and theoretical framework.
- Chapter 7 Summary of findings, conclusions, and recommendations: The final chapter presents the summary of findings, limitations and delimitations of the study, contribution of knowledge, suggestions for further research, recommendations, and conclusion.

1.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the direction of the study and provided the background on which the study is set. The chapter gave a general overview of the prevailing atmosphere in secondary school settings and the need for contextual issues to be addressed by principals for effective student learning. I also examined the rationale for the study, statement of the problem, research questions, purpose of the study, and significance of the study. It also provided the organisation of the thesis.

The next chapter deals with literature on the concepts of leadership, school leadership, student learning, leadership for student learning, school climate, and leadership factors that influence successful student learning. An overview of the history and structure of PCC secondary education in Cameroon is also discussed in this chapter.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The previous chapter provided the background and introduction to the study. It also examined the phenomenon under investigation at international and national levels. The present chapter discusses the literature on how school principals connect their leadership roles to student learning by creating enabling environments (context) for effective learning. Despite recent discussions related to effective school leadership, leadership has rarely been linked to the context in which students learn (Marishane, 2020). Hallinger (2011) acknowledged that it is difficult to relate school leadership to its context. It is acknowledged that most studies on school leadership, internationally and in Cameroon, concentrated on principals' role in improving teacher quality and pay less attention to the contexts in which teaching and learning happen (Aburizaizah et al., 2019; Huguet et al., 2017; Kraft & Falken, 2020; Lyonga, 2019; MacBeath, 2019; Mufua, 2019). However, Holahan and Batey (2019) stated that recently there has been increased focus in research on positive school climate as an essential aspect of establishing non-discriminatory learning environments in which all students can succeed. Therefore, the literature reviewed in this chapter is restricted to how school principals connect their leadership to student learning through the context (environment) in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools. This chapter begins with an overview of formal education, the start of Presbyterian education, and the legislation of private education in Cameroon. School leadership, student learning, leadership for student learning, and school climate are also discussed, together with leadership factors that influence successful student learning.

2.2 Overview of Formal Education in Cameroon

Cameroon is a developing country on the African continent. It is located along the Atlantic coast between the Sahara Desert and the Congo Basin. Chad borders this African country to the north, the Central African Republic to the east, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of the Congo to the South, and Nigeria to the west (Tamasang et al., 2021). The colonial era led to the implantation of two official languages in Cameroon, namely English

and French (Ashu, 2016). These languages were introduced in 1916 when Britain and France shared Cameroon into two unequal parts after defeating the Germans (Bondarenko et al., 2018). The English-speaking section, made up of the Southwest and Northwest regions, is called Anglophone Cameroon. The French-speaking section, made up of the Littoral, Centre, Adamawa, West, East, North, Extreme North, and South regions, is called Francophone Cameroon (Nana, 2016). Figure 2.1 is a map of Cameroon and shows the different regions of the country.



Figure 2.1 A map of the regions of Cameroon (https://www.researchgate.net/figure/Map-of-Cameroon-showing-the-10-administrative-regions-Source-Author_fig1_358593849)

In Cameroon, secondary schools are a component of formal education, operating under the Ministry of Secondary Education. Formal education started with missionary activities,

which moved education from informal to formal by instituting schools, teachers, and students (Ashu, 2016; Gwanfogbe, 2018, 2020). During that period, a good portion of education was provided by Christian missions (Gallego & Woodberry, 2010), such as the Basel Mission, from which Presbyterian schools emerged. Hence it is necessary to examine how PCC schools were started in Cameroon.

2.3 The History of Presbyterian Schools in Cameroon

The Presbyterian Church, one of the Protestant churches in Cameroon, has been a private education provider for over 50 years. According to the Presbyterian church in Cameroon (n.d, 2007), formal education in Cameroon began in 1866 with the arrival of four Basel Mission missionaries called Yohannes Bitzer, Godlieb Muntz, Friedrich Becher, and Christian Dilger. Religious autonomy was transferred from the Basel Mission to the PCC in November 1957 (Lang, 2014; PCC, n.d). This was followed by the transfer of Basel Mission schools to the PCC in 1968 (Presbyterian Church in Cameroon, 1982, 2007). Although just one secondary school, the Cameroon Protestant College, founded in 1949, was handed over to the PCC, it now operates a variety of secondary schools, including grammar, technical, and comprehensive secondary schools. Thus, it is vital to study how school leadership interacts with student learning in this organisation that has stood the test of time.

2.3.1 The administrative structure of Presbyterian Church in Cameroon secondary schools

Presbyterian Church in Cameroon secondary schools (PCCSS) operate under the Presbyterian Education Authority (PEA). This department is headed by an Education Secretary appointed by the moderator of the PCC. Article 121.i of the PCC constitution (2014) states that the elected Moderator is the spiritual and constitutional leader, the highest authority of the Church, and the proprietor of the PCC educational institutions. The Moderator is also the chairperson of the PEA. The Education Secretary, the principal liaison officer between the PEA and the Ministry of Secondary Education, supervises the work of secondary school principals. In consultations with the proprietor, the Education Secretary appoints principals, vice principals, and discipline masters (Education

Secretary’s beginning-of-year 2020/2021 report to the Ministry of Education). Teachers are employed by the Education Secretary, who transmits educational policies via principals for implementation. The Education Secretary takes orders from the Moderator, principals take orders from the Education Secretary, and other administrative personnel, including teachers, take orders from principals, as shown in Figure 2.2. Figure 2.2 shows that communication is mainly from the top down (one way), which may make it challenging for teachers and students to give feedback from below. Poor communication may have created unfavourable learning environments and caused a disconnection between principals and students.

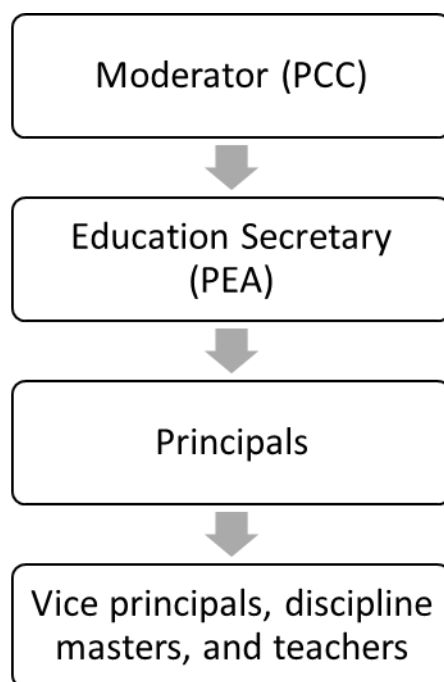


Figure 2.2 Administrative structure of PCCSS (Source: Adapted from the Education Secretary’s 2020/2021 report to the Ministry of Secondary Education)

2.3.2 The Presbyterian Education Authority organ and membership

The PEA is the board through which PCC schools are controlled (PCC, 2007) and is responsible for the running of PCC schools. The organ is made up of 10 categories of members, as outlined in the Education Secretary’s 2019/2020 end-of-year report to the Ministry of Secondary Education. I noted that while teachers have representatives in the PEA, students are represented by ex-students, who focus on funding school projects. Since ex-student representatives do not hold pre-meetings with enrolled students before

PEA meetings, the voice of the students may only be indirectly heard through principals' reports, which may not give an exact impression. This shows that students are relegated to the background regarding matters of their welfare. This study attempted to determine how principals connect their leadership to student learning in PCCSS.

2.3.3 Mission of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and Presbyterian Education Authority

Since the PEA operates under the PCC, in order to sufficiently assess the mission of the PEA, that of the PCC must be considered. According to the Constitution of the PCC (2014, p. 7), "the mission of the PCC is to proclaim the Good News of God through Jesus Christ, in word and action. The proclamation of this Good News includes preaching the word, teaching, healing and liberating the people of God from sin (Luke 4: 18–19)". This mission is also proclaimed by the PEA through the teaching ministry of the PCC.

2.3.4 Goals of the Presbyterian Education Authority

The following is specified in the PEA's internal regulations (2004, p. 1):

The Presbyterian Education Authority (PEA) in collaboration with the Cameroon government and fulfilment of the command of the Lord Jesus Christ in Luke 4: 18–19, seeks to proclaim the good news of God through Jesus Christ, in WORD and ACTION. Furthermore, it attempts to provide participatory Education, which is society-based to the young people of Cameroon's urban and rural areas.

The PEA strives to attain these goals "with deep commitment to human dignity and basic human rights and the moral and ethical obligations of the education profession" (p 4). These are good goals if they are actually put in action as indicated.

2.3.5 The general objectives of Presbyterian Church in Cameroon in education

The educational objectives of the PCC, which are similar to that of the Basel Mission, are aimed at passing on the truth about God from generation to generation, and saving people from prejudice, disease, ignorance, and want (PCC, 2007). The PCC also aims at providing the skills needed for community and self-development (PCC, 2007). These objectives have implications for this study as achieving them require school principals to have leadership skills and provide participatory education in which students' opinions,

dignity, and rights are valued. As such, it is vital to examine the extent to which these objectives are attained by PCCSS principals' leadership.

2.4 The Legal Structure for Private Education in Cameroon

In Cameroon, legalisation is one of the ways in which schools are controlled by the government. An examination of the legal framework for private education is crucial as some of the difficulties and lapses can be traced to existing legislation. In April 1910, the Germans passed the first Education Law in Cameroon that provided a school programme for mission schools (Gwanfogbe, 2018). Since the German's intention was to expand the German language and culture, financial subvention was provided to mission schools by the German Government (Gwanfogbe, 2018). The property of the German missions was handed over to the English missions after the World War I in 1919 when 'Southern Cameroon', now known as Anglophone Cameroon (the base of the PCC head office), was taken over by the British (Dupraz, 2019). The Nigerian Education Ordinance was imposed in Southern Cameroon until in 1972 when the two sub-systems of education in Cameroon were merged, and the Federal Republic of Cameroon became the United Republic of Cameroon (Schneider, 2018). After this union, Law No. 76/15 of July 8, 1976, gave the government the right to determine the fees and salary rates for students and teachers in the private sector (Mensah, 2000, cited in Ndongko & Tambo, 2000). This law also compelled all educational activity to run under four agencies; one of which was the Protestant Agency of Private Education under which the PEA falls (Mensah, 2000, cited in Ndongko & Tambo, 2000).

However, this law had positive and negative implications. The law brought some discipline to the private education sector for effective operation but also increased poor infrastructure care and teacher attrition because of lack of funds and private teachers receiving the lowest pay (Mensah, 2000, cited in Ndongko & Tambo, 2000). Due to these pitfalls, private education providers asked for a review of the law, which resulted in the enactment of Laws No. 766/PJL/AN and No. 86/022 of 1987. Despite the liberalisation of the fees rate in 1987 to enable private school owners to provide effective teaching (Mensah, 2000, cited in Ndongko & Tambo, 2000), the salary situation for teachers in the private sector has remained meagre, and some school infrastructure is still very old.

These situations have implications for this research because when principals and teachers are not motivated to work, it may affect their interactions with students, thereby affecting the environment in which students learn. Furthermore, it is likely that an unattractive school campus may harm student learning.

To ensure that schools meet the state's requirements for effective teaching and learning, the Guidelines for Education in Cameroon (Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998) require private providers to obtain authorisation from the government. Yet, some PCC schools operate without authorisation (Annexure 9), which may be contributing to the gap between leadership and student learning.

2.5 The Duties of School Principals in Cameroon

Since this study intended to find out how principals relate with student learning, it was vital to explore their functions to see whether they align with the guidelines provided by the state. Principals are the heads of secondary schools. As leaders, they are expected to provide good leadership to ensure school environments are conducive to teaching and learning because the teachers and students are under their control (Fonkeng & Tamajong, 2009). Principals are required to have knowledge about administrative, pedagogic, social, and financial control (Cameroon Ministry of Education, 1996). *The Handbook for Heads of Secondary and High Schools* outlines the duties of principals as follows:

- Pedagogic duties: Pedagogic supervision is one of the important duties of principals because the main purpose of supervision is to ensure pedagogy or instruction is improved. Improved instruction can be achieved through professional development (Dipaola & Wagner (2018), which PCC principals lack. In this domain, principals are expected to collaborate with vice principals and heads of departments to distribute the workload of staff, hold meetings with the staff for academic evaluations, ensure the organisation of workshops for teachers, foster positive school life through group work, and assess the general welfare of students. I am concerned about how principals evaluate students' welfare and what is done after such assessments in order to directly connect their leadership to student learning.

- Administrative duties: These duties involve the proper coordination of financial, material, and human resources for the attainment of institutional goals. Thus, principals appoint suitable persons to posts of duty to ease coordination and ensure the protection of important school documents.
- Financial duties: According to Damtie (2020), the financial duties of principals refer to the management of financial resources. Principals with bursars make wise decisions about finances and ensure that funds are properly managed. This implies that principals need professional skills in financial management and planning for effective operation.
- Social duties: Considering that schools are open social systems in the sense that they receive, transform, and produce students to serve the community (Mbua, 2003), principals play the role of social relations officers. As such, it is the duty of principals to promote positive relationships with teachers, students, and the external environment.

2.6 Duties of Presbyterian Secondary Schools' Principals

The roles of PCCSS principals are indicated in the revised edition of the PEA Job Description (PCC, 2015). The main responsibilities of principals are to ensure the application of the state, PCC, and PEA rules, to maintain good relationships with various authorities, to ensure proper financial control, and to tender reports to board meetings and the Ministry of Secondary Education. Principals also act as advisers to parents-teachers associations (PTAs) to ensure the smooth functioning of schools, keep school records updated, and provide pedagogic follow-up and support to teachers. Organising educational council meetings and regular staff meetings to discuss students' disciplinary and academic affairs is also the duty of PCC principals. As an observation, the duties of PEA principals stated above do not stress the need for leadership to ensure the establishment of healthy relationships with teachers and students, let alone creating a conducive environment for student learning. Instead, the emphasis is on maintaining good relationships with various public authorities. This suggests that internal school environments may have been neglected, creating a gap between leadership and student learning, which is the rationale for this study.

2.7 School Leadership

Over the years, researchers used different definitions of the term 'leadership' (Ronald, 2014). However, Durant (2016) claimed that despite the diverse definitions of this term, essential elements of leadership are identified in most definitions, such as compassion, good character, accountability, and fortitude. Evans (2009) defined leadership as the process of creating an enabling environment in which people are not only empowered but also feel free to see, hear, feel, comment, move about, act, be creative, make choices, and ask what they want. Pratomo & Arifin (2020) described leadership as empowering and mobilising others with utmost skill and integrity to serve students' academic and related needs. Bush and Glover (2014) claimed that leadership is a process of influence based on personal and professional values leading to attaining common objectives of the school. According to Helmrich (2015), a leader knows how to inspire people to achieve goals. Bush and Glover also indicated that a good leader influences rather than exercises authority. These definitions give a clue of what it entails for school leaders to function effectively.

The school principal is a leader who is charged with the responsibility of exercising leadership in a school. Per *The Handbook for Heads of Secondary and High Schools* (Ministry of Education, 1996), the respective functions and roles of the school head are embedded in the administrative, academic, social, and financial management functions. These functions are geared towards ensuring that human, financial, and material resources are well managed for quality learning and outcomes. In addition, a critical principle in Cameroon's *Policy on Good Governance* (Republic of Cameroon, 2004) is the need for institutional leaders to create an enabling environment in which all stakeholders feel free to express their concerns. This principle also requires the involvement of all stakeholders in decision-making in matters that affect their lives based on their abilities, opinions, and ideas to have a shared vision. These may only be effectively and efficiently achieved when principals connect their leadership to student learning, which is at the centre of every learning institution (World Bank Education Strategy, 2020, cited in De Siqueira, 2012).

Although Bush and Glover (2014) insisted that successful leaders have a vision for the school and share it equally with all stakeholders in the school, I think that direct, effective leadership connection to student learning goes beyond sharing. However, Day et al. (2011) pointed out that to provide effective leadership for student learning, the focus should be on instructional leadership and building healthy relationships within and outside school communities. Principals should also strive to develop trust with the parents, teachers, and students and to improve student learning and school performance. These researchers regarded these practice as essential factors for developing a school's capacity as a learning community that is collectively responsive to change and resilient in the face of foreseen and unforeseen challenges. They advised that school leaders should encourage and practice participatory decision-making, be approachable and communicative, work with other schools by allowing the staff and students to develop new skills for pooling resources, work with other agencies, such as educational psychologists, and improve the physical learning environment. The emphasis on promoting valuable exchanges indicates that team leadership is a critical factor in creating an enabling environment for the facilitation of student learning, which is principals' responsibility. Morgeson et al. (2010) regarded the concept of 'team leadership' as a shared property of a group of all members, irrespective of their position or status, actively involved in the process of leadership.

Enyew (2018) declared that principals are not expected to be desk-bound but rather to be visionary leaders who spend quality time working with and interacting with students. Similarly, Roberts (2017) quipped that listening, hearing, and acting on what children say are different activities that principals must do to address marginalisation in school environments. Marishane (2016) asserted that solid support for student learning and school improvement is school leadership. According to Kouzes and Posner (1994, cited in Evans, 2009), such leadership support to student learning depends on the outstanding qualities in the leadership of principals, who should be competent, inspiring, honest, and hardworking. Moreover, the role of the principal is summarised in Law No. 80/293 of 1980 and Circular Letter No. 27/BI APP.3 and 7 of 1980 as being responsible for the smooth running of the school. Thus, principals are required, among other functions, to play the role of central machinery to ensure a positive and healthy school climate for both teachers

and students that result in quality school performance. I believe that these leadership qualities will significantly impact principals as leaders and lead them to run schools effectively.

2.8 Student Learning

Student learning is an indispensable aspect of every school system, and at the centre of an educational institution (Day et al., 2011; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). This implies that principals and teachers are in schools because students have to learn. Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) described student learning as the way or state in which different students learn. Fry et al. (2008) defined student learning as the degree to which students learn and how teachers teach to enable learning to occur. In my opinion, student learning refers to the conditions inside and outside classrooms under which teachers teach and students learn, taking into consideration their collective and individual needs, rights, concerns, interests, and abilities for the enhancement of positive learning outcomes. This definition falls in line with Darling-Hammond's (2008) idea that student learning requires that individual students' particular conditions and backgrounds are considered. Entwistle and Ramsden agreed that students' different abilities, interests, motivations, and expectations should not be ignored in effective student learning. Instead, these differences and the school environment must be made to interact cleverly and indirectly. In support, UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) indicated that students cannot learn simultaneously considering their differences in aptitudes and abilities and recommended a participatory approach to learning, which requires appropriate tools and resources that reflect such differences. Students' differences in their abilities and needs must be considered because students learn differently, and therefore, one approach to teaching does not work for every student (Mukhibat, 2023; Ismail et al., 2023, Hawk & Shah, 2007). Thus, in order to give the best support to student learning, principals must set an example by exhibiting a good understanding of students' differences, helping and inspiring the confidence of teachers and students in what they can achieve, and paying attention to these differences and the school environment.

As a supportive measure to student learning, Darling-Hammond (2008) suggested that teachers acquire pre-service training and continuous professional development.

However, neither teachers nor principals in PCC schools receive professional training upon appointment and recruitment. Darling-Hammond (2008) also advised that schools support continuous learning by teachers and emphasised the need for teachers to teach in ways that connect students by understanding the subject matter, and students' different cultures, family experiences, and learning approaches. She further recommended that teachers must understand adolescent development to support students' growth in social, physical, and emotional perceptions of knowledge, to identify individual students' strengths and weaknesses, and to be able and willing to work with students. In addition, Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) pointed out that student learning requires principals to focus more on the study processes and academic environment. These researchers concurred that such an environment must consider the diverse opinions of school members and give room for students to express their feelings and needs. It is assumed that in encouraging such practices, principals would be empowered to create suitable contexts that improve leadership connectivity to student learning.

Delpit (2006) argued that parents want schools to provide a security structure for children's survival and socialisation. In support of this view, Darling-Hammond (2008) remarked that it is essential for teachers to carefully listen to students and provide tasks that require students to talk and write about their experiences and what they believe about themselves. According to Darling-Hammond, these actions will encourage students to work hard towards learning. Allington (2008, cited in Presseisen, 2008 p. 123) stated that classrooms must be unique environments that encourage varied skills and improves students' self-esteem. He reiterated that an environment that engages students' interests and attracts their attention will facilitate learning by students and teachers. Therefore, if principals fail to provide an appropriate school climate, both teachers and students may be prevented from learning.

2.9 Leadership for Student Learning

Improving student learning has been the focus of school leadership discourse over the years. Two examples can be cited in this regard. The first example is the United States of America, where the Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium (1996) placed school leadership at the forefront of student learning in its *Standards for School*

Principals. The second example is the National Association of Elementary School Principals (2001) that obliged school principals to rally all their decisions around student learning, which is the core business of schools. Despite these efforts made by principals over the past years, there is still a gap between leadership and student learning, which may have resulted from neglecting the conditions under which students learn.

MacBeath and Townsend (2011) described leadership for student learning as the expertise of a school leader to exercise collective leadership to give teaching and learning a shape that is fashioned and acceptable by school members; while Neuman and Simmons (2000) defined it as the leadership's ability to help all students learn and reach their full potential by focusing on improving teaching and learning cooperatively. In this regard, leadership for student learning may be defined as the process in which school leaders respond to the needs of the students to attain a conducive environment that promotes students liking for learning. It is widely acknowledged that the impact of leadership on student learning is only second to classroom teaching (Bush & Glover, 2014; Hightower et al., 2011). This suggests that leaders are more likely to make a difference in students' performance when they become closer to the central business of teaching and student learning (Robinson et al., 2007; Robinson and Cray (2019). Anderson and Pounder (2018) pointed out that student learning is impacted by leadership establishing learning environment conditions that influence what and how teachers teach and students learn, which depends on the quality of the principal. Though Hunter (2006) also emphasised the mandatory role of school administrators to help students succeed by focusing on the institutional mission of teaching and learning, she further suggested that to better student learning, leadership should look beyond teaching and learning and look deeply in and around the school campus. She explained that administrators who view their institutional mission as a strict focus on teaching and learning may be restricting success through student learning.

In support, Andersen (2006) pointed out that students' retention ability is not enough to ensure learning. Instead, enhancing their social and intellectual development should be a primary goal. The scholar believed that an environment that promotes relationships for effective communication in and outside the school should be initiated by school leadership to facilitate student learning. She also proposed that another way in which student

learning could be fostered is by assigning staff mentors to students to provide guidance and support and designing school programmes to reflect the goals and mission of educational institutions and the needs of the students. Meeting the learning needs of students is also highlighted in the *World Declaration on Education for All* (UNESCO, 1990). *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) showed that leaderships' failure to adapt to children's needs results in high levels of repeated grades and dropout in too many schools. These reports suggested that educational quality can only be achieved when principals meet the needs of students by creating student-friendly environments that promote student learning.

In addition, Cornell and Mosley (2006), and UNICEF & UNESCO (2007) concurred that leadership provision of a supportive learning environment to promote student learning is the first priority. Andersen (2006) described a supportive learning environment as one in which students have a sense of belonging and strong relationships with their peers and staff and that promote critical thinking and cognitive and academic skills for improved outcomes. Hunter (2006) agreed that one of the ways to help students succeed in their learning is by increasing their involvement in the decision-making process and giving them increased attention, which promote feelings of togetherness in the internal environment of the school. She further indicated that students should feel comfortable in the academic environment through quantity and quality engagement. Quality engagement refers to the degree to which students are and feel engaged with their studies (Hunter, 2006). Furthermore, students can provide valuable information and improve school quality when they are considered and treated as active partners in school life (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). These efforts can lead to effective delivery of services and programmes in school systems (Hunter, 2006; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Students are likely to have a higher retention rate when they feel accepted in school and when their learning and daily life experiences are blended. Principals should be at the helm of such initiatives.

Drucker (2018, p. 1) indicated that for heads of organisations to be effective, they require "the ability to get the right things done" rather than doing the right things. This means that there may be problems in school environments because principals are focused on implementing the right measures without necessarily considering whether these

measures are done rightly. From its inception, the American College Personnel Association (ACPA, 1994) reported on *The Student Learning Imperative*, and revealed that student learning is not necessarily facilitated by school leadership through the implementation of better teaching strategies. This ACPA reported that student learning can also be enhanced by creating conditions that motivate students to be committed to studies in and outside the classroom, and these requirements include students' active participation and the commitment of other school members. The ACPA (1994) held that principals can intentionally create conditions that enhance student learning by reinforcing cognitive skills, the integration of curricular and co-curricular activities, and the availability of quality institutional resources. The ACPA observed that students learn more when quality institutional resources, such as libraries, health care services, laboratories, and counselling units, are available and they are encouraged to use them. Furthermore, the ACPA asserted that ensuring the endowment of cognitive skills will ease student learning; these skills include critical thinking, practical problem-solving ability, decision-making, conflict resolution skills, respect for human differences, and a sense of confidence, self-esteem, civic duty, and integrity. Students' involvement in decision-making is backed up by Article 12 of *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child*, which states that children have the right to express their views on all aspects of their education, and that their views should be given due weight according to their maturity and age (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The ACPA (1994) further suggested that curricular and co-curricular activities should be interwoven for effective student learning. Relationships outside the classroom influence the moods, feelings, attitudes, and perceptions of students toward learning. Article 29 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989, p. 32) aligns with the idea that education should be child-friendly and empowering. A child-friendly, safe, and healthy environment refers to a welcoming learning environment that is protective, safe, gender-sensitive, and healthy (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Therefore, principals to having focused more on instructional leadership in the past (Mufua, 2019) signals a problem with the context (learning conditions). My view is that applying the skills propagated above, promoting students' integrity and safety, and the presence of such facilities may create a positive school climate for learning, which will ensure the success of principals to connect their leadership to student learning.

2.10 School Climate

Holahan and Batey (2019) stated that recently there has been an increased focus by researchers, policymakers, and education gurus on a positive school climate as an essential aspect of establishing non-discriminatory learning environments in which all students can succeed. However, Kraft and Falken (2020) disagreed with this. Kraft and Falken argued that over the years, educational reforms have focused on improving teacher quality and paid less attention to the contexts in which teaching and learning occur. This section therefore looks at the different views scholars have on school climate. To begin with, Bear (2020) referred to school climate as the impression of the school members' experiences of organisational arrangements, staff practices, interpersonal relationships, learning conditions, and physical and emotional safety. Grazia and Molinari (2020) concurred that school climate is the individual impressions of the institutional, relational, and moral situations of a school. In my understanding, school climate is the manner in which principals interact with school members to provide services, and members' perceptions of the leaders' services. This definition shows that principals are responsible for how all members feel about their school environments.

Although school climate is defined differently by various researchers, Gray et al. (2017), Grazia and Molinari (2020), and Huang and Anyon (2020) agreed that school climate revolves around a central meaning and ideas, which seem to revolve around the school atmosphere, teaching and learning procedures, the quality of people's school life experiences, and demonstrations of the norms, goals, values, organisational structures, and interpersonal relationships. Consequently, rendering positive environments that enhance not only teaching but also student learning is an essential practice principals must consider to effectively link their leadership to student learning. Gray et al. (2017) and Showers (2019) reinforced my observation that principals' leadership practices extensively influence schools' climate. Özgenel (2020) concurred that the effectiveness of a school largely depends on a positive school climate created by the leader.

Reviewing what a positive school climate should be, Bear (2020) described a positive school climate as the outcome of a school's awareness to strengthen and nurture caring, respectful, and trusting relationships, enhance a supportive physical, academic, and

disciplinary environment, and promote safety that enables students to acquire high academic and behavioural levels. *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) views a positive school climate as a learning environment that emphasises quality, builds trust, treats children with dignity and respect, values students' views, and practices peace and non-violent conflict resolutions. The policy further states that a positive school climate is a learning environment void of discrimination, sexual abuse, humiliating punishment by teachers, bullying, aggression among students, and all forms of physical violence. Syahril and Hadiyanto (2018) affirmed that school climate influences the success of the teaching and learning process at schools to a significant extent. Magen-Nagar and Azuly (2016) added that maintaining well-organised and enjoyable learning that promotes productivity in teaching and learning is usually associated with schools that have a positive school climate. This information highlights that the learning situations at PCCSS are insecure and unsafe, which motivated this study, and therefore, this study may be helpful to PCCSS principals.

Ismail et al. (2020) revealed that a positive school climate enhances a healthy frame of mind and good communication that result in a learning environment that influences and promotes successful teaching and learning practices, boosts teachers' job satisfaction, and hence, supports successful teaching and learning practices to improve students' academic performance. Espelage and Hong (2019) and Farina (2019) added that a positive school climate prevents and reduces violence and creates a safe learning environment. These authors suggested that principals must reflect on the school climate in order for interventions and violence prevention programmes to be effective. UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) revealed that since other factors influence student learning, effective learning cannot occur if the environment is not healthy, welcoming, and safe enough to enhance students' physical, psychological, and emotional wellbeing. Students should learn under good hygienic conditions with clean potable water, sufficient clean toilet and urinal facilities for both sexes that consider their physical challenges, and quality buildings (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). In addition, school environments must be free from drugs, alcohol, tobacco, and dangerous weapons (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) agreed although students' success or failure used to be solely attributed to the characteristics of the students, it is gradually being acknowledged

that the environment or context of student learning is critical. Good communication, peace, safety, psychological balance, care, and concern are practices highlighted in the relational leadership theory, which underpins this research, that may help principals directly and effectively liaise with student learning.

Still on the topic of the impact of school climate, Usman and Syaputri (2020) pointed out that students' learning environment has a more significant effect on student learning motivation than teachers' professional and academic competencies. Anderson and Pounder (2018) indicated that creating a cheerful environment for students and staff members is central to schools' success. The authors insisted that principals must support open and safe learning environments that enable students to share their views freely and must make contributions that are valuable to solve problems for the benefit of the school. Kraft and Falken (2020) held that school climate matters for students and teachers because the organisational contexts in which teachers and students teach and learn can either make or mar the teaching-learning process. The scholars explained that positive school environments motivate teachers and students to perform to their fullest potential, and a negative one results in the reverse. The ideas expressed here confirms my view that the school environment is the cornerstone of student learning to which principals must urgently attend.

McCormick (2019) posited that since principals are responsible for schools' overall climate, they must use effective strategies that support the staff and students to ensure the maximisation of student learning. The author believed that strategies that directly and indirectly influence student learning and achievement include building and promoting positive relationships, staff support, mentoring programmes, professional learning communities, and teacher leadership teams. Webster (2020) agreed with establishing good relationships and providing professional development for staff but also argued that effectively communicating schools' norms, goals, and vision to all members is of equal importance. Although McCormick and Webster emphasised the need for school leaders to ensure positive relationships, a critical observation of their opinions shows much focus on improving teacher performance at the detriment of contextual situations of teaching and learning, which is the core of this study. However, Webster's remark insinuated specifically that despite other factors, principals cannot be successful in their roles without

initiating effective communication among teachers and students. Hahn (2017) highlighted additional aspects that contribute to sound school climate, and stated that the main characteristics of leadership that impact school climate, and consequently student learning, are that principals focus on students, reflect on practice, and create collaborative environments. These characteristics are indicative of the crucial role of leadership to enhance students' environment so they can learn better.

Furthermore, Siahaan (2020) stated that the managerial and supervisory competences of principals have a direct positive influence on the school climate. Day et al. (2011) encouraged principals to establish trusting relationships with school members and considered trust the lubricant that keeps organisations running smoothly. UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) explained that when students feel hated, there can be no trust and their ability to achieve optimum development is limited. To ensure trust, principals must promote an atmosphere of respect for all students in line with Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN, 1948). Anderson and Pounder (2018) reiterated that trust is necessary for a school to function as a cooperative body. This sense of trust can only be influenced by the principal, who is responsible for creating an environment that promotes trust among students, parents, and teachers for improved student learning (Bryk & Schneider, 2002). It is evident from the reviewed literature that the conditions of the school environment can either improve or suppress student learning. Therefore, when principals take responsibility to ensure students feel respected and valued, it builds an educational culture of trust.

Trusting relationships among principals, teachers, and students contribute to favourable learning spaces, which positively impact students' ability to perform. This is also one of the goals of *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007), which is to improve the quality of education. Therefore, since a country's wellbeing is determined by its ability to promote its educational systems and schools, principals must know what can be done to make schools protective grounds for students and not a hindrance (Freiberg, 2005). Bear (2020) demonstrated how schools can become protective grounds for students and classified school climate under four domains, namely social and emotional support, structure, engagement, and feelings of safety. Bear lamented that it is common to find schools with authoritarian leadership that lack these

aspects. It is obvious that if a school lacks these aspects, it takes a heavy toll on student learning; PCCSS may lack these aspects, which are discussed in the following subsections.

2.10.1 Social and emotional support

This domain includes two related aspects, namely responsiveness to students' basic psychological needs and interpersonal relationships between staff and students and between students and students. Interpersonal relationships here refer to how students and staff interact in school, which is considered a crucial aspect of school climate (Bear, 2020). Caring, supportive, and respectful relationships between these school members result in positive outcomes in the academic and social life of students, and may reduce violence (Obsuth et al., 2017). Such relationships also influence students to respect one another and the school rules and expectations because they are motivated to maintain the relationships (Bear, 2020).

2.10.2 Structure

Bear (2020) stated that this domain involves an orderly and safe learning environment, fair disciplinary practices, and high behavioural expectations. The researcher explained that this domain demands monitoring and supervising students' behaviour and fair school rules and enforcement. He also indicated that the effective implementation of these practices positively impacts student learning and academic performance and results in fewer behaviour-related problems such as peer victimisation and bullying, which hinder student learning.

2.10.3 Engagement

This dimension requires students' cognitive, behavioural, and emotional engagement in school (Bear, 2020). Bear (2020) indicated that the degrees to which students are involved in these aspects reveal their positive and negative reactions, which reflect how they feel about the school, rules, and learning.

2.10.4 Feeling of safety

Bear (2020) pointed out that this category of school climate is revealed when students and teachers feel safe and the school environment is free of violence. The implication is that when students feel physically and emotionally unsafe, they are unlikely to enjoy school, which affects their learning. He suggested that feeling insecure may stem from a lack of trust in one another. In addition, Eacott (2018) opined that even leading teachers is difficult if they do not trust and believe that the principal cares, which implies that leadership is about relationships. The scholar explained that principals need to adapt their leadership to suit their situations in different school environments. Hersey (2013, cited in Palermo, 2018) and Eacott agreed that leadership is relational. Therefore, the ability of principals to create a safe learning atmosphere may increase students' interest in learning, thereby attracting and motivating an ensemble school performance.

2.11 Leadership Factors that Influence Successful Student Learning

Various studies outlined the leadership factors that influence successful student learning (Anderson & Pounder, 2018; Connelly & Schooley, 2013; Day et al., 2011; Marishane, 2020; Siahaan, 2020; Usman & Syaputri, 2020). Rodriguez-Gomez et al. (2020) maintained that a critical element in improving the quality of educational systems is the professional development of principals. They stated that principals must undergo formal pre- and in-service development programmes and use informal learning opportunities as part of their professional development for effective student learning. They insisted that student learning is positively influenced when the principal has a robust professional determination, a positive perception of professional competencies, and enthusiasm for the profession. In support, Anderson and Pounder (2018) revealed that successful principals have sound knowledge of teaching and learning, can empower teachers to grow, and regularly interact with students and teachers. They emphasised that the influence of leadership on student learning and outcomes can be realised when principals provide teachers with appropriate resources and experiences and when they ensure the active involvement of teachers in planning, coordinating, and monitoring curricula and instruction. Usman and Syaputri (2020) agreed that professional leadership and

pedagogical competencies are vital for student learning and insisted that principals' influence on the school environment is an essential factor contributing to student learning. These leadership qualities may be lacking in school leadership in Cameroon where principals mostly train on the job (section 1.4). However, Siahaan (2020) advised that leadership capabilities can be improved by upgrading their competence in management and supervision.

Hightower et al. (2011) opined that when principals organise in-service training for teachers, it supports quality teaching and improves student learning and achievement. They suggested that effective professional development programmes for teachers that impact student learning should explore deep knowledge of subject matter and different student learning methods and create awareness of the difficulties students and new teachers face. UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) concurred that student learning can be significantly impacted if teachers' standards are improved, and therefore, teachers must be given the necessary management support, adequate training consistent with working in child-friendly schools, have their concerns addressed, and be given a chance to participate in forums through which they can influence policy. UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) proposed that training on how teachers can adopt non-violent conflict resolution strategies introduced by principals will go a long way to end physical and humiliating punishment for students, which impacts student learning. I believe that vivid descriptions of this magnitude which explains what principals must do is more helpful to school leadership in the implementation of suitable practices. Leithwood et al. (2004) asserted that high-quality leaders influence students by setting directions, developing people, and making the organisation work. They believed that teachers' instructional behaviour is shaped through these practices, which eventually improve student learning. Therefore, principals should take responsibility for initiating training programmes, and in the course of implementing training for teachers, the principal will also learn. This demands that principals must be professionally equipped to easily and effectively carry out their duties. From a different perspective it may be difficult for principals to close the gap between them and students if they only focus on teacher development, and therefore, there should be a balance between addressing teachers' and students' needs.

Marishane (2020) stated that the following components shape student learning: The learning process, which encompasses the acquisition of knowledge; learning conditions (context), which is the circumstances in which learning takes place; learning content, which is what students learn; and learning outcomes, which is what learning is intended to measure. This study was limited to how principals connect their leadership to the learning conditions (context) for effective student learning. Although Day et al. (2011) referred to contexts as indispensable elements of the problems school leaders must solve to improve their schools, I view context as the platform or foundation on which all other components rest. This perspective explains that if the context is not supportive enough, the other three components of student learning will be negatively affected. Marishane (2020) pointed out that student learning can be significantly influenced by principals' ability to intelligently link and give equal attention to the four components of student learning, and this must include problem-identification and -solving ability, knowledge of the subject matter, exemplary behaviour, integrity, good interpersonal relationships, approachability, and flexibility. This confirms that high-quality leadership significantly contributes to learning outcomes in particular, and school improvement in general (Bush et al., 2011).

Hallinger and Heck (2011) opined that the quality of student learning can be positively impacted by principals' collaborative leadership role, which requires them to be open and ready to work with every school member, including the students. Such leadership depends not only on the leaders' values and qualities but also on the way they understand and respond to the root causes of internal and external environmental issues that may hamper student learning (Day et al., 2011). Goldring et al. (2008) concurred that principals must have a broad focus on student-related challenges to prove their trust in the school system. From my observation, the reviewed literature revealed that school principals are at the centre of all practices in schools, which reiterates that the success or failure of student learning are determined by the decisions and actions of principals. Therefore, they must be equipped with intelligent and robust leadership qualities to create a culture of collaboration with the students and staff, and this will allow them to interact in a healthy school climate for teaching and learning, and consequently, improve students' achievement. Although Leskiw and Singh (2007) stated that the changing needs of

education and the contemporary educational challenges of the 21st century have made school leadership a problematic venture, Adams and Muthia (2020) and Gurr and Drysdale (2020) disagreed and argued that principals must reconsider how they discharge their duties in schools to enable them to relate to these challenges by looking for alternative ways to create positive environments and performance for students. I agree with this argument because leaders are supposed to provide solutions and should therefore adjust their leadership to the needs of their schools.

Since this study strived to explicitly describe what principals must do to eradicate the distance between them and student learning, it was essential to explore and evaluate Robinson et al.'s (2009) and Day et al.'s (2011) findings in the following subsections. Robinson et al. (2009) proposed a five-fold classification for successful school leadership practices that are also worth examining. These practices were grouped by Day et al. (2011) under four main categories, namely setting directions, developing people, redefining and realigning the organisation, and improving the teaching and learning programme.

2.11.1 Setting directions

Setting directions is a leadership factor that influences successful student learning (Day et al., 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004). Successful student learning requires principals to build shared visions and communicate them effectively (Day et al., 2011; Leithwood et al., 2004). Ensuring effective communication enhances understanding of aspects such as school rules and regulations, and improve relationships and school discipline (Bear, 2020). However, Day et al. (2011) and Leithwood et al. (2004) did not give guidelines on what effective communication entails or examples of how it should be done; setting directions without descriptions may not be very helpful to the principals who are expected to apply the directions. This leadership factor also warrants principals to ensure teachers and students accept their visions (Day et al., 2011), and I feel that this may translate to leadership dictatorship. Imposing ideas on members may not work for a principal who intends to foster teaching and learning (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Although Bush and Glover (2014) also stated that successful principals have a vision they share with all members in the institution, I believe that how it is shared is important.

Additionally, setting directions requires principals to involve members in decision-making and evaluating the schools' development to determine areas that need further attention (Day et al., 2011). This suggests that students will have opportunities to table some of their concerns, which may better their learning conditions. Students' involvement also means that they are treated equal as humans (May & Delston, 2017). This leadership factor further expects principals to have high-performance expectations as well as monitor organisational performance in order to control successful learning outcomes (Leithwood et al., 2004). High-performance expectations, which refers to leaders' expectations of quality performance to achieve goals (Li et al., 2019), mean leaders must show members what is expected of them (Jacobsen & Anderson, 2019). This requires practical leadership expertise, which may be lacking in PCCSS leadership. In regard to monitoring, paying keen attention to what teachers and students do may help principals identify issues that hamper student learning.

2.11.2 Developing people

Practices associated with this leadership area include focusing on providing individualised support and intellectual activation (Leithwood et al., 2004). Providing individualised support warrants that school leaders help teachers improve curricula and instruction (Finnigan & Stewart, 2009). Offering intellectual motivation involves sharing resources among teachers (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 2017), respecting teachers' rights (May & Delston, 2017), and expecting principals to draw teachers together (Printy, 2010; Wagner, 2001) and lead by example by matching actions to words (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Day et al., 2011 and Leithwood et al., 2004) observed that this category of practice builds the staff's capacity for knowledge and skills and should receive much attention. Staff reinforcement is only a part of effective school leadership (McCormick, 2019; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Hence, the insistence that leaders must focus more on teachers may mean that students' interests are overlooked, which puts school contexts at risk and may cause a gap between principals and students.

2.11.3 Redefining and realigning the organisation

Redefining and realigning the organisation comprise building productive relationships within the school community and restructuring and redefining roles and responsibilities (Day et al., 2011). Building productive relationships within the school requires principals to create environments of awareness for students' and teachers' concerns (Day et al., 2011; Robinson et al., 2009), and be responsive to them (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Initiating good relationships between teachers and students where students feel free to talk to teachers about their worries promotes school environments that encourage student learning (Day et al., 2011; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Roberts (2017) and McCormick (2019) agreed that principals building productive relationships has positive effects on student learning and achievement. This has implications for the current study as it provides conducive environments that foster effective teaching and learning, thus closing the gap between leadership and student learning.

Restructuring and redefining roles and responsibilities require principals to create team structures for solving problems (Hadfield, 2003). In this regard, structures with educational psychologists as members are necessary (Day et al., 2011) because when principals work closely with these structures, student-related issues will be solved, rendering the school environment better for student learning. Knowing students' background (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) and respecting class size (Leithwood et al., 2004) are associated with effective leadership implementation because they can be helpful in handling individual learning challenges and ease classroom management for teachers, which enable students to learn in comfortable classroom conditions, and by implication, will foster effective teaching and learning. By so doing, leadership will be linked to student learning via suitable learning spaces for students.

2.11.4 Improving the teaching and learning programme

Principals' focus in this factor is staffing the teaching and learning programme by retaining interested teachers (Gray, 2000). Though West et al. (2005) indicated that school leaders must focus on teaching and learning in challenging contexts, my view is that attending to the issues that make the context challenging creates a conducive platform for even more

improved teaching and learning. Other applications under this category include monitoring student progress and classroom observations (Day et al., 2011; Hallinger, 2003). According to Hallinger (2003), monitoring student progress is essential for school leaders in challenging situations. In my opinion, monitoring students' progress without attending to the conditions in which the progress is made only widens the gap between principals and students, affecting students' progress. Day et al., (2011) stated that monitoring school activity through classroom observations can add value to organisational effectiveness. These researchers cautioned that classroom observation should be used developmentally to provide support, guidance, and advice about further improvements, rather than as surveillance. My worry is that PCC principals may not be aware of these pedagogic principles because of unprofessionalism. Therefore, principals learning how to connect their leadership role to student learning seems most urgent in the PCCSS context.

From the above observations it can be deduced that principals who are effective leaders use collaboration with all stakeholders, including students (Finnigan & Stewart, 2009). However, it is vital that the implementation be very context sensitive (Marishane, 2020). Nevertheless, in Cameroon many principals lack basic administrative competences, which increases their dependence on other approaches to create productive learning environments (Monjong & Fon, 2016). This is even worse in the private sector, such as PCCSS, where teachers are recruited with a bachelor's degree, as opposed to government teachers who must have a teaching qualification. It has been noted that bachelor's degree is not enough to ensure teacher quality without specialised training in classroom practice (Hightower et al., 2011). Oplatka (2004) proposed implementing education policies to change principals' perception of how to respond to students' needs. Therefore, schools that seem to neglect other aspects of teaching and learning and focus only on the cognitive outcomes of students need much attention, and PCCSS are not an exception (Witziers et al., 2003).

The reviewed literature showed that an essential ingredient for school leadership to directly connect to student learning is the ability of principals to create a positive school climate in which students' interests and opinions are valued. This observation helped me understand the roles played by school leaders when connecting their leadership to

student learning. The literature review also established that there is a gap between leadership and student learning globally because most studies did not describe what principals should do to create enabling contexts to directly link their roles to student learning. The literature further revealed some areas of policy and leadership lapses and neglect that require reinforcement and attention.

2.12 Chapter Summary

The reviewed literature in this chapter looked at the emergence and evolution of formal education in Cameroon and PCC schools. The mission, goals, and objectives of PCC in education were also examined, together with some educational decrees, policies, and laws binding private education in Cameroon. These laws, which have merits and shortcomings, have left the private education sector in Cameroon disadvantaged. For example, a vital recommendation of empirical research studies around the world is that principals and teachers need professional training, yet the meagre pay for teachers in the private sector does not attract trained personnel. Consequently, principals train on the job, which limits their leadership ability to effectively connect to student learning. This chapter further examined the functions of PEA principals. I provided details of the literature on essential concepts related to the study. Literature was also presented on what principals need to do to improve their connection to student learning; for instance, building healthy relationships with students by involving them in decision-making, and making students the top priority. It is hoped that this research provides the missing information to remove the existing gap between leadership and student learning. The following chapter explores the theoretical framework used for this investigation.

CHAPTER 3

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

3.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter gave a general picture of formal education in Cameroon, how PCC schools came into existence, and how PCCSS operate. The chapter further provided a detailed literature review of how school principals connect their leadership role to student learning and argued that creating a safe environment is indispensable for student learning. That literature provided a basis for this study. The present chapter focuses on the theory underpinning the study and begins with an analysis of the theory and then positions the study in the theory.

3.2 Relational Leadership Theory

A theoretical framework positions the investigation to give a clear view of the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006). This study was guided by the relational leadership theory based on leader-member exchange (LMX) and interpersonal trust reviewed by Brower et al. (2000), and the relational leadership theory from the perspective of Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011). LMX had its origin in the vertical dyad linkage theory that was developed by Graen and colleagues (Cashman et al., 1976; Dansereau et al., 1975; Graen, 1976; Graen & Cashman, 1975). Brower et al. (2000) defined LMX as a measure of the quality of the exchange between the leader and the people under their authority. The authors asserted that the quality of the relationship is improved over time as the parties interact and make exchanges. This theory is based on the belief that the leader builds a mutual relationship with some under their authority, which gives them more 'negotiating latitude' than others as a result of the different ways in which the leader manages them (Brower et al., 2000; Van Breukelen et al., 2006; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Zhou & Schriesheim, 2010). This model states that LMX relationships are created through relational exchanges in which members belonging to the relationship appraises each other's ability, benevolence, and integrity (Brower et al., 2000). Ability here refers to the characteristics, competences, and skills that enable a member to have influence in a specific area. Integrity is the level to which the leader's actions reflect values acceptable

to the members, and the leader's perception that the members agree with a set of principles acceptable to the leader. Benevolence is defined as the degree to which a member is believed to want to do good to the leader, and benevolence promotes trust over time because it is similar to liking (Brower et al., 2000).

The LMX theory of leadership suggests that the leader and members become connected and bring something of value to the exchange which in turn promotes trust (Hart et al., 1986) and increases members' ability to perform (Brower et al., 2000). Brower et al., (2000) indicated that the lower-ranking members' awareness of the level of trust their leaders have in them may negatively or positively affect their behaviour and attitude. Furthermore, when members under an authority feel valued and trusted, they will work diligently and be devoted to the organisation. In addition, a high LMX welcomes the contribution from members in areas different from their defined roles (Brower et al., 2000).

Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) viewed leadership theory based on the assumptions that humans live in interrelated relationships with one another in their surroundings and that their everyday experiences in conversations and interactions shape these relationships. In support, Sklaveniti (2016) indicated that relational leadership theory focuses on togetherness and draws attention to the differences between individual and collective efforts rather than focusing on individuals' impact. This suggests that leading and managing organisations require all members to be actively involved in the creation of their organisational context through their relationships with one another. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) indicated that relational leadership requires leaders to always engage in a relationship with the world, engage in relational dialogue, and be accountable to others. The scholars observed that relationships are about people, based on a foundation of trust, feeling that what they say is important and that their contributions are appreciated. Additionally, the researchers suggested four main notions that run through relational leadership in the following order: leadership as a way of being in the world; dialogically working out what is meaningful with others; recognising that working through differences is inherently a moral responsibility; and the involvement of practical wisdom. These notions are explained in the following subsections.

3.2.1 Relational leadership as a way of being in the world

Relational leadership requires leaders to use excellent communication to collaboratively work with others by talking with people and getting their opinions on what is to be done in particular circumstances. This notion also stresses the need for establishing trust to allow people to express themselves and respect one another (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Trust is defined as a process of social exchange (Brower et al., 2000).

3.2.2 Dialogically working out what is meaningful with others

Dialogically working out with others demands that their needs and interests be identified, which is best done through dialogue and not bullying. Leaders should not use meetings as spaces for imposing pre-conceived ideas but rather as arenas in which purposes and strategies are worked out between people in everyday interactions through dialogue because this makes people feel involved. Dialogue also strengthens relationships and organisational practices. Therefore, relational dialogue is necessary for relational leadership (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Hersted and Gergen (2013) pointed out that relational dialogue involves provoking, answering, objecting, and agreeing.

3.2.3 Relational integrity: Responsiveness and responsibility

According to Eriksen (2011), relational integrity is the assumption that it is the moral responsibility of relational leaders to acknowledge that working with and through people is intrinsic. Therefore, leaders must be sensitive to the differences in views and needs of others and take responsibility to work through the differences in a collaborative manner and in a way that makes people feel they are treated as human beings. Leaders should also react to differences with the right attitude because “ethical selfhood is about how we treat others”, (Ricoeur, 1992, cited in Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011), and without others there is no self. In addition, Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) indicated that responsibility goes beyond policy documents, directives, and job descriptions but rather occupies a more important space in everyday relationships. They explained that relational integrity requires leaders to be accountable to others and have others count on them. Furthermore, the authors asserted that relational leaders focus on ethical issues such as respect, justice,

care, honesty, and concern for the improvement of interpersonal relationships in establishments.

3.2.4 Relational leadership, knowing-from-within, and practical wisdom

According to Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011), this conceptual thread of relational leadership involves the application of practical wisdom by leaders. Leaders must develop relational wisdom from within to help them arrive at shared meanings, especially in situations where there are no clear-cut rules. This can be done through listening, questioning, and dialogue in order to get various voices pertaining to specific circumstances, which can help handle future hitches. These scholars further indicated that relational leaders acknowledge the need for prompt collaborative responses to problem solving of organisational situations surrounding the members. However, they argued that although practical wisdom does not solely depend on technical knowledge, it entails some degree of technical knowledge. Cunliffe and Eriksen pointed out that the difference between technical knowledge and practical wisdom is that technical knowledge believes in the right answer, but practical wisdom goes beyond believing in the right answer and applies strategies for better outcomes. They further stated that the usefulness of this relational viewpoint is that it provides a way of reforming relationships between organisational leaders, members, and other stakeholders as a continuous process of shaping social surroundings and circumstances and also gives empirical principles through which collaborative relationships can be created. Moreover, the researchers asserted that failure to see the need to create collaborative relationships leads to the ineffectiveness of many organisational leaders.

Generally, leadership theorists who view organisational relationships through a positive lens believe that although leaders and members have different roles in the organisational context, both have equal rights and should be treated with dignity (Uhl-Bien, 1995, cited in Brower et al., 2000). Hence, LMX focusses on the quality of the dyadic relationship between the leader and individual members, which is shown in Figure 3.1.

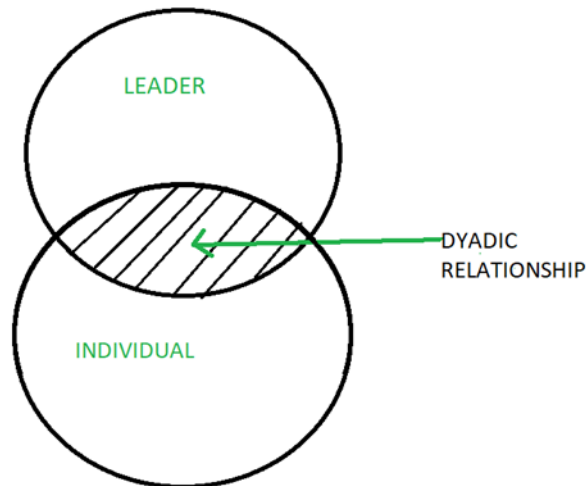


Figure 3.1 The vertical dyad (Source: Bratton, 2020, p. 171)

3.3 Positioning the Study in Relational Leadership Theory

The relational leadership theory is related to this study in many ways. To begin with, the LMX relationship in an organisation can be likened to the relationship between principals, staff, and students in the school system. Therefore, the theory is a useful and practical model to explain why principals, as leaders of educational organisations, must create healthy relationships, particularly with the teachers and students. This explains that when students in an educational organisation feel valued and trusted by the principal, they will be committed to learn and like their school. Also, when principals interact with the students, it enables students to contribute, and feel free and safe. In addition, principals should be able to identify students' needs and interests through dialogue and not by bullying. This creates healthy relationships, particularly with students. Healthy relationships in schools eventually promote trust, commitment, loyalty, benevolence, liking, and devotion in the students and staff, which are vital aspects for the promotion of student learning. High quality dyadic relationship between school leadership and members will create a positive context for students and teachers, and this will greatly impact student learning. Therefore, it is evident that in order to connect school leadership to student learning, principals need to establish high-quality relational exchanges with students and staff members. The teachers and students, who are the members involved in this relationship, should have a sense of belonging through their involvement in decision-making and be given room to evaluate the circumstances surrounding their

learning. Furthermore, as relational leaders, principals should acknowledge the need for quick collective responses to problems that students and staff face in the school. Healthy learning environments are free from discrimination, disrespect for human rights, and all forms of violence, and such conducive environments can be considered the bedrock of successful student learning. Thus, the need for school heads to create and maintain healthy relationships with students cannot be over emphasised. Therefore, the earlier principals start paying attention to the student learning contexts, the better it is for student learning and outcomes in their establishments, which will eventually culminate in an ensemble impact on leadership for student learning. More explicitly, every student requires safe, supportive, and respectful spaces in order to be more devoted to studies. Therefore, fostering positive relationships with and among students will go a long way to create effective learning environments. The crux of this discussion on the relationship between the theory and the study is “leadership is all about relationships” (Eacott & Eacott, 2018).

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter gave an explicit analysis of the theory supporting the study, as well as the position of the study in the theory. The next chapter looks at the philosophical assumptions, research paradigm, research approach, research design, research methodology, data analysis, trustworthiness, and ethical considerations of the study.

CHAPTER 4

RESEARCH APPROACH, DESIGN, AND METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter discussed the theoretical framework used as this study's foundation. This chapter describes the research paradigm, approach and design employed to conduct this research. The chapter begins by shedding light on the philosophical assumptions in research, and then it addresses the research approach, design, methodology, data analysis, the study's trustworthiness, and the ethical considerations.

The study investigated how school principals connect leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools. The relational leadership theory guided the study based on LMX and interpersonal trust reviewed by Brower et al. (2000), and the relational leadership theory from the perspective of Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011). These theories promote establishing healthy relationships between principals and students through student engagement, participation in decision-making, dialogue, and respecting rights. These principles result in safe and secure school environments for effective student learning. The primary research question for this study asked how principals connect their leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian school context, and the following secondary questions guided the primary question:

- How do principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools understand the connection between context and student learning?
- How do school principals create viable conditions for effective student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?
- What challenges do school principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools experience when creating an environment that enables them to connect directly with the students?
- What alternative strategies can be implemented to ensure a safe and secure learning environment in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?

The research questions directed the research paradigm, methodology, and data collection and analysis procedures. I used a qualitative case study research design since this study concentrated on understanding how school leaders connect their leadership to student learning in secondary schools. Through this design, I was able to analyse and interpret how secondary school principals relate their leadership role to student learning from the perspectives of the principals, teachers, and students.

4.2 Philosophical Assumptions of the Study

Philosophical assumptions are the foundation of a study (Khatri, 2020) and are philosophical ways of thinking (Thanh & Thanh, 2015). In research, these philosophical ways of thinking, which result from various ideologies of ontology, epistemology, and axiology, concern the ideas and beliefs underpinning the research. Understanding these ideas and beliefs is vital to researchers before commencing a study because these various ideas and beliefs give researchers direction on what research approach is appropriate for the study from start to finish.

Guided by the philosophical beliefs, the qualitative approach, which considers data from a single phenomenon (Bailey, 2014; Lincoln et al., 2011), was adopted for this investigation. According to Lincoln et al., (2011), formulating research questions and selecting data collection techniques that will provide answers to the questions raised in the investigation are shaped by philosophical assumptions. Therefore, research is founded on philosophical assumptions connected to researchers' view of reality. In this study, I assumed that the research questions and data collection techniques would allow participants to share their views, perspectives, and experiences through close interaction with me in a natural setting (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Thus, my understanding of the phenomenon helped facilitate data analysis. In addition, I assumed that this study could shed light on how school principals create conducive learning environments for effective student learning. In this way, the study may bridge the existing gap in the literature relating to the link between leadership and student learning context by collecting rich descriptive data from a particular situation (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Therefore, it is important for researchers to have a deep knowledge of various ideologies to better understand the norms, values, assumptions, and beliefs upheld by each philosophy. The following

subsections discuss the ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions underlying the research.

4.2.1 Ontological assumptions

Ontology deals with the nature of existence or reality based on philosophical assumptions (Khatri, 2020). Scotland (2012) posited that ontology is preoccupied with the assumptions researchers make to ensure the topic under investigation seems sensible and real. This reality can only be constructed using participants' perspectives, and this will result in multiple realities since it is likely that one participant's knowledge differs from another's (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). Hence, to understand how school leadership connects to student learning in PCCSS, I depended on the multiple realities provided by individual participants. Scott and Usher (2010) concurred that ontology is vital in the research process as it helps researchers understand the things that make up the world as it is known. Multiple realities helped me familiarise myself with the reasoning for the epistemological and methodological beliefs in connection with the research problem (Khatri, 2020). Thus, using ontological assumptions in this study enabled me to understand the phenomenon in social reality.

4.2.2 Epistemological assumptions

Epistemology concerns the methods used to obtain knowledge from different sources during the research (Khatri, 2020). It is how researchers acquire knowledge from the setting in which the investigation is conducted (Khatri, 2020). Epistemology is the roadmap used to delineate the scope of the whole study (Khatri, 2020). In this study, I used the interpretive paradigm, based on the belief that knowledge relies on the interpretations of the group of persons or individuals involved in the investigation. Therefore, I learned how school leadership connects to student learning context from principals, teachers, and students. Since epistemology focuses on understanding how people come to know what they know, the acquired knowledge from the participants' viewpoint helped me understand what principals do to connect their leadership to the context in which students learn. Indeed, the application of the epistemological component

in this research revealed fascinating information about principals' role in connecting leadership to the student learning via the context.

4.2.3 Axiological assumptions

Axiology is concerned with the expected behaviour that both researchers and participants need to adhere to for the protection and respect of the rights of both parties (Khatri, 2020). Creswell and Plano Clark (2007) submitted that axiology has to do with the function of ethics involved in carrying out scientific research. Axiology is vital when conducting educational research because complying with the ethical values of research results in an unbiased investigation that adds to the credibility of a study. Furthermore, adhering to ethical principles in research allows researchers to draw well-grounded conclusions. In this study, I ensured that ethical principles were respected during data collection, analysis, and interpretation and when drawing conclusions. Generally, philosophical assumptions are useful in educational research because they help portray researchers' position (Thanh & Thanh, 2015) and guide them to ensure ethical norms are observed. In summary, philosophical assumptions clearly express the ontological, epistemological, and axiological standpoint of the researcher while conducting the research.

4.3 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a framework used when doing research that guides actions and decisions of researchers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Therefore, this section looks at the theoretical paradigm used in this study. This study was located within the interpretivist paradigm because the special characteristics and advantages of said paradigm were most suitable for the study. These characteristics and advantages are examined below.

The interpretivist paradigm permits researchers to see the world through the ideas and experiences of the participants because interpretivism assumes that people have different perceptions of the world (Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Willis et al., 2007). Therefore, in this study, the principals, teachers, and students who had different experiences of the nature of leadership connection with student learning offered information. The information helped me render an explicit account of how leadership connects to student learning in PCCSS. The relational leadership theory based on LMX and interpersonal trust (Browe et al. 2000;

Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Sklaveniti, 2016) directed the interview process on how leadership related with teaching and learning via the context. The interpretive paradigm was selected to examine how principals connect to student learning because it allowed me to study the participants' knowledge of the topic in their natural settings. This selection aligns with Cohen et al.'s (2007) opinion which states that interpretive researchers' focus should be directed towards actions that are meaningful for the given operation. These researchers add that to uphold the genuineness of the situation under study, the collection of in-depth interpretations from participants' perspectives about the phenomenon being investigated is important. Collecting in-depth information from the research participants is a characteristic of the interpretive paradigm, and it allowed me to get insights into the participants' understanding of the link between leadership and student learning, principals' efforts to create positive learning climates, the challenges faced by principals, teachers, and students, and alternative ways of addressing these challenges.

Grbich (2007) and Schwartz-Shea and Yanow (2013) indicated that the focus of interpretivists is to understand how human beings view their circumstances in a specific setting. This study discovered how the participants view connecting the leadership role of principals to student learning in the specific setting of PCCSS. Additionally, interpretive studies permit researchers to obtain insights into the situation under study by using probing (Wellington, 2015). For example, in this study, a few principals were not very explicit about their impressions of their role in connecting to student learning and how they address challenges related to this. Therefore, I had to ask more questions to obtain details and clarification from the participants. Probing was done in the form of short follow-up questions such as 'what do you mean by that', 'how do you do that' and 'why do you feel so'.

The interpretive paradigm also has drawbacks. Firstly, it is more subjective than objective (Mack, 2010; Thanh & Thanh, 2015), which means that in order to understand and interpret how school principals connect their leadership to student learning, I could not use scientific methods but had to understand and interpret the viewpoints of the participants. Furthermore, interpretive research uses small sample sizes, which limits the study as it makes the results ungeneralisable (Cohen et al., 2011). For example, this study was conducted only in PCCSS, and only six out of 23 schools were involved in the

research with a total of 54 participants. Lastly, the fact that reality (knowledge) differs from person to person (Scotland, 2012) means that it is possible for reality to be interpreted in many ways through the perspectives of several participants. Irrespective of these drawbacks, the interpretivist paradigm was the most useful for this research. Interpretivists mostly use qualitative methods to collect data (Nind & Todd, 2011; Rahi, 2017; Willis, 2007).

4.4 Research Approach: Qualitative Research Approach

A qualitative research approach was the most suitable for this study and was used to investigate, interpret, and describe the data collected from individual participants on how school principals connect their leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools (Creswell, 2014). The qualitative research approach attempts to collect rich descriptive data from a particular situation in order to develop an understanding of what is being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010; Rahi, 2017). The rich descriptive data obtained using this approach gave a clear picture of the participants' perspectives pertaining to the study, which in turn guided data analysis and interpretation. An outstanding aspect of qualitative approach is that it stresses acquiring the lived experiences of the participants (Cohen et al., 2011). I relied on the interpretations of the lived experiences of the participants with respect to the phenomenon to be studied. Thus, using qualitative research in this study permitted the opinions of the participants to be heard, which contributed to the authenticity of the study (Yin, 2011).

Obtaining information from the participants in their natural setting allowed me to have close interactions with the participants, which enabled me to have a broader understanding of their views of the situation under study (Creswell, 2012; Yanow & Schwartz-Shea, 2011). Qualitative research can only be used to study a single phenomenon at a time (Bailey, 2014; Lincoln et al., 2011).

Using the qualitative approach allows researchers to explain human behaviour in relation to a human or social problem (Thanh & Thanh, 2015; Yin, 2012). Thus, I collected impressions from a small sample of participants to obtain rich, extensive data about the research problem.

Qualitative researchers use methods that will help them get an in-depth understanding of the relationship between persons and their environment (McQueen, 2002). I understood how participants interacted in their school environments through qualitative research approach.

Qualitative research data collection instruments permit researchers to be flexible in terms of the research participants and the type of data generated. In this study, the data collection instruments used were interviews and document analysis. Qualitative research was used in this study because of three of its advantages. Firstly, semi-structured in-depth interviews and document analysis are often used in qualitative research. These interviews helped me collect data on the opinions of the participants, how they expressed their impressions, and the rationale for these expressions from their lived experiences. Document analysis helped me explore additional information to better understand the data collected during the interviews. Secondly, the qualitative approach is best used when not much research has been done on the topic under study (Creswell, 2014; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). The literature review showed that much research still needs to be done on school leadership connectivity to student learning via the context (Hallinger, 2011; Marishane, 2020), and thus, this approach was helpful to collect rich data that increased understanding. Thirdly, the fact that the significance of qualitative approach depends on how meaning is created and shaped (Terr Blanche et al., 2006), gave room for the participants to interpret how they understood the study. I was able to extract in-depth meaning from the study's findings and conclusions by using qualitative data, and this gave me a detailed understanding of the study.

The qualitative approach does have some pitfalls. The first restriction is that the approach is costly. In the current study, I had to travel to Cameroon to conduct the research, which was quite expensive. The second deficiency of qualitative research is that it is quite demanding. I spent many hours per day at the research setting during the interview sessions. The third impediment is that it is liable to personal bias and discernment. This requires the researcher to be cautious not to present valid findings as proof but rather as observations (Shuttleworth & Wilson, 2008). Therefore, I ensured that the collected data was credible using the guidelines for trustworthiness (section 4.8).

Despite these weaknesses, I chose a qualitative approach because it was suitable for this study and facilitated the collection of the necessary data to understand the phenomenon.

4.5 Research Design

A case study design was adopted for this study, and by using this design, I gathered detailed contextualised data from the lived experiences of three groups of participants, namely principals, teachers, and students. A case study is an inquiry into real-life situations using different data collection techniques from multiple source that provide detailed in-depth information (Creswell, 2013; Hamilton & Corbett-Whittier, 2013). Case studies are used to obtain an in-depth perception and understanding of a particular situation (Maree, 2020). I chose a case study because I wanted to collect rich data on school leadership connection to student learning, leadership challenges, and alternative strategies for improvement from school members involved in the situation in PCCSS. Stake (2000) agreed that case studies are inquiries that deal with a situation and product of the inquiry.

I used the perceptions of participants to interpret the problem under study, and to enhance readers' understanding of the study (Creswell, 2007). With this in mind, my focus during this research was to apply organised procedures to collect sufficient data from the participants, and I was able to achieve this by using a case study design (Berg, 2001). The case study design allowed me greater insight into the phenomenon under study. During the research process, I concentrated on obtaining fresh ideas to augment the description of the collected data by consciously putting aside my individual perceptions, feelings, and beliefs, which could have led to biased findings. In summary, using this study design helped me have a complete understanding of the way principals interact with teachers and students in PCCSS while trying to create healthy learning contexts for students. Seeking to have a complete understanding of the way people connect with one another in a particular environment is a major attribute of a case study design (Maree, 2020).

Some of the benefits of this research inquiry were, firstly, that case studies are conducted in an existing structure which facilitates the research process (Yin, 2009); PCCSS in

Cameroon was the structure for this case study. Secondly, the intensive nature of the case study helped me gather rich data for the research (Creswell, 2005) because even though it was costly and took a lot of time (Baxter & Jack, 2008), the extensive nature of this research design led to quality interactions between me and the participants.

4.6 Research Methodology

I used qualitative research methods for this study as my aim was to gather rich, descriptive data on leadership connection to student learning from many participants by using various data sources. The data was collected from principals, who lead the schools; teachers, who teach the students; and students, who learn. These participants helped me interpret opinions on how principals connect their leadership to student learning in PCCSS.

4.6.1 Research population

The research population is all the individuals of interest to the researcher (Marczyk et al., 2005; Rahi, 2017). The population of interest for this research comprised six principals, 12 teachers, and 36 students who work and learn in PCCSS. I considered these three groups of participants crucial to this investigation as they represented the key sources who could provide rich data about the problem under study. My assumption was that principals, teachers, and students are interconnected with student learning since they interact in the same learning environment, and they have their own unique experiences and views concerning leadership connectivity to student learning. The following rationale was used for selecting each group of participants that made up the research population:

- Principals: In Cameroon, principals are the heads of secondary school. They were included in the study because they have more insight into issues regarding student learning through the control of school programmes and implementation of educational policies from the PEA and the Ministry of Education.
- Teachers: They are the guarantors of quality education (Law No. 98/004 of 14 April 1998). They receive instructions from the principal regarding teaching and learning, and therefore, have insight into issues regarding student learning. They

spend more time with students in both curricular and co-curricular activities than the principals, and therefore, their perceptions of the school environment in which they teach were necessary as it helped shed more light on the prevalent atmosphere that surrounds student learning.

- Students: Students are important actors in the education sphere. They were an essential part of this study as investigation focused on the conditions surrounding their learning, and therefore, their voices had to be heard.

Thus, these groups of participants shared their understanding of what was being done by principals to create favourable environments that promote effective student learning. Table 4.1 is a summary of the study population.

Table 4.1 Summary of study population

No.	Group	Quantity
1.	Principals	6
2.	Teachers	12
3.	Students	36
Total		54

4.6.2 Sampling techniques

Sampling techniques are used by researchers to select the location, quantity, and quality of participants to ensure they are a good representation of the study population. Moser and Korstjens (2018 p.10) confirmed that decisions related to sampling are made to obtain sufficient information “for a full understanding of the phenomenon under study” to answer the research questions. My choice of participants from PCCSS was based on location and type. In Cameroon, PCC schools are mission schools supervised by church leaders. However, mission schools receive school calendars, policies, and a government grant for school management purposes from the Ministry of Education. This means that PCC schools make a remarkable contribution to the education of Cameroonians. Consequently, choosing PCC schools for this study was necessary. I used convenience and criterion sampling to select the schools and type of persons to be involved in the research. The selection of schools in rural and urban areas coupled with participants with specific qualities were relevant to collect data on diverse experiences for the study.

In convenience sampling, the researcher chooses participants or individuals based on the fact that they are easily available (Acharya et al., 2013; Rahi, 2017). I conveniently chose participants from six schools that were easily accessible in terms of security due to the prevailing political crisis (the Anglophone Crisis) that affect some areas where there are PCC schools. Accessibility to schools in the Anglophone regions was often uncertain because of frequent ghost towns, robberies, shootings, bombings, and killings that characterise some roads and places. For instance, I had to turn around halfway on my way to visit a school in Kumba because allegedly there were gunshots ahead. This was disappointing to the principal who had agreed to participate and challenging to me who had to change direction. However, I was able to meet my target of six schools and fifty-four participants.

Criterion sampling was used to determine the particulars of the participants within the reachable schools. Criterion sampling is used by researchers to decide on the typical characteristics and the number of participants in an investigation (Mugo, 2002; Patton, 2002). The selection of the participants was based on specific criteria: The participants had to be working (principals and teachers) or studying (students) at PCCSS for more than a year, irrespective of gender. I was able to get information about principals who met the criterion, from the proprietor of PCC schools who appoints and transfers them. The selection of teachers and students was done with the help of the principals. In each school, the principal, two teachers, and six students participated which gave a total of fifty-four participants from six schools. The students who participated were in Forms 4, 5, and 6, and I selected two from each class. I assumed that the selected participants had in-depth knowledge concerning the situation under study because they had worked or studied in their schools for more than an academic year. I selected students from Forms 4, 5, and 6 because they would be better able to understand the interview questions and respond more eloquently than students in lower forms. The age range of students was between 16 to 19 years. The final sample of 54 participants represented the three types of participants in the PCCSS as indicated under “research population” above. A research sample is described as a subset of the research population that is representative of the population (Guest, 2014; Creswell 2009; Marczyk et al., 2005; Rahi, 2017), and the selected sample was useful for obtaining a quick approximation of reality.

4.6.3 Research sites

A research site refers to where the researcher intends to conduct the investigation (Maree, 2020). The current research was conducted at Presbyterian secondary schools in the Republic of Cameroon. Researchers' choice of research site is critical as it determines the aptness of the data collected (Kombo & Tromp, 2009). Therefore, the geographical area where the data for a study is collected plays a significant role in the researchers being able to collect adequate data for a study because every research problem is tied to a location and people, and it is only through their interpretations of the situation that rich data can be collected. Cameroon is a Central African Country located along the Atlantic coast between the Sahara Desert and the Congo Basin. In Cameroon, there are 23 PCC schools located in five regions. For the purpose of this study, six conveniently selected secondary schools in three regions (Southwest, Littoral, and Centre) were used as research sites. In the Southwest Region, three schools of the Fako Division participated in this study. One is situated in Buea, the capital city of the Southwest Region, and the other two are in Limbe, a beach town in southwestern Cameroon. Two schools also participated in the Littoral Region, and both schools are located in the city of Douala, the capital of the Littoral Region and the economic capital of Cameroon. In the Centre Region, I had access to one school in a village on the outskirts of Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon. The choice of research sites was key to obtain rich data for the study (Kombo & Tromp, 2009) since the research problem revolved around leadership for student learning in PCCSS in Cameroon, and the selected research sites were suitable and feasible (McMillan & Schumacher, 2001). Finally, there was no language barrier, which eased the data collection process, because the language of communication in the schools is English. Figure 4.1 is a map of Cameroon that shows the research sites.

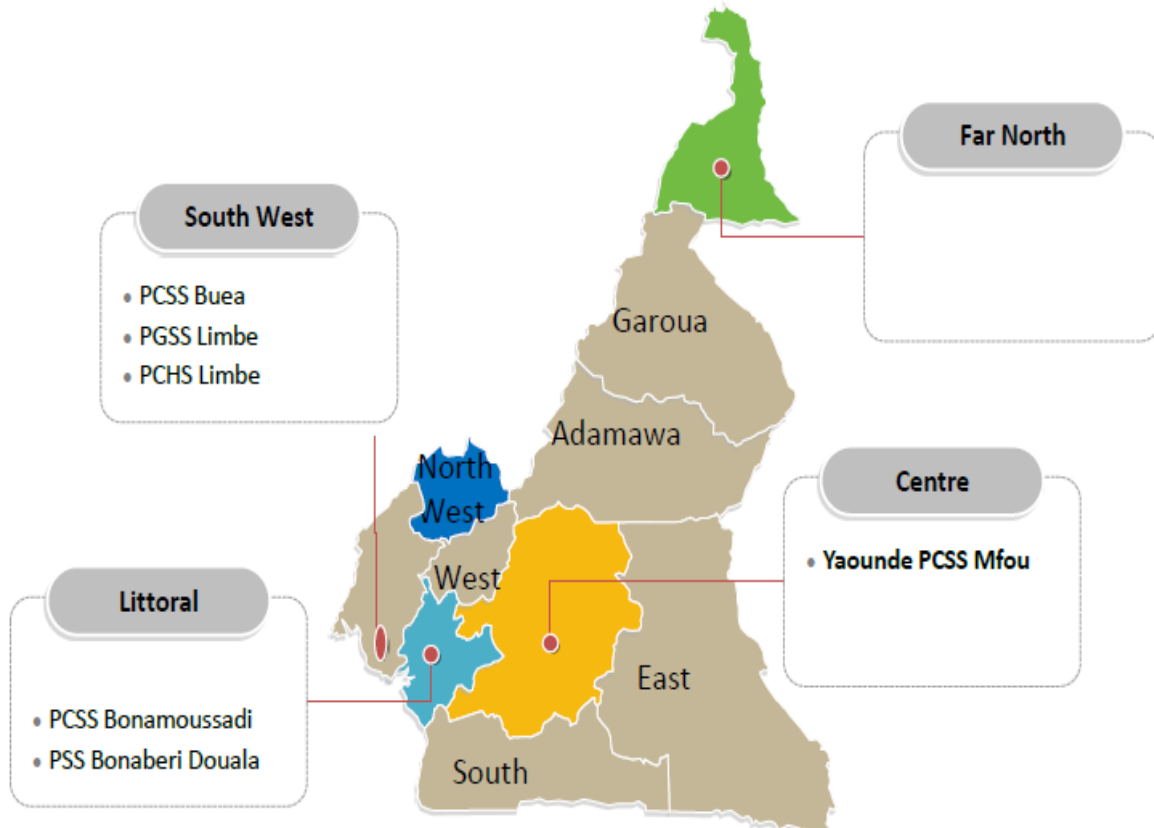


Figure 4.1 Map of Cameroon show the research sites (Source: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, 2021; Indications: Author)

4.6.4 Data collection instruments

Data collection instruments are the tools researchers use to collect the required data (Munir et al., 2017). Interviews and document analysis commonly used in qualitative research were used to gather data for this research (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2013). These two data collection tools coupled with the multiple participants enabled me to triangulate the data and increase the study’s credibility as well as to perceive issues from the perspectives of the various participants. Natow (2020) claimed that using more than one data collection tool for the purpose of triangulation is the power of qualitative studies. I collected rich data for this study using the in-depth individual interviews and document analysis that are discussed in the following subsections.

4.6.4.1 Interviews

A main research tool for this study was semi-structured in-depth individual interviews. Semi-structured interviews are mostly used by qualitative researchers (Kallio et al., 2016). During semi-structured interviews the interviewer has a pre-planned set of questions to ask the interviewees. Therefore, I prepared three interview guides for the three groups of participants, which enabled me ask questions aimed at answering each of the research questions (Appendices 6–8). These pre-planned questions acted as a guide for both me and the participants and reduced deviation from the research focus (Briggs et al., 2012). The semi-structured interviews also allowed me to have a face-to-face contact with the participants (Briggs et al., 2012), which added to the credibility of the study as I ensured the participants were interviewed separately to avoid any influence or duplication of responses. As such, principals were interviewed in the comfort of their offices during their leisure time, and teachers and students were interviewed in various locations such as the library, under a tree, a classroom, and the office of the chaplain, depending on the provisions of the principals. These venues provided privacy and confidentiality.

Semi-structured individual interviews have some advantages. Firstly, they are flexible and permit the interviewer to ask follow-up questions to probe for more information (Grix, 2010; Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). This was beneficial during the data collection because it enabled me to keenly listen to the interpretations of the participants of the leadership role of the principal in connection with student learning. I probed the participants as they expressed their different views in order to obtain detailed explanations of the situation being discussed and to identify possible themes emanating from the discussions related to the study. Probing not only provided rich data but also increased the credibility of the study. I used probes when the participants' answers were not very clear; for example, when explaining the responsibilities of the principal in connection with student learning, a few principals focused on how they managed material and financial resources, and this warranted me to probe in order to lead them to other functions, such as the management of human resources. Secondly, semi-structured interview questions are open-ended and take the form of a conversation (Nieuwenhuis, 2013). This allowed participants to freely express themselves, which gave me a broader understanding of their ideas, views,

attitudes, and beliefs. It also created a relaxed atmosphere that motivated the interviewees to provide ideas on the study with open minds. Furthermore, since semi-structured interviews are conversational, they helped create a close and harmonious relationship between me and the participants, which resulted in cooperation (Maree, 2012).

According to Bray (2008), the knowledge of the population under study is deepened by the use of interviews. To obtain the views of the principals, teachers, and students, the participants were required to respond to the following aspects of the phenomenon:

- Measures used to connect leadership to student learning;
- Support facilities and systems to enrich student learning;
- Challenges faced by principals, teachers, and students; and
- Alternative strategies to improve student learning.

The interview questions helped me keep track of the issue under discussion. In summary, the semi-structured interviews guaranteed the collection of diverse data from the interview discussions (Willig, 2001). To ensure no information was missed, a digital voice recorder was used to record the discussions with the permission of the participants. The voice recording helped improve the written transcripts (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). The interviews with principals lasted 60–90 minutes, and those with the teachers and students lasted 45–60 minutes. Generally, most participants, particularly the students, were interested in sharing their experiences regarding the study. I respected the participants when they did not want to answer a specific question.

4.6.4.2 Document analysis

Document analysis is the other data collection tool used in this study. Documents are various types of written communication that can shed light on the situation under study (Bowen, 2009). The documents reviewed included minutes of staff and administrative meetings, principals' annual reports, minutes of board meetings, disciplinary council minutes, and school rules and regulations. These documents provided more information that supported and authenticated the data collected during the interviews (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). For example, the minutes of staff and administrative meetings gave

more information about what the principals did to connect their leadership to student learning. In addition, reports of board meetings shed light on the degree to which students are engaged in school development. Furthermore, the school rules and regulations gave me an idea of the type of deviant behaviour by students and the sanctions meted out, which revealed the various learning environments. This added information helped me triangulate data from interviews with that from the document review. Although the documents can be inaccurate because they represent data created or seen by the participants (Creswell, 2014), I agreed with Wells et al., (2012) that institutions of learning depend on several documents to keep up to date with their activities and achievements. Yin (2009) concurred that documents are crucial in case study research because they can provide interpretations (Briggs et al., 2012; Maree, 2012; Maree, 2020). However, I ensured that all the required documents were collected from the principals and that all documents had official stamps to authenticate the source.

4.7 Data Analysis

In qualitative research, data analysis requires the researcher to classify the views of the participants on the subject under investigation in a manner that the readers can understand. Data analysis is putting the collected data into themes and groups to make meaning from it (Cohen et al., 2011). Thematic analysis, which is often used for qualitative data analysis (Terry et al., 2017), was found suitable to analyse both the transcribed data from the interviews and the information from the documents for this study. Thematic analysis is used to analyse qualitative data by classifying, organising, and presenting the participants' perceptions into themes (Clarke & Braun, 2013). Data obtained through the data collection instruments were classified by assigning codes or sub-themes to participants' perceptions, which were later organised into categories in order to come up with themes (Saldana, 2021). A code is a word or phrase used by researchers to identify, name, or describe an idea related to the data. This process was important as it made it possible for every detail to be considered and for elaborate information to be explored under the various categories.

Thematic analysis in qualitative research permits researchers to use effective data collection tools. For example, researchers can obtain salient information through thorough

probing during interviews (Weller et al., 2018). In addition, thematic analysis helps researchers interpret extensive data set and find the vital information (Kiger & Varpio, 2020). This method of analysis enabled me to communicate the findings and interpretation of meaning more easily. Another advantage is that thematic analysis provides an avenue through which researchers can explore a diverse detailed information (Clarke & Braun, 2013), which benefitted this study.

In thematic analysis, themes are groups of ideas that the researcher noticed prior, during, and after the data collection process (Yin, 2003; Vaismoradi & Snelgrove, 2019). To come up with suitable themes, I carefully examined the data as it related to inductive evidence from the literature on the research title. I also used themes that were not grounded in the literature but emerged from the interview data (Saldana, 2011). Maree (2012) stated that thematic analysis does not require the use of pre-existing themes. The themes used in this research were new as no other research of this nature has been conducted in the study area, as established in the literature review.

Classifying data into themes helped create a picture of the participants' lived experiences and their opinions of the situation under investigation, which enhanced the reporting of findings. Information from recordings and documents were reduced and merged into relevant segments to ensure meaningful reporting (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). In order to have an initial survey of the findings, initial coding and clarification were done alongside data collection. This was helpful because I was able to check the appropriateness of the information collected before the final analysis (Silverman, 2005). Thereafter, an in-depth analysis was done upon completion of the data gathering phase using the steps recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006, cited in Kiger & Varpio, 2020), namely data familiarisation; generating codes; viewing themes emanating from the codes; categorising codes into sub-themes; revising, describing, and identifying themes; and writing down the findings in a way that is understandable to the reader.

Following these steps, I ensured that the data from interviews and the collected documents were protected to avoid losing any data, especially while travelling. To get familiar with the data, I listened to the audio data several times. As I listened to each interview, I took note of the issues raised with regards to the interview questions. The

data were later transcribed into plain text. Though expensive, the transcriptions were printed and grouped into the three participant categories to facilitate creating the themes. As I read and re-read the text and the documents, I noted salient information and highlighted the segments of interest to the study. I later examined all the interview features to create codes or sub-themes. Data from the interviews and documents were coded in order to differentiate the data (Gibbs, 2007). The coding process required the organisation of data into portions of text and assigning a phrase or word to the portion in order to come up with a general sense of participants' views (Creswell, 2014). Coding facilitated the interpretation, organisation, and analysis of the qualitative data (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). These codes were descriptive to bring out their meaning (Saldana, 2011). Thereafter, the codes were categorised into themes and sub-themes (Cohen et al., 2011). After the transcription and coding were done, I thoroughly checked the data to ensure its correctness.

The next step involved coding the data according to the research questions. After this stage, the information was prepared in accordance with the objectives of the study and the analysed responses to make sure they align. Thematic analysis involves two main steps: Examining the transcribed data to get an understanding of the meanings, and taking a closer look at the data transcriptions to evaluate the opinions of the participants (Liamputtong, 2009). By implication, the application of thematic analysis requires the investigator to constantly scrutinise the data to bring codes together to form sub-themes and themes, and then delineating the relationship of the ideas under the themes within the study.

The presentation of the themes was the final phase of the analysis procedure. All quotations used were presented verbatim. The presentation of themes was followed by a discussion of the findings. Thereafter, the findings were summarised and conclusions drawn, which led to the recommendations for this research. On the whole, the themes, and discussion of findings and conclusions were guided by the objectives, literature review, research questions, and theoretical framework of the study. I avoided academic dishonesty by disclosing all findings (Creswell, 2014). The data was analysed manually with the help of the supervisor.

4.8 Trustworthiness of the Study

Trustworthiness has an important place in qualitative research (Lincoln & Guba, 2013). An important task of every researcher is to ensure that the gathered information is representative of participants perspectives (Hittleman & Simon, 2006). Trustworthiness in this study was ensured through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. These elements were used as parameters to enhance the authenticity and trustworthiness of the research findings. To ensure the trustworthiness of the results of this study, data were gathered using two tools, namely semi-structured interviews and document analysis, and multiple sources were used (Natow, 2020; Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). It was necessary for principals, teachers, and students to give their understanding of what is being done to create healthy school environments to enhance student learning, and on alternative measures that can improve the learning environment for effective student learning. The relational leadership theory based on LMX and interpersonal trust used for this study advocates building healthy relationships, encouraging student engagement, practising collective participation in decision-making, and having mutual respect for one another, among others. These features indicate that school principals must create healthy relationships among the teachers and students, which serve as a platform for successful student learning. In addition, the data analysis combined the interpretations of the interviews and document analysis. Furthermore, a voice recorder was used to record the interviews, which were later transcribed. The opinions of the participants can be heard in their own words in Chapter 5. All this was done to guarantee the trustworthiness of this investigation, and the elements that guided the trustworthiness of this study are discussed in the following subsections.

4.8.1 Credibility

Credibility checks whether participants' responses are adequately represented through the researcher's construction of reality (Rule & John, 2011). To guarantee credibility, I used triangulation in the course of data collection by using both interviews and document analysis as data collection tools (Morgan, 2022). Triangulation is the process of using data from different sources to clarify meaning and interpretation (Hamilton & Corbett-

Whittier, 2013; Maree, 2020). This study used data gathered from principals, teachers, and students. Thus, the use of these sources helped increase my understanding of participants' perception of the study topic. I transcribed the interviews while they were still fresh in my mind (Creswell, 2005). I acknowledge that having worked as a teacher and administrator of PCC schools may have given me a soft spot for the topic under study. In order to overcome this weakness and ensure credibility, I used bracketing, which is a method applied in qualitative research that requires researchers to set their own beliefs about the topic under investigation aside (Layder, 2013). Therefore, I made sure the data analysis depended solely on the opinions of the participants, backed by information from school documents related to this study. To an extent, the face-to-face interactions between me and the participants during the interviews added credibility to the study as the interviews took a conversational form, thereby building rapport with the participants (Brinkmann, 2022), which enabled the participants to feel free to share their views. During the data collection process, I agreed with the participants through the consent letters that the final dissertation would be sent to their schools in order for them to have access to the final information. This agreement therefore held me accountable to report only what was provided in the field. I also used member checking, which allowed participants to check whether the findings are accurate (Maree, 2020). Lastly, probing helped provide rich data for the study, thereby also increasing the credibility of the study.

4.8.2 Transferability

Transferability refers to the researcher allowing the findings and conclusions to be determined by the reader by providing thick descriptions (Rule & John, 2011). To guarantee transferability, a thick description of the research site, the participants, and the research design is provided in this dissertation to help the readers make their own decisions. This gives room for similar studies to be carried out in similar contexts. Additionally, Lincoln and Guba (2013) opined that transferability refers to the extent to which the conclusions of research can be applied to a similar representation of participants and research settings. Although the findings of this research may not be generalised because the investigation was conducted in six PCC schools in three regions of Cameroon, I provided detailed information of the study on which readers can reflect

and then transfer the findings to their own contexts. The findings are also supported with coded quotations from the interviews.

4.8.3 Dependability

According to Lincoln and Guba (2013), dependability is an evaluation of the quality of the processes of data collection, data analysis, and theory generation. To assure dependability, my supervisor ensured consistency between data generation, analysis, and findings. In this regard, the data collection strategies were guided and closely re-examined by my supervisor. This was essential to prevent the intrusion of individual influence or bias with the exact corroboration of information from the opinions of the participants. Furthermore, the full and clear explanation of the methods used in the investigation of this study makes it clear that when applied to an investigation similar to the current one, it will yield similar findings (Lietz et al., 2006). This ensures the dependability of this research.

4.8.4 Confirmability

Confirmability is described by Lincoln and Guba (2013) as the extent to which the findings of a study are a true reflection of participants' experiences and not researchers' interest. Therefore, confirmability requires researchers to ensure the generated data and research findings are not influenced by their own viewpoints. Thus, to ensure confirmability, I remained as impartial as possible by ensuring that the data were generated solely from participants' experiences. This was done by making an exact transcription of the interview recordings. Furthermore, I used multiple sources and data gathering strategies to gather in-depth information that was reproduced on audiotapes (Cohen et al., 2007). This is evident in Chapter 5.

4.9 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are located within the axiology research paradigm, which handles ethical issues that must be observed in the course of an investigation (Khatri, 2020). It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure the protection of the participants, build trust with them, foster the integrity of the research, and guard against any form of misconduct

(Maxwell, 2013). Thus, I had to adhere to ethical principles at all levels of the study. Maree (2020) stated that getting authorisation before visiting the research site(s) for investigation is key, and therefore, I first requested ethical clearance from the University of Pretoria before going to the field to collect data. For the request, the authorities that had to be consulted, the interviewees, the research sites, and the intended methodology were clearly stipulated (Annexure 1; Maree, 2020). Thereafter, I obtained permission from the Moderator and Proprietor of the PCC Schools to involve the principals, teachers, and students from the six sampled schools (Annexure 2). The letter addressed to the Moderator also stated the potential impact and intended outcomes of the study on PCCSS (Creswell, 2014). I proceeded to obtain permission and consent from principals to conduct the research in their schools and to have them as participants (Annexure 3). The participants were asked to read through the informed consent letters in order to understand the research and the conditions involved, such as privacy and confidentiality, informed consent, anonymity of participants, voluntary participation, and risk and mitigation (Appendices 3–5). I further explained the implications of these principles to the participants. In the course of the interviews, I was conscious of the likely effect my personal judgements and perceptions could have on the study (Silverman, 2005), and to avoid this, I was not judgemental during the investigation process but rather permitted the participants to freely share their views on the research topic. The aforementioned ethical principles are discussed in the following subsections.

4.9.1 Privacy and confidentiality

The participants were assured that their privacy would be protected by treating their contributions with confidentiality. My assurance and the participants' awareness of the protection of their basic human rights as well as their privacy and dignity promoted a good conversation between me and participants. As a result, the participants, particularly the teachers and students, felt free to communicate their views. The interview points in various schools provided privacy and confidentiality. In addition, the interviews and documents were given maximum protection to ensure confidentiality (Creswell, 2012; Denscombe, 2010).

4.9.2 Informed consent

According to Cohen et al. (2007, p. 50), “informed consent is a way of confirming that participants know what is implied by getting involved in a specific study, so they make an informed decision to join”. Denscombe (2010) agreed that participants’ consent is required before their participation. In this study, letters were written to ask participants’ consent. I devoted time to explain the content of the letters to the participants and gave them enough time to digest the information before agreeing to participate. Participants who took part had to sign the consent form attached to the letter (Appendices 3–5). The type of data collection strategy involved, and the use of an audio recorder were indicated on the consent letter. The participants were conversant with the study’s main aim, which was to understand how principals connect their leadership to student learning through the environment in which students learn, and the usefulness of the research to PCCSS.

4.9.3 Anonymity of participants

For anonymity purposes, participants were told that they did not need to give their names, and if they did, their identities would not be disclosed anywhere in the study. They were also told that pseudonyms would be used when analysing the data (Maree, 2020). The use of pseudonyms provided anonymity so that no reader can identify the participants and their schools in the research.

4.9.4 Voluntary participation

Before starting the interviews, I informed the participants of the study’s objectives, and that the information would strictly be used for academic purposes. Participants were told that they had the freedom to choose to participate or not, and that they could decide to discontinue their participation if they felt uncomfortable. This complies with Creswell’s (2003) statement that participants should be able to withdraw at any stage of the research. This awareness encouraged participants to participate voluntarily.

4.9.5 Risk and mitigation

Since the research involved collecting data from people and about people (Neuman, 2014), I respected the assurance I gave to the participants that their individual contributions and identities would not be disclosed to avoid embarrassment and any suffering on their part (Cohen et al., 2007; Creswell, 2014). Furthermore, conducting face-to-face interviews might have exposed both me and the participants to the COVID-19 virus. Therefore, I ensured that both parties respected the safety measures by wearing masks and social distancing. I always provided and encouraged the regular use of sanitiser before and after dealing with the consent forms. I also ensured the audio recorder was of good quality so that distance was not a barrier to recording the interviews, and I interacted with only one participant at a time. In addition, even though the period during which this research was conducted in Cameroon was characterised by ghost towns, lockdowns, shootings, and bombings, convenience sampling helped reduce the risks. To an extent, choosing PCCSS that were conveniently accessible minimised the risks associated with the prevailing political crisis (the Anglophone Crisis) that affected some PCCSS locations. Lastly, I ensured that all ethical principles were followed for the safety of the participants.

4.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter focused on the philosophical assumptions in the research, the position of the researcher, the research approach, the research design, and the research methodology. The interpretive paradigm, qualitative approach, and case study design were chosen for this research to give insight into how school principals connect their leadership to student learning. This chapter described the research sites where data was collected. Convenience sampling was used to choose the research sites and participants. Within the population, criterion sampling was used to determine the characteristics of participants involved in the study. The participants included principals, teachers, and students of six secondary schools, and a total of 54 participants were interviewed. Document analysis was used to obtain more data. The strengths and weaknesses of the data collection instruments related to this study were discussed. The data was manually

analysed using thematic analysis. The chapter further described and justified how issues of trustworthiness and ethical considerations were handled. The following chapter presents the findings of the investigation.

CHAPTER 5

RESEARCH FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

The philosophical assumptions in the research, the position of the researcher, the research approach, design, and methodology were explicitly presented and discussed in Chapter 4. The present chapter presents the findings derived from the data collected from six secondary schools in Cameroon. Data were collected from three participant groups, namely principals, teachers, and students. The data collection instruments were interviews and document analysis, and were used to give a comprehensive understanding of how school leadership connects to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools. These data sources were used to triangulate the data, thereby increasing the trustworthiness of the findings (Patton, 2002). The study was guided by the following secondary research questions:

- How do principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools understand the connection between context and student learning?
- How do school principals create viable conditions for effective student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?
- What challenges do school principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools experience when creating an environment that enables them to connect directly with the students?
- What alternative strategies can be implemented to ensure a safe and secure learning environment in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?

The interviewees who participated in the study and the documents collected from schools provided information to answer the above-mentioned questions. These participants were conveniently selected. The data were manually coded and analysed according to the themes with the help of my supervisor. The study questions, reviewed literature, and theory closely monitored the themes.

Table 5.1 shows the type of schools selected for the study, the area in which they are located, and the forms of the students who participated in the research. The secondary

schools used in this study are in the Southwest, Littoral, and Centre Regions of the Republic of Cameroon.

Table 5.1 Categorisation and contextual background of the selected schools

Name	Area/location	Type	Selected forms
School 1 Boarding school: Mixed girls and boys	Urban	Private-PCC	Forms 4,6 &7
School 2 Boarding school: Single-sex girls	Urban	Private-PCC	Forms 4,6 &7
School 3 Day school: Mixed girls and boys	Urban	Private-PCC	Forms 4,6 &7
School 4 Boarding school: Mixed girls and boys	Urban	Private-PCC	Forms 4,6 &7
School 5 Boarding school: Mixed girls and boys	Rural	Private-PCC	Forms 4,6 &7
School 6 Boarding school: Mixed girls and boys	Rural	Private-PCC	Forms 4,6 &7

Table 5.2 presents the three categories of participants selected from the six schools and the total number of participants for each group. The table also shows the highest level of education for the principals and teachers who participated in this study. The highest level of education for four of the six principals interviewed for the study is a bachelor's degree. One has a master's degree and another a doctoral degree. Eleven teachers have bachelor's degrees and one has an Advanced Level Certificate.

Table 5.2 Categories of participants

No.	Name	Codes/Initials	Quantity	Highest qualifications
1	School principals	SP	6	1 PhD, 1 MA, 4 BA degrees
2	School teachers	ST	12	11 BA degrees, 1 Advanced Level Certificate
3	School students	SS	36	

Table 5.3 shows the organised data categorised into themes and sub-themes, which are discussed in the following sections.

Table 5.3 Summary of the identified themes and sub-themes

No.	Theme	Sub-themes
1	Principals' perceptions of context and student learning	A function of leadership practices that promote enabling learning environments Practising appropriate leadership that provides teacher support for learning

No.	Theme	Sub-themes
		Monitoring students' activities for students' success
2	Teachers' understanding of student learning	Proper use of pedagogic approaches to enhance students' understanding Having qualified teachers Students' different abilities to assimilate information Use of the learner-centred approach to teaching Executing academic activities within a specified period
3	Creating viable conditions for student learning	Making teachers duty conscious and providing for their needs Maintaining good principal-teacher relationships Establishing a friendly atmosphere between principals and students Fostering positive teacher-student relationships Staff involvement in decision-making Availability of modern infrastructure and facilities Identifying students' needs and challenges Use of flogging, bullying, and insults to maintain discipline
4	Challenges faced by principals and teachers	Inappropriate school location Lack of qualified services High teacher mobility rate Poor working conditions Inadequate accommodation amid insecurity Resistance from students Employer-employee relationships Principals being unwelcoming to teachers Coping measures for challenges
5	Unsafe and insecure conditions for student learning in PCCSS	Use of obsolete and humiliating punishments Poor interaction and communication between staff, guests, and students Low student engagement in decision-making processes Low-quality meals Insufficient social activities Lack of social and emotional support Insufficient sanitary, health, and security care Lack of other resources
6	Proposed alternative strategies to ensure safe and secure learning environments	Improving learning and environment Reviving work conditions and relationships

5.2 Theme 1: Principals' Perceptions of Context and Student Learning

This theme sought to examine the school principals' understanding of the connection between context and student learning, which was the basis of this study. The theme led to several sub-themes based on the participants' views, experiences, and knowledge of the theme. The sub-themes are a function of leadership practices that promote enabling

learning environments, practising appropriate leadership that provides teacher support for learning, and monitoring students' activities for student's success.

5.2.1 Sub-theme: A function of leadership practices that promote enabling learning environments

The principals of Schools 2, 4, and 6 had similar views. They understood the connection between context and student learning as a function of appropriate leadership practices that provide learning environments suitable for students' success. The principal of School 4 stated that making the teaching and learning environment right for teaching and learning is strongly connected to student learning. He reported that the relationship is inseparable because students can only learn comfortably in a healthy school environment in which internal and external environmental factors are considered. Such an environment has modern infrastructure, learning facilities, love, and concern, and is void of vices such as discrimination, violence, favouritism, nepotism, and corruption. These principals acknowledged that there is a connection between context and student learning. They disclosed that a positive learning context affects student learning positively, and vice versa. These principals made the following insightful comments:

The connection between context and student learning refers to the internal and external environment vis-à-vis student learning. It takes good mastery of leadership to provide a good relationship between them. A positive internal environment will positively affect student learning, thereby improving the quality of learning and teaching done in the school. The presence of love and concern and the availability of magnificent buildings and specialised rooms, among others, are indispensable for successful student learning. Alternatively, a hostile school environment and a noisy external environment will negatively impact student learning if the school is located around bars or market areas. Also, the presence of an unfriendly environment where there is violence, favouritism, nepotism, corruption, and discrimination, in fact, all the vices manifested in the environment, will result in a drop in performance or the quality of learning. (SP School 4, 2021)

I understand that you must have a conducive environment for student learning. I know that effectiveness is also a function of a school leader to use some behavioural styles that he deems appropriate to the demands of the environment. (SP School 2, 2021)

When we talk of the connection between 'context and student learning', what comes to mind is how the environment (both internal and external) influences academic success. (SP School 6, 2021)

5.2.2 Sub-theme: Practising appropriate leadership that provides teacher support for learning

To express the meaning of the connection between context and student learning, some principals related the link between the concepts to practising appropriate leadership styles to ensure students learn. When asked to explain their view, the principal of School 3 explained that the connection between context and student learning has to do with displaying a leadership style that support student learning by ensuring teachers set their goals and achieve them. Though teacher support contributes to student learning, this study was more concerned with contextual aspects directly linked to student learning. The findings revealed no direct leadership connection to student learning except via the teachers. The principal's attention is more focused on how teachers teach than on how students learn, which is an indication that the principal concerned could not establish a clear connection between context and student learning, as indicated in the following excerpt:

The school environment comprises three categories: the principal, the leader, the teachers, and the student body. Learning is an activity of obtaining knowledge, and knowledge is obtained through severe studies. As a leader, how do I connect the context to student learning? I must ensure that teachers are supported and that teachers in this school environment have their set goals and attain their objectives so students learn well. Since it is a learning institution, its only aim is to finish its syllabuses at the end of the school academic year for the students to write their exams. (SP School 3, 2021)

To the principal of School 5, the connection between context and student learning is using a leadership approach suitable for students to receive knowledge from teachers. He explained that the leader determines the context by applying leadership methods that ensure the acquisition of knowledge by the students through teachers. Though he pointed out that the principal influences the context, there was no insight into what the context meant. His explanation seemed to link the relationship between context and student learning to a leadership approach that guarantees students' knowledge acquisition. The findings showed that this principal could not establish the relationship between context and student learning. He said, "Well, I think that the connection between them is that the leader initiates a good leadership approach wherein the context will ensure that students receive knowledge from the teacher" (SP School 5, 2021).

5.2.3 Sub-theme: Monitoring students' activities for students' success

The connection between context and student learning was interpreted as monitoring the activities of students. After I asked for clarification, it was explained that students carry out various activities, and for students to learn and succeed in life, the leader must facilitate and monitor these activities. Context and student learning were perceived as the leadership monitoring students for success. The link between context and student learning was likened to leadership monitoring and students' activities. The findings showed that this principal could not situate the relationship between context and student learning, as seen in the following comment:

Context and student learning involve keeping an eye on what the children do at a particular time. It also refers to words with different meanings which the children used ... I mean that the connection between 'context and student learning' has to do with the activities carried on by students with the leader acting as facilitator; monitoring students and following them up so they succeed in life. So, if students are not monitored, they will not learn. (SP School 1, 2021)

It was shocking that three principals could not align the link between the context and student learning; hence, the need for this study.

5.3 Theme 2: Teachers' Understanding of Student Learning

Teachers' understanding of student learning was intended to seek teachers' comprehension of the student learning concept. Sub-themes emerged from the teachers' varied knowledge of the theme. These sub-themes were proper use of pedagogic approaches to enhance students' understanding; having qualified teachers; students' different abilities to assimilate information; use of the learner-centred approach to teaching; and executing academic activities within a specified period.

5.3.1 Sub-theme: Proper use of pedagogic approaches to enhance students' understanding

Student learning was described as the appropriate use of pedagogic approaches to enhance student learning in terms of teachers giving the correct information to help students understand, as explained in the following comment:

In my understanding of the concept of 'student learning', it is a two-way thing. It does not only have to be students, but the teachers are also involved because if the teachers are involved with the proper approaches, and the right information is being designated and disseminated,

the children will be able to pick up the right material. They can assimilate for better understanding. (ST School 1, 2021)

5.3.2 Sub-theme: Having qualified teachers

The findings also showed that some of the teachers understood student learning as having qualified teachers to teach the students. The teacher said, “Student learning, in my opinion, is having qualified teachers who are ready to teach the students who are willing to learn” (ST School 6, 2021).

5.3.3 Sub-theme: Students’ different abilities to assimilate information

Furthermore, one of the teachers indicated that student learning refers to the different ways students use their abilities to assimilate what is taught, depending on the teacher’s presentation. The teacher said, “To me, the concept of ‘student learning’ is the various ways the students grab whatever material is presented to them by teachers in various styles” (ST School 2, 2021).

5.3.4 Sub-theme: Use of the learner-centred approach to teaching

The investigation also showed that some of the teachers understood student learning as teachers using the child-centred method in teaching, as expressed in the following extract:

Student learning is also known as learner-centred education. Basically, it encompasses methods of teaching that shift the focus of instructions from the teachers to the students. Thus, student-centred learning puts students’ interests first and acknowledges student voice as central to the learning experience. (ST School 5, 2021)

5.3.5 Sub-theme: Executing academic activities within a specified period

Another teacher defined student learning as the way educational activities are carried out within a specified period. The teacher confessed that she had never heard of such a concept, as seen in the following comment:

I may not have come across this phrase before, ‘student learning’. But what I want to say is that, from the words, I think it means how the academic activities are being carried out from a certain period to another period. (ST School 1, 2021)

The findings for the second theme showed that most teachers could not relate well to the concept of student learning as only one gave an explanation close to the meaning.

Unfortunately, the stakeholders directly involved in teaching the students did not seem to have a clear idea of student learning. The teachers' lack of knowledge about student learning shows that there are many problems in the student learning environment in PCCSS.

5.4 Theme 3: Creating Viable Conditions for Student Learning

Theme 3 sought to investigate how principals and teachers create conditions suitable for effective student learning. While seeking information on this theme, different sub-themes surfaced, such as making teachers duty conscious and providing for their needs, maintaining good principal-teacher relationships, and establishing a friendly atmosphere between principals and students. Fostering positive teacher-student relationships, staff involvement in decision-making, availability of modern infrastructure and facilities, identifying criteria of students' needs and challenges, and use of flogging, bullying, and insults to maintain student discipline are also sub-themes for this theme.

5.4.1 Sub-theme: Making teachers duty conscious and providing their needs

Making teachers aware of their duties and providing for their needs is one of the ways in which some principals create a school environment conducive to effective student learning. The teachers are conscious of their responsibilities because policies are implemented that demand they remain alert and adequately prepared to execute their functions. Teachers are required to submit a copy of their schemes of work and lesson plans to the vice principals for verification and endorsement before being used. This is done to ensure adequate preparation and respect for deadlines. Teachers are encouraged to provide students with their course outlines to enable them to have a smooth follow-up of the lessons and prepare ahead of time. A monitoring mechanism was initiated wherein class prefects can report problems with teachers, such as lateness, to the administration. The following comment explains these measures:

If the teachers are not conscious of their duties, the students will not be present in their respective classes. I make teachers conscious of this aspect. There are set-up policies to guide teachers to be duty conscious, such as submission of schemes of work and lesson notes to the vice principal's office, so that the teachers respond on time and their work is checked. Also, copying course outlines in classrooms, which will help the students follow the teacher's

course, is advised. Students follow up with teachers and report irregular and late ones to the administration. (SP School 3, 2021)

Regular meetings are held with the teachers to assess their level of syllabus coverage and identify their needs. Teachers are supplied with didactic materials at the beginning of each term and these are replenished as the need arises. In School 4, teachers need proof before receiving a replacement for a notebook or pen. This attitude exhibits a lack of trust between the administration and the teachers. Classroom observations by the principals and vice principals are scheduled. Even though teachers are informed about the observations to avoid embarrassment, some teachers are uncomfortable with it. Conferences are held with each teacher for feedback purposes. Lastly, to enhance quality teaching and learning, teachers are advised not to depend solely on the prescribed textbooks but are encouraged to beef up their notes through research. The statement confirms these findings:

To begin with, regular staff meetings are held, such as the beginning of term meetings and others, to set the pace for the term and to check the material covered. Teachers are given supporting materials that will help them deliver the goods ... The vice principal replaces the material with enough proof that they were used. Hmmm... for example, you need to present the used exercise books or pens. I ensure adequate preparation of lessons by attending some lessons after notifying the teachers and discussions with each teacher follow ... Sometimes I do, and sometimes the VP [vice principal], but some teachers don't like it. I also want to say that teachers are encouraged to do quality research to ensure quality notes and teaching to improve quality education on the part of the students. (SP School 4, 2021)

5.4.2 Sub-theme: Maintaining good principal-teacher relationships

Apart from ensuring that teachers are duty conscious and that their needs are provided for, the study's findings also showed that some of the principals make their environment conducive to effective student learning by ensuring that there are healthy relationships between the principal and teachers and the teachers and students. The principal of School 3 indicated that he assumes the responsibility of ensuring collaboration between him and his close collaborators. He also encourages teachers when they do a good job by showing gratitude in cash or kind. This kind gesture is made to reduce resistance and circumvent tension, as explained here:

For these policies to be well implemented, there must be dynamism between the head and the sub-collaborators. That is, the working relationship should be very good and cordial to avoid tension so that certain strategies put in place will be highly respected. To maintain this good relationship, I appreciate the teachers for a task well done, in words, or cash if possible. (SP School 3, 2021)

Another principal affirmed that working with the staff is necessary for productive student learning. He explained that achieving his task would be difficult without cooperating with the persons working under his leadership. He insisted that school heads must make sure there is a conducive relationship between them and the teachers. He believed humility and approachability create a safe student learning environment. He further explained that establishing a healthy relationship between him and the teachers requires him to be God-fearing and exemplary by being approachable and treating the staff with humility, so they feel comfortable talking to him. He is mindful of the fact that he is no better than his teachers because they all have the same level of education. The principal of School 2 said the following:

I think contingency theory postulates that for the leader to achieve his goals, there has to be some synergy. The leader will be unable to accomplish his work without this synergy because he uses people under his authority to do his work. Jesus Christ is our model. The fact that you have been appointed as a principal in school does not give you the right to lord over them because I'm not better than them in terms of qualification. Humility is very important, and you must be open to the teachers. You need to be approachable so that in case of any difficulty, they will feel comfortable approaching you at any given moment. Being an example to the sheep makes you the good shepherd. (SP School 2, 2021)

5.4.3 Sub-theme: Establishing a friendly atmosphere between principals and students

This sub-theme looks at how principals create learning-friendly environments for students. Half of the principals failed to give direct responses to this question. For example, the principal of School 1 mentioned that in striving to ensure a friendly atmosphere between her and the students, she made sure that the teaching and non-teaching staff perform well at their various responsibilities, which provides satisfaction to the students. However, the principals of Schools 4 and 6 shared their experiences of instituting a cheerful student learning atmospheres directly with the students. They create a conducive environment for effective student learning by giving a listening ear to the students and endeavouring to come up with remedies to address their concerns. The students are kept busy to enable them to stay clear of laziness and loitering (SP4). Apart from paying attention to their complaints, the principal of School 6 tries to find ways to improve situations that make the students uncomfortable. The principal is conscious that students may be missing their parents at home and try to ensure they feel comfortable at

school by talking with them and enabling them to study with less worry. Students are constantly reminded to channel their complaints via the official channels. When asked how emergency cases are handled, he said that emergencies, such as serious health issues, have direct access to his office. The principals said the following:

Listening and understanding the students, and providing solutions to their problems with them participating, keeping the students busy to avoid loitering and laziness. (SP School 4, 2021)

I try to make the students feel at home. They are away from their parents, and while here, we do everything to make them comfortable. We try as much as possible to give them a listening ear, try to diagnose their problems, and work hard to improve on their worries. We talk to them regularly to put them in the right frame of mind for studies. They are always told to meet their house masters or class masters with minor issues. For serious cases, they write through the masters who will bring to me if they can't handle the situation. Students with serious health attacks come to my office. (SP School 6, 2021)

The principal at School 2 confirmed that a warm relationship between the teachers and students is necessary for a lively environment that promotes student learning. He added that he made sure harmony and love existed among the staff and students in the school despite their diverse experiences:

I started by saying that I try to create an atmosphere of conviviality where the teachers and students feel comfortable to teach and learn. Although it is not easy to deal with people from different backgrounds, I try to ensure that there is love, peace, harmony, and concern for one another. (SP School 2, 2021)

5.4.4 Sub-theme: Fostering positive teacher-student relationships

This sub-theme explains how principals foster the relationship between teachers and students and how teachers help make their school environments conducive to student learning by creating relationships with the students to facilitate student learning. As depicted in the study's findings, some principals make their environment conducive to effective student learning by ensuring good relationships between students and teachers. The principal of School 4 acknowledged that cordial relationships between teachers and students must be encouraged. The principal explained that he promotes friendly interactions between the staff and students by educating and inspiring the teachers to make their classrooms lively, so students feel at home. Teachers are also cautioned to be caring, friendly, considerate, and show the fear of God when working with the students. The principal explained it as follows:

This relationship must be cordial. I emphasise in meetings the issue of creating a good classroom climate and culture, ensuring that the interactions between the teachers and

students are supportive, friendly, accommodative, encouraging, and above all, God-fearing. They are reminded of creating a communal atmosphere where everybody is involved; instilling a sense of belonging among the students. (SP School 4, 2021)

Given that the school environment can positively or negatively influence student learning, teachers were asked how they help the administration make the school environment conducive for student learning, and they stated that they help through monitoring and counselling. A teacher at School 5 explained that he takes care of the boys' dormitory and makes sure that students' activities are monitored to ensure they are at the right places at the right time. The teacher said the following:

As a teacher, I think I am part and parcel of all the activities that create a safe and secure learning environment. I ensure students follow up on their various activities, conduct a roll call to ensure all students are on campus, and do surprise checks in the afternoon during siesta to ensure no student is out of campus. (ST School 5, 2021)

Another teacher added that she follows up with students in the dormitories to find out how they are doing. She identifies sick students who cannot attend class and takes them for medical attention. She said that this strengthens her relationship with the students because she shows them care. Her experiences are evident in the following comment:

First and foremost, I am a house parent and make sure that I visit the dormitory often. If a child is sick or unable to come to class because of one issue or illness, I make sure I take the child to the dispensary. This brings the children closer to me because I care for them. That is my way of contributing. (ST School 1, 2021)

One of the teachers at School 3 attested that to make the school environment conducive to student learning he creates friendly relationships with the students, making them feel free to communicate their worries to him. He acts as a counsellor to the students and advises them on how to choose friends. He said the following:

I always advise the students on how to make or choose a friend within the school and be very observant of the various activities they carry out here. As a teacher, I also think my role is to be very friendly with them so they can always feel free to share some of their challenges with me. In so doing, I can help them. (ST School 3, 2021)

The findings under this sub-theme revealed that some principals and teachers are aware of the significance of positive interactions to student learning.

5.4.5 Sub-theme: Staff involvement in decision-making

The findings also showed that principals make their school environments conducive to effective student learning by involving other staff when making decisions that concern them. This improves teachers' willingness to realise school goals and obedience to the

educational policies of the PCC. When teachers participate in important issues that affect the school, it makes them feel as if they are in a secure relationship. This feeling of belonging compels them to respect instructions and makes them conscious of their individual and collective responsibilities. When asked for examples of the activities in which teachers are involved, PTA meetings were mentioned. Important decisions are made at PTA meetings, but students are not represented. Teachers are charged with various responsibilities to keep them involved. One of the principals stated the following:

When people feel involved in every activity and decision-making, they feel they belong. When they think of belongingness, they are tied down to respect the rules and regulations because they are a party to the rules and move by them. This helps to create an atmosphere where everybody knows at every moment what they are supposed to be doing and that they are at the right place at the right time, doing the right activity. This makes them also respect the policies of our system. For example, teachers in the PTA. Duty post holders take care of various activities. (SP School 2, 2021)

The principal at School 6 also revealed that students and teachers, for the most part, have very little to contribute to decisions-making since all the stakeholders are bound to respect and strictly implement policies handed to principals by the Synod Office top officials. Therefore, teachers can only be involved in class council decisions and issues concerning social contributions. Members of the administration are responsible for project prioritisation and disciplinary council decisions. The principal cannot take the initiative for fear of being relieved of his functions, which may affect his leadership performance, as explained below:

I sometimes seek the opinion of my staff on some issues. But you know, it is not on everything. We receive orders from the big people that everyone, including me, must follow to the later, and sometimes, one is afraid to take the initiative because you may be fired. However, before any project is executed, the administration sits to classify their order of importance and take disciplinary decisions. Mmm ... teachers contribute during class councils and social levies. (SP School 6, 2021)

5.4.6 Sub-theme: Availability of modern infrastructure and facilities

A few principals indicated that modern infrastructure and facilities are an important factor that encourages students to learn. When a school does not have these facilities, it has a negative impact on the teaching and learning process. One of the principals disclosed that he ensures a conducive school environment for effective student learning by demanding quality and adequate infrastructure and facilities from the PTA and hierarchy. The classrooms are well arranged for the standard class size, and quality lighting is

provided to ensure students can see the chalkboards. Enough boarding facilities in a boarding school is also critical to ensure a healthy student learning campus. The principals explained it as follows:

I ensure quality infrastructure through the PTA and proprietor. I ensure less crowded classrooms, and good lighting. The desks and tables are in columns and rows for proper studying and good chalkboards for proper viewing. (SP School 4, 2021)

In terms of the structures, you ensure that you have adequate infrastructure that is good. I mean the classrooms, laboratories, refectory, the kitchen, and all the compartments of a boarding school. (SP School 2, 2021)

5.4.7 Sub-theme: Identifying students' needs and challenges

This sub-theme attempted to discover the criteria principals use to identify students' needs and challenges to ensure safe and secure learning environments. It was revealed that there are no defined guidelines to identify the needs and challenges of students apart from being approachable so that students feel free to discuss their concerns with them. Students who isolate themselves draw attention. In one school, teachers are assigned to classes as advisers to discuss the students' problems and provide solutions. The principals of Schools 2 and 3 said the following:

I think as I said earlier, there are no formal criteria, but we make ourselves approachable to the students such that at any time, they feel free to confide in the administrators and especially the chaplain. But when you see a child isolating himself, it calls for attention. That child might have a problem. (SP School 2, 2021)

We have as criteria class advisers for the respective classes who help to find students' difficulties and needs and provide solutions to them. (SP School 3, 2021)

Assessment and evaluation help determine which students' performances are below average, but some students fail to progress despite the follow-up. It is worth mentioning that efforts to ensure students' performances improve may be ineffective because the root causes are not identified. Students' needs and challenges are also identified by questioning students leaving the school instead of discussing current students' concerns to prevent them from leaving. The principal at School 5 explained their approach as follows: "Academically, after the very first test, we identify the slow learners and make them work hard, though some don't improve. Questioning withdrawn students also helps" (SP School 5, 2021).

These findings revealed that problem-solving for students is limited to the level of teachers rather than principals.

5.4.8 Sub-theme: Use of flogging, bullying, and insults to maintain discipline

Another sub-theme that arose was creating an enabling environment through flogging, bullying, and insults to maintain discipline so students can learn in a serene atmosphere. This theme was important from the views of the principals, teachers, and students. All the principals stated that students who misbehave are flogged, insulted, given hard labour, and bullied, and in extreme cases they are either suspended or dismissed, depending on the offence. These punitive measures are meted to students for disruptive behaviours such as fighting, consumption of hard drugs, violence, bullying, stealing, immorality, gambling, and scaling of the fence. The reprimands are intended to act as a deterrent to other students and ensure discipline. When principals and teachers were asked why they flog, bully, and insult students, they answered that African children need these measures because bringing down students' self-esteem helps keep students' conscious and disciplined. It is ironic that students are punished for bullying their mates, yet the staff bully them with impunity. This study revealed that PCC schools often use corrective rather than preventive measures to maintain a healthy learning climate. It is sad that in the 21st century, obsolete physical punishments are still being used, which is a violation of students' rights and strains the relationship between the staff and students, thereby limiting the connection between leadership and student learning. A principal and teacher said the following:

Some students are terrible, so we use the cane to maintain a sound atmosphere. They break bounds, smoke, brutalise, steal, practice immorality, and bully others. I think flogging should be done occasionally and at the principal's discretion to decide that some students should be flogged. It helps because when a student is flogged at the right time, they will learn some lessons and adjust. The African child understands the language of the cane more than any other. Hard cases are dismissed. (SP School 3, 2021)

Depending on the environment or setting, bullying, flogging, and insult are effective corrective measures since it is the traditional and colonial method of correction after the peaceful method has failed. At times we insult to bring down their ego. They help the students to be conscious of learning. Persistent cases are suspended. (ST School 6, 2021)

The use of flogging was confirmed by a student who said, "In this school, the highest measure they use is beating" (SS School 1, 2021).

However, one teacher stated that the punitive measures do not create sound student learning campuses. This participant perceived the efforts as ineffective in maintaining discipline in schools and attributed the reactions to angry teachers, as evidenced below:

I believe bullying, flogging, and insults of students by teachers do not help the student as effective corrective measures, especially as some of these activities come up out of anger due to a lack of self-control by the teacher. I believe in counselling. (ST School 5, 2021)

These reports insinuated that environments characterised by violence cannot be friendly and are unlikely to enhance student learning.

5.5 Theme 4: Challenges Faced by Principals and Teachers

This study further evaluated the acknowledged challenges principals encounter in the process of creating a safe and secure student learning atmosphere and how they cope with these challenges. Teachers' views were also sampled to give more insight. It was imperative to discover areas that need attention to ensure improvement in the establishment of a healthy climate in PCCSS by principals. There is a significant number of sub-themes under this theme, including inappropriate school location, absence of qualified services, high teacher mobility rate, poor working conditions, inadequate accommodation amid insecurity, resistance from students, employer-employee relationships, principals being unwelcoming to teachers, and coping measures for challenges.

5.5.1 Sub-theme: Inappropriate school location

Some principals reported that the location of their schools, coupled with limited space, are barriers to their efforts to create conducive student learning environments. School 1 is positioned in the heart of a city with too many economic activities, exposing the students to many distractions. There are on and off licenced bars, beer parlours, and a daily market in the school neighbourhood. These businesses are very close to the school and usually crowded with loud music coming from the bars. Students respond to the music in classes by dancing when the teacher is out of class or nodding their heads to enjoy the music during lessons. Teachers are equally affected. Clients at these businesses sometimes use violence or vulgar language where the students can hear. When the principal was asked about the measures taken to improve the situation, it was revealed that all attempts to involve the Divisional Delegation for Secondary Education have been futile. The principal receives threats from the business owners whenever they are notified that they cause a disturbance at the school. The noisy environment in which the school is situated

and the immorality of the community can negatively affect student learning. The school's enrolment has been dropping, and this may be due to the negative remarks from parents. It was also noted that the students are unhappy because there are no sports facilities due to the small space. The following quotation justifies these findings:

The environment where the school is located is a problem for teaching and learning. The school is in the heart of the town with so many economic activities. Bars and off-licences are very near us, including the market. The music is so loud that students dance in class or shake their heads during a lesson. There are no pitches for them to play due to little space. The population may be falling because of these problems parents and students have been complaining about ... I have been reporting to the DDSE [Divisional Delegate for Secondary Education] about the noise to no avail. When I meet the owners, they are always aggressive. (SP School 3, 2021)

Schools 2, 4, 5, and 6 also reported that sports fields are either absent or inadequate. Schools 4 and 6 confirmed that the limited spaces provided by the church for the boarding school does not leave space for a sports field. As a result, students are not prepared to participate in sports competitions, and the students and parents are unhappy with the situation. The principals said the following:

We are managing the place by putting up storey buildings so that students can even have small spaces to play. (SP School 4, 2021)

Parents complain about the absence of playgrounds for the children, which makes participating in sporting activities difficult, let alone competitions. This makes the students feel bored, especially the boys who want to play football. (SP School 6, 2021)

Schools 2 and 5 disclosed that they cannot provide standard fields for students because of the uneven nature of the terrain and the undeveloped fields, respectively, as illustrated below:

Our pitches are not standard because of the topography. It makes it difficult for the students to win in FENASCO games since they do not practice on the normal dimensions. (SP School 2, 2021)

See, the whole place is very rough. The fields need to be carved out and bulldozed. (SP School 5, 2021)

The state of the fields of School 5 was confirmed in the principals' report to the Board of Governors on April 22, 2021, p. 5, when he reported that the playgrounds still needed to be developed.

One aspect that boosts a school's liveliness is sporting activities. Unfortunately, the findings showed that only one of the six schools participating in this study had standard student recreation grounds. If there are not enough sports spaces in schools, students do

not have the opportunity to relax and practice sports to participate confidently in competitions. Learning without relaxation affects student learning.

Another report revealed that the air at one school is polluted due to the stench from the city's government slaughterhouse. Teachers and students are uncomfortable with the air they breathe on campus and some new students even vomit. The slaughterhouse has been cleaned occasionally in response to a complaint lodged with the municipality, but this did not improve the situation. The principal disclosed that the slaughterhouse is older than the school. Another issue raised is the uncooperative attitude of the community around the school whose inhabitants constantly tempt students to break school rules by clandestinely selling cooked food to the students. Though this is risky for the students' health, it was insinuated that the school food is not up to standard. Therefore, these challenges portray insecure teaching and learning environments in PCCSS. As one principal stated:

Our environment is polluted. You can get the strong smell. It is coming from the abattoir near us. It is very disturbing to everyone. Some new students vomit, but with time they get used to it. Neighbours hide behind the fence and sell cooked food to students, which is dangerous. (SP School 4, 2021)

5.5.2 Sub-theme: Lack of qualified services

This sub-theme discusses how the lack of qualified problem-identification and -solving structures, such as a counselling unit, is a challenge to principals and teachers who are obliged to take the responsibility for counselling students without training. Principals and teachers handle this task with mediocrity. It was reported that government counsellors hardly visited PCC schools. During education sector conferences that principals and education secretaries of all private education providers attend, the Divisional Delegate for Secondary Education (DDSE) repeatedly reminds these leaders that it is important to employ trained counsellors, but this has not been done in PCCSS. The counselling role is burdensome to the staff because they already have teaching and administrative responsibilities and are not trained to be counsellors. The findings revealed that though the PCC has been running secondary schools for over 50 years, very little attention has been paid to the psychological and mental needs of students. Ignoring students' concerns may have made the school environment uncomfortable for students whose problems may

not be adequately handled by the untrained staff who do not have in-depth knowledge of child psychology. These revelations were supported by the following comments:

For my school, we rely only on the chaplain, for the most part, the administration, and some staff members for counselling. We lack guidance counsellors to assist the students in this direction since we are not trained in this domain and have so much in our hands. We expect the ES [Education Secretary] to recruit specialists as often reminded in sector conferences by the regional secondary education official. (SP School 6, 2021)

We counsel them ... do a bit of counselling that you can. (ST School 2, 2021)

The principal of School 4 reported that lack of mastery of subject matter is another serious problem as teachers have no knowledge of student characteristics. He said, “Unskilled teachers or less qualified teachers with no knowledge of the characteristics of the students is an issue here” (SP School 4, 2021).

The principal from School 1 confirmed that some teachers do not know their subject matter, yet principals are being demoted based on students’ performance. Teachers who displayed such mediocrity lost students’ trust, as explained here:

Some teachers, too, are not confident. They cannot deliver well. And once a child finds out that the teacher is always finding himself wanting, they don’t believe in him, and the blame goes to the principal, who can be sacked for poor results. (SP School 1, 2021)

Similarly, a teacher at School 5 asserted that PCC teachers feel inferior to government teachers: “Teachers feel inferior, especially when they meet trained teachers from ENS” (ST School 5, 2021).

This finding suggests that principals’ and teachers’ inferiority complex may affect their performance.

5.5.3 Sub-theme: High teacher mobility rate

Principals lamented a teacher shortage owing to the high rate at which seasoned teachers leave for better positions. As a result, some teachers have to teach additional subjects in which they obtained a pass at the advanced level examination. These teachers seemed unhappy, and when teachers are unhappy at school, it affects their relationship with the principal and students. This atmosphere is unhealthy for student learning. Newly recruited teachers found the job challenging as they did not do a training course. The principal of School 4 identified lack of sufficient staff and teacher mobility as factors that harmed student learning in his school. He said, “Old teachers leave, and the fresh ones from the

university who are not enough find it uneasy. Some teachers are given extra subjects to teach, provided they passed them in high school ... always look sad” (SP School 4, 2021).

5.5.4 Sub-theme: Poor working conditions

This theme examined the conditions under which the participants worked and the quality of the available school resources. While some participants indicated that they need better resources, others reported the complete absence of resources. It was noted that the rural areas in which Schools 5 and 6 are found are characterised by frequent electricity cuts, coupled with absence of standby generators and classroom shortages, which frustrate students. The absence of pipe-borne water also causes problems because students become ill from drinking unclean water. The lack of clean water is a very serious problem, because it means that students cannot clean the school, let alone wash their hands regularly, even during the COVID-19 pandemic. This unhygienic situation is a big problem for an academic environment that must protect the students. The principals of these two schools said the following:

The rural nature of our setting is a setback. One of our greatest troubles is lighting; when we are in a blackout, the students feel terrible and frustrated. There is no standby generator (SP School 6, 2021)

Inadequate classroom infrastructure and no pipe-borne water also call for concern. Water is life. It is like a suicide mission for about 200 persons to gather for a purpose without water. (SP School 5, 2021)

The principals of Schools 2 and 5 reported that they have no transportation to take sick students to hospitals, despite it being boarding schools. In some schools, the principals reported that there are no qualified health personnel to attend to students and that biology teachers took this role. The participants said the following:

Especially at night, I find it difficult to take serious health cases to the hospital without a school bus. We give only first aid treatment ... do not have a school nurse. (SP School 2, 2021)

In our scenario, there is a need for a school van to handle emergencies. (SP School 5, 2021)

The lack of medical services in boarding schools indicates an unhealthy learning environment for the students because when students’ needs are not well attended to, they feel unsafe and insecure. Therefore, this is a disconnect between school leadership and student learning.

Most principals indicated that the lack of modern teaching aids is a barrier to providing an effective enabling environment for teachers to teach and students to learn. Most teachers confirmed this. There are no internet facilities for research, modern staffrooms, libraries and laboratories, projectors, and whiteboards. School 1 has no chairs for students to sit and study in the library. These deficiencies detract from the school climate and make teaching and learning quite challenging. A principal and teacher stated the following:

The lack of enough library space for students who may want to use it and the lack of current teaching tools are demotivating. (SP School 4, 2021)

Lack of internet, specific books for research, good staffroom, projectors, white boards, and furnished labs make it hard for us. We have tables here, but chairs are unavailable. So how will the children sit to read? (ST School, 2021)

Although some participants observed that upgrading facilities such as the staffroom would improve the interactions between teachers and strengthen their commitment to students, others revealed the complete absence of such a facility in their school. The following quotes confirm these findings:

Our staff room is huge and airy. I think a lot must be done because the teachers are uncomfortable with the staffroom. We need individual tables, a TV, and even a cup of coffee during breakfast. This will create cordial relationships that bring teachers together and make us like to be around and attend to students. (ST School 1, 2021)

For the moment, as I speak, we don't have a staff room. (ST School 3, 2021)

Most teachers also reported that the ablution facilities for teachers are insufficient. The principals' failure to provide sufficient ablution facilities for teachers may make the school environment un conducive for teaching, which may also affect student learning. The teachers said the following:

... but for the teachers, it is a problem because we do not have a good toilet. We have just one, used mainly by the administrators. (ST School 6, 2021)

So, we have a problem in the staff room regarding the toilet. (ST School 1, 2021)

Principals and teachers noted that the PCC restriction policy on professional development, demotivating salaries with frequent cuts, and delayed pay are preventing them from executing their duties and creating enabling environments for student learning. The church policy for secondary schools does not encourage teachers to further their studies as those who ask for study leave are expected to reapply for their jobs after finishing their studies, and if they are recruited, they are treated as new employees, irrespective of their positions before leaving to study. Studying while working is difficult

because of a heavy workload of 25–30 hours per week with other duties attached. Principals also mentioned that the uncertificated in-service coaching programmes are insufficient to support their work. The principals and teachers also complained of low and irregular salaries with many curtailments. There is no hope for salary increases despite length of service.

Therefore, the lack of and insufficient basic social and academic facilities, low salaries with several cutbacks, and the church's restricted career development policy are threats to providing safe and secure environments for student learning. The lack of emphasis on leadership and teacher training for current principals and teachers leaves them with limited knowledge about their duties. The following comments confirm these findings:

The policies are harsh. PCC has as a policy that workers on study leave will have to reapply to the system upon completion of studies if such workers wish to return to their previous jobs. Another issue is that such persons are required to start afresh if recruited. The in-service training workshops are not enough and are not certificated. (SP School 4, 2021)

Many intend to work and study to improve their job, but the workload is too stressful ... 25–30 periods a week. With unemployment, one is afraid to leave for studies for fear of receiving a lower salary when one finishes. Poor salaries, which are not even regular, are always cut, and even after longevity, there is no hope for salary increment. We are over-laboured with many duties. (ST School 6, 2021)

Our biggest issue that is demoralising us is the salary. We desire to work, but the wages are not encouraging and keep decreasing. (ST School 2, 2021)

The principals of Schools 3 and 6 explained that because of the poor treatment teachers receive from the PCC, they are unmotivated, which manifests in resisting decisions, lateness, and absence from lessons because they have part-time jobs to make ends meet. This creates a tense atmosphere. This negative attitude of teachers affects their commitment to leadership, teaching, and the environment in which student learning takes place. There is no doubt that the dissatisfaction with the work conditions spills over on to the teacher-principal relationships, and consequently, onto the principal-student and teacher-student relationships. These principals said the following:

There are some teachers who are more stubborn than students. Some oppose decisions and are so involved in part-time teaching that they come late or are absent from lessons to meet their family needs since PCC treats teachers like a thrash by offering them meagre salaries. (SP School 3, 2021)

This is because the high cost of living, low pay packages, and regular cuts make teachers aggrieved. This makes work uninteresting and creates tension. (SP School 6, 2021)

The shortage of financial resources is a significant limitation to the provision of a sound learning environment by leadership: “Financial resources are sometimes quite inadequate to build and provide for a dream school” (SP School 5, 2021).

5.5.5 Sub-theme: Inadequate accommodation amid insecurity

Another challenge mentioned by the teachers and principals is insufficient housing for teachers and insecurity. The teachers said that schools located on the outskirts of the city do not provide accommodation for staff, not even for the duty post holders who are expected to be at schools very early in the morning to ensure the smooth running of students’ activities. They also expressed fear of the risks of coming to school early because of the political situation where teachers and students are being kidnapped. Furthermore, the terrible roads to some schools make transportation difficult, affecting their timely arrival and performance at work. When asked how the issue of insecurity is handled, it was revealed that government security officers are sent to campuses to ensure security. Duty post holders play an important role in ensuring students’ days start well, and when they do their job well, it enhances the connection between school leadership and student learning and vice versa. Therefore, if these teachers are not at their duty posts, effective student learning may not occur. Similarly, when teachers feel insecure, students are more likely to also feel insecure, which creates an environment that is not conducive to student learning, indicating a disconnect between school leadership and student learning. This was confirmed in the following comments:

I have some challenges coming from the fact that I do not live on campus. House parents are supposed to live on campus. This makes it difficult for me to leave home as early as 5 o’clock to wake the students up. The roads are also very bad. This is quite challenging. (ST School 1, 2021)

We are afraid to leave our homes early and stay around school because the separatist fighters target teachers. The situation negatively affects my effectiveness at the job site ... government security men around the campus ensure that the school is highly secured from any external forces that may hamper the children’s learning process. (ST School 1, 2021)

The principal of School 5 confirmed that the housing is a challenge, and in his report to the Board of Governors meeting on April 22, 2021, he wrote, “Many teachers staying off campus find it challenging to meet up with their extracurricular responsibilities” (p. 14).

In secondary schools, co-curricular activities are meant to enhance student learning, and therefore, the absence of the coordinators of these activities may affect the smooth functioning of school activities, which may strain the relationship between the principals, teachers, and students, hampering the connection between the principal and student learning.

5.5.6 Sub-theme: Resistance from students

Another challenge principals face in their quest to make the environment conducive to learning is that some students become defensive when being flogged, which sometimes results in fights, as indicated in the following excerpts:

Some students are respectful, but some even turn back to fight at us by trying to stand up for themselves when flogged. (ST School 5, 2021)

In this school, students are very insolent ... like insulting a teacher ... a student tore the vice principal's shirt. (SP School 3, 2021)

The issue of fights between teachers and students was affirmed by a student who revealed that “a student slapped a teacher for insulting him” (SS School 1, 2021).

This shows that there is tension between the students and teachers in some PCCSS, making such environments unconducive to learning. The school leader's role is to create a tension-free platform for students to learn effectively. The principal of School 3 indicated that the students are so insolent that a student fought against the vice principal and tore the vice principal's clothes, which demonstrates of a violent environment that cannot enhance student learning. This research calls for secondary school principals to connect their leadership to student learning through the context of their schools.

5.5.7 Sub-theme: Employer-employee relationships

This sub-theme sought to determine the criteria used to appoint principals in the PCC. The principals reported that appointments are based on hard work, longevity, and loyalty, but many teachers lamented the favouritism that characterises unmerited appointments. It was observed by many teachers that there is also discrimination based on tribalism. This discrimination is reflected in the unexplained discrepancies in pay packages of persons with the same status, such as the diplomas and degree holders who earn the

same stipend. Sometimes, impolite language used by the hierarchy to address principals and teachers dampen their spirits; yet, when teachers complain about this, they are reminded of the state of unemployment in the country and told that they can leave if they are dissatisfied. The sub-theme is reflected in the following verbatim quotations:

Appointments come because of loyalty, longevity, and hard work. However, it is sometimes funny as it is possible to find a teacher who has not been long in service being appointed due to their social or tribal connections with hierarchy. (SP School 6, 2021)

I do not understand why teachers of the same level are paid different amounts, and the salaries of diplomas and degree holders are alike. When we table our sufferings, the proprietor will say, "If you don't want to teach, you should go because there are many unemployed graduates out there" ... we feel low. (ST School 6, 2021)

It is worth noting that discrimination, favouritism, and tongue lashings are vices that can take a heavy toll on the relationship of workers in an organisational environment, and the school environment is no exception. These experiences may make principals and teachers less accommodating to provide the necessary support for students to learn.

5.5.8 Sub-theme: Principals being unwelcoming to teachers

This sub-theme examined teachers' perceptions of principals' leadership. A few teachers indicated that they are satisfied with their principals' leadership because the principals are flexible, communicative, and empathetic with the teachers but strict when necessary. Nevertheless, many reported that their principals are unapproachable, shuts down any dialogue, and are too authoritative. The following comments explain these experiences:

My principal is a good leader and communicator. He is flexible and understanding but hard and stern when necessary. (ST School 6, 2021)

Regarding leadership, the PEA must train and appoint leaders, not bosses. There is a lack of timely dialogue, slow flow of communication, and dictatorship. We must respond to short notices as quickly as possible. (ST School 5, 2021)

The gap between the principal and staff suggests an even wider disconnect between the principal and students. A principal who is unapproachable by teachers will not be different to students. On the other hand, a principal who is easy to talk to will create a friendly student learning atmosphere in which teachers and students feel free to share their concerns. Therefore, there appears to be a need for PCC principals to initiate high-quality interactions with teachers and students to strongly influence student learning.

5.5.9 Sub-theme: Coping measures for challenges

Principals and teachers were asked how they handle some of the challenges they face. The principals reported that they are tactful with teachers by politely, respectfully, and persuasively explaining their visions to teachers to reduce resistance. Internal workshops are organised to reinforce teaching. Because of the lack of teaching facilities and low pay, teachers improvise by finding extra jobs. School 6 principal and School 4 teacher answered the question as follows:

In such cases, there should be a polite and respectful way of approaching fellow teachers and having numerous dialogues. So, you always try to cajole them ... take time to explain my vision and decisions to them. (SP School 6, 2021)

We improvise and take the initiative where we can, and for low wages, we do other businesses or part-time jobs elsewhere. (ST School 4, 2021)

The uncondusive circumstances in schools faced by principals and teachers in PCCSS likely prevent principals from positively impacting student learning, thereby hindering leadership connectivity to student learning.

5.6 Theme 5: Unsafe and Insecure Conditions for Student Learning in Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Secondary Schools

This theme looks at how students feel about their learning environment in PCCSS. This was essential to possibly improve the connection between school leadership and student learning through the context in which students learn. The students exposed a lot about their school experiences. They presented aspects that motivated them to learn and serious environmental concerns that hinder their learning. Many sub-themes unfolded from this theme, such as the use of obsolete and humiliating punishments; poor interaction and communication between the staff, guests, and students; low student engagement in decision-making processes; low-quality meals; insufficient social activities; lack of social and emotional support; insufficient sanitary, health, and security care; and lack of resources.

5.6.1 Sub-theme: Use of obsolete and humiliating punishments

The students were asked about the various measures used to punish them and how helpful they are. These questions intended to establish how students feel about their

school climate. All the students said that corporal punishment, insults, bullying, hard labour, suspension, and dismissal are used very often. Students lamented the treatment they are subjected to while undergoing some punishments. Students at School 1 showed me a room called 'the guillotine', where students are so severely beaten that they sustain injuries all over their bodies, and sometimes the injuries are so bad that they have wounds, feel sick, and cannot learn. In one instance in School 1, a government security officer on duty was said to have intervened when a teacher was continuously beating a student at night. Furthermore, students in Schools 1, 3, and 5 said that innocent students are sometimes punished because the principals and teachers do not give them a chance to explain the situation, and innocent students also suffer from collective punishments. Those who perform poorly in evaluations are not only beaten but are also humiliated at assembly. The students are not comfortable with the insults they receive from the staff. They are asked to dig deep pits. One student was prepared to show me the scars sustained from severe beatings. The following narrations bear witnesses to these disclosures:

Teachers always beat and cause students to kneel in class. When the principal reads the results in morning devotion, he will call teachers to hit you when you fail and tell students to shame you. The principal and some teachers abuse us. These instil fright in students and make the students uncomfortable. Like the SDM [senior discipline master], students fear him. So, when they see him, they run because he beats at any minor crime. They beat children here so badly. The SDM tells you to dig a 6 feet pit. (SS School 4, 2021)

For the beatings, certain teachers beat till when they're delighted. Some students come back with blood clotted on their fingers and bodies. Others have pains and can barely write. Some get sick and cannot concentrate on their bookwork. One night a teacher beat a student until a police officer went to warn the teacher. There is even a room in this school called 'guillotine' where we are given inhuman beatings. Madam, I can even show you the scars on my body. (SS School 1, 2021)

Two teachers at Schools 3 and 5 confirmed that innocent students are sometimes punished without proper investigation and that some teachers punish students out of annoyance. They made the following statements:

At times the students tend to be angry with the school when we do collective flogging. It can be a class that is so noisy that we just come and punish the whole class, but some students are faultless. So those are not satisfied. (ST School 3, 2021)

Some of these scenarios come up out of anger due to a lack of control by the teachers. (ST School 5, 2021)

Students are bullied indiscriminately, which makes them scared of the bullies, as one student explained: "The students are frightened; just the shouting is terrible. For example,

teachers in this school make you feel a kind of fear that whenever they are around one feels uncomfortable” (SS School 1, 2021).

When asked how useful the punitive measures are, all the students said that they feel humiliated when they are beaten, insulted, bullied, and asked to pick a pin and kneel in front of their mates. The principals’ and teachers’ harsh attitudes make the students hate them. Two students explained it as follows:

Public flogging is very disgraceful because everyone will see how you are crying. The junior students laugh at you. By public flogging, I mean that two students will hold your legs and hands, and the teacher or principal will be flogging your buttocks. (SS School 4, 2021)

When they beat students and make them pick a pin, we start hating teachers instead of loving them. One is supposed to love a teacher, not start having grudges against a teacher. (SS School 5, 2021)

Furthermore, some students dislike their schools because they are responsible for mowing the lawn on the entire campus, which leaves them very tired. The high rate of mistreatment and brutalisation by older students against the younger ones is another factor that make students hate their school: “What I don’t like about the school is that students must clear all the grass, and we cannot read at night because of the large portions ... senior students illtreat and beat us” (SS School 2, 2021).

This sub-theme shows that students in PCCSS learn in insecure and unsafe environments. This feeling of insecurity reported by all the participating students is glaring proof that there is a disconnect between principals’ leadership and student learning. The principals must ensure that educational laws are respected. Therefore, the use of obsolete and humiliating punishments that reduce students to nothing makes school environments unhealthy for student learning. It is disappointing that school environments have been transformed into military barracks where there are ‘guillotine rooms’. Adding to the physical pain, students are also psychologically traumatised, which may cause them to withdraw from school.

5.6.2 Sub-theme: Poor interaction and communication between the staff, guests, and students

This sub-theme evaluates the level of interaction and communication between the principal, teachers, and students, and it also examines how education officials who visit

the schools interact with the students. The students disclosed how they communicate their worries to the principal and their views about how they are treated by the principal, teachers, and educational officials, such as the Education Secretary, DDSE and Regional Delegate for Secondary Education. The students explained that they have to follow the proper channels to communicate their concerns to the principal. The class advisers or house parents are the first persons to be contacted by students with problems. Issues that cannot be handled at these levels are forwarded to the discipline masters, and then to the vice principal, and finally to the principal, if necessary. The participants were asked about situations in which students are given direct access to the principal's office, and out of the 36 students interviewed, more than half were dissatisfied that only students with health crises had direct access to the principals' office because it means that some of their problems are not effectively handled by the principals. The following comments establish these findings:

You go to the house parent or class master when you have a problem. From there, the matter moves to the discipline master, the vice principal, and if the matter is too serious, it is taken to the principal during their weekly meetings. (SS School 1, 2021)

Students can be granted direct access to the principal's office if they are seriously sick. We don't like this style because it makes the principal not know our difficulties. (SS School 2, 2021)

While some students said they would love to have direct contact with the principal about confidential issues that they do not feel free to share with the teachers, other students indicated an unwillingness to discuss their problems directly with the principals. When asked to give examples of such sensitive issues, one student at School 1 said that they cannot report to teachers when they are mistreated by the teachers. A student in School 5 said that they do not want to share their problems directly with the principal because of his unfriendly demeanour. The students made the following comments:

If permitted, I prefer to tell my problem to the principal because the way the teachers interact with the students in this school is sometimes really poor. A student who has a problem with teachers will not want to report it. (SS School 1, 2021)

Students sometimes feel uncomfortable discussing their worries with the principal because they are afraid to face him. For example, our principal is always frowning, making him look wild. (SS School 5, 2021)

Students at School 2 reported that although the principal said they could come to him, when necessary, most are too scared because he is a male principal at an all-girls school. The student explained it as follows:

Since this is a single-sex school, some students are shy to open up to the principal since he is a man. But the principal has informed us that he is our father so that we can communicate any problem to him at any time. (SS School 2, 2021)

Additionally, some teachers make life very uncomfortable for students by giving preferential treatment to students from affluent backgrounds. Teachers only ask particular students questions in class and refer to those who do not meet their expectations as dull. Other teachers hate students who are not on good terms with their colleagues. The students also feel uneasy with teachers who spend valuable class time on irrelevant issues. Teachers' negative attitudes can only demotivate student learning. Students at Schools 4 and 2 said the following:

Some teachers show more love to wealthy students, and they have their special students in the class who answer questions, and if you give a wrong answer, they say you are dull. Some teachers turn to hate students because other teachers hate them, making them uncomfortable. For example, if a teacher fights against a student, the teacher will tell his colleagues, and the colleagues will start hating the student. (SS School 4, 2021)

When the teachers come to class to teach, they have this favourite person they always talk about, which makes the students feel down and discourages their bookwork. (SS School 2, 2021)

The findings of this study revealed unfriendly student learning environments in PCCSS. The unequal treatment given to students make marginalised students feel they do not belong in the schools, which adversely affects their learning. Students who feel their teachers hate them will not want to stay in school.

Regarding the interaction of students with educational authorities, the students are often informed when guests arrive. They are then ordered to welcome the guests and later move to the hall to be addressed by the visitors, after which working sessions are conducted during which students can ask questions. When asked who were involved in these sessions, I was informed that the staff are usually present, which prevents the students from asking sensitive questions. A student in School 3 revealed that on one occasion when a guest gave the students the opportunity to meet him and raise issues, the principal selected students and told them to say only good things about the school.

These experiences are explained in the following excerpts:

There is always a spirit of camaraderie when officials stop by. Students prepare a welcome song, and the bell jingles when the visitors come in. After speaking to the audience, a working session follows with the students. (SP School 6, 2021)

Our principal and teachers also sit in the hall. Students grumble that they cannot ask questions because of them. Last month when the ES [Education Secretary] came here and wanted to

talk with some students, the principal chose 10 of us and warned us not to say anything funny about this school. (SS School 3, 2021)

The lack of suggestion boxes in most schools is yet another indication of poor communication between the principals and the students. Two of the six schools have suggestion boxes available to students, but in one of these schools, students complained that the box is inaccessible because it is in the administrative building, which limits their contributions as they fear being noticed by the administrators when dropping their suggestions. The students had the following to say:

In my former school, we had containers to drop our suggestions, but there is none here. (SS School 6, 2021)

The suggestion box is placed at the administrative block, and students do not want to be seen when they drop their points. (SS School 4, 2021)

When asked how they are informed of school rules and regulations, the principals, students, and teachers said that the information is disseminated to students using noticeboards and verbal announcements by the prefects and teachers. One student answered that “there is a notice board in school where all rules, regulations, and punishment for defaulters are placed. At devotions, the prefects and teachers always read the school’s rules” (SS School 3, 2021).

The strict requirements for students to meet with principals, the poor interactions between the students and teachers, and unfriendly demeanour of principals may limit students’ connection with principals. Furthermore, when students are intimidated into not telling the truth about the school, the learning environments in the schools are not conducive to learning, which also signifies a disconnect between leadership and student learning.

5.6.3 Sub-theme: Low student engagement in decision-making processes

Students were asked about their role in making decisions about aspects of school life. Their responses revealed low student engagement in making decisions about issues that directly concern students, such as the student menu (in the case of boarding schools), canteen items, and the prioritisation of school needs. While most students indicated that they are not asked for their opinions before decisions that affect them are made, a few indicated that their opinions are occasionally asked about their meals. There is little to no room for feedback from students. Students answered the question as follows:

We are not the ones who decide on the type of meals. The administration makes the decision whether we like it or not. Even the things in the canteen ..., the decision is taken by the administration, and even the school needs. (SS School 1, 2021)

Students are often not consulted before making decisions on student affairs, such as the menu. They are not asked what they feel about the meals. The school gives what is available. (SS School 6, 2021)

At School 5, the principals' end-of-year report to the DDSE for the academic year 2020/2021 revealed that students were represented at the Board of Governors and PTA meetings by the president of the ex-students' association, whose role is to convey the proposed projects presented by the principal to the association members for action. The lack of representation of current students in such decision-making meetings limits their ability to share their concerns with the representative of the ex-student's association, who only comes to school to attend meetings about development projects. The principal of School 5 said, "The students were ably represented by the president of the ex-student's association during the Board and PTA meetings and promised to liaise with his comrades for assistance with the library project" (SP School 5, p. 11, 2020/2021).

The limited student involvement in the issues that affect them and lack of opportunity for feedback can harm the context of student learning, which can in turn create a gap between the students and the principal.

5.6.4 Sub-theme: Low-quality meals

The students were asked to give reasons for their disruptive behaviours, and I discovered that most students left the school grounds without permission to buy food because the school food is poorly prepared and insufficient. Students said the following:

For those who break bounds by scaling the fence, the reason is that they don't cook good food in school, so they do so to go and buy food. School is boring; social activities are very few and rare ... no dancing. (SS School 1, 2021)

We dislike the food that is given in the refectory. Some are tasteless. (SS School 4, 2021)

Confirming the students' complaints, the principal at School 4 reported during the PTA annual general that "students break bounds to buy the very rice and beans we give them at school" (SP School 4, p. 11, 2020).

5.6.5 Sub-theme: Insufficient social activities

Students at School 6 are dissatisfied with the complete absence of social activities for students, and one student said, “The rules are not good because they don’t make students feel lively, so they are bored; for example, no socials” (SS School 6, 2021).

5.6.6 Sub-theme: Lack of social and emotional support

Under this sub-theme, students expressed their lack of trust in and fear of betrayal by the principals and teachers, which affect their social and emotional lives. In School 4, students were promised different meals and lower prices at the canteen, but to the students’ frustration these were never done. Similarly, a student at School 6 said that students do not have confidence in their principal as he does not keep confidential information to himself. The following are the students’ comments:

He keeps making promises about changing the meals but doesn’t fulfil the promise. He even said he would reduce the prices of some items in the canteen, but they are still the same. (SS School 4, 2021)

Some students do not feel free to discuss their problems with the principal because the principal might reveal the matter to the school if he deems it unnecessary. (SS School 6, 2021)

In Schools 5 and 4, some students claimed that some female students are intimidated by male teachers who make advances toward them and intimidate them to prevent them from telling the principal. Students did write a complaint and slipped the paper under the principal's door, but the complaint was ignored. A student said she has decided to keep her issues to herself because she does not trust the teachers and principal. The following are comments made by the students:

Some teachers have the habit of threatening students, making them uncomfortable. For instance, when a male teacher is attracted to a female student and makes an approach, and the student refuses, the teacher will threaten the student not to report. (SS School 5, 2021)

A student will write a letter, place it under the principal’s door, and wait for a call from him. But sometimes he ignores some problems. I keep my things to myself because it is very difficult to trust anyone. (SS School 4, 2021)

Lack of freedom of speech makes students afraid of their leaders. So, students are scared that what they say to the principal can cause the principal to use it against the student. (SS School 1, 2021)

Furthermore, students at School 2 do not trust their principal because they were asked to contribute financially to build a wall that is necessary to protect their privacy. A student at

School 2 stated, “The principal said we should contribute money if we wanted the toilet area closed, but we refused” (SS School 2, 2021)

The bad attitude of teachers who are supposed to take care of the students betrays the trust of students, and this may affect students’ relationship with the principal and teachers, creating an unfriendly environment for students learning. If female students are not safe in schools, there is no safe place to learn, and girl children must be safe to attend school and complete their secondary school education.

A school environment that promotes student learning must be peaceful and safe and must provide social and emotional support to students, especially during adolescence. Regrettably, the opposite is happening in most PCCSS. Consequently, the school leadership disconnection from student learning makes students feel lonely and depressed, resulting in poor academic achievement.

5.6.7 Sub-theme: Insufficient sanitary, health, and security care

This sub-theme emerged from students’ views concerning the quality of available facilities. Students in School 3 said they felt uncomfortable using the pit toilets, of which there are not enough, and the dirty bathrooms. In five of the six schools, the students remarked that there is no or little clean drinking water. Attempts to get water from outside are fruitless because the water is filthy and unsafe for human consumption. The following quotations justify these findings:

I dislike the pit toilets because they are very nasty, full, smelling, and not disinfected all the time. (SS School 3, 2021)

There is the problem of lack of good water. The school has made efforts to carry water out of campus in dirty jugs, which even changes the water’s colour. We cannot keep our dresses and dormitories clean since water does not always flow. (SS School 5, 2021)

However, a student at School 1 revealed that the principal has made the toilet situation a priority and that work has begun at the girls’ dormitories. He said, “The principal is trying to build modern toilets, and workers are already at the girls’ camp” (SS School 1, 2021).

The health care situation at the boarding schools is also a concern to many students. The students revealed that the infirmaries lack essential drugs for minor ailments, and that treatment is given by unqualified and unfriendly personnel who accuse the sick students

of pretending and not in their office during work hours. They also stated that injections are given incorrectly, and the same treatment is given for all ailments. Therefore, the inability of principals to ensure better health care for students creates a gap between both parties.

Another alarming complaint is that even though School 2 is a boarding school, there is no dispensary. This forces students to regularly leave school for medical attention, which is detrimental to learning. Two of the students said the following:

Many students complain that the nurses are not well trained for healthcare. This is because the place is swollen when the students are injected. We have different complaints, but they give paracetamol to all illnesses. Also, the nurses come very late and close early. The nurses are also very rude. They shout at students and tell them they are pretending. (SS School 1, 2021)

Then, we do not have a dispensary in school for the healthcare service. We must be moving out of school, which disturbs our studies. (SS School 2, 2021)

Students from three schools said they feel unsafe because the campuses are unfenced, which is dangerous during the political crisis during which students are kidnapped from PCC boarding schools. A student explained it as follows:

We do not have a fence around the school or gates. We live and sleep in fear, especially as boys have been entering schools to kidnap students and even shoot and kill them. I am afraid of what can happen to us, especially as we are all girls. (SS School 2, 2021)

When connecting school leadership to student learning, students' comfort should be a priority to principals. Though some principals are making improvements, the above-mentioned environmental circumstances are not favourable to student learning. These uncondusive student learning environments in PCCSS need urgent attention.

5.6.8 Sub-theme: Lack of other resources

Concerning the quality of available resources, students also complained of the lack of current study material at the library, inadequate laboratory equipment, lack of playgrounds, overcrowded refectories and dorms with poor ventilation, and insufficient beds. These amenities must be improved in order for students to learn effectively, as seen in the following statement:

The school campus is small, with no field where students can play. The refectory and dormitories are congested and not ventilated. We can't sleep well when it is hot, especially as we sleep two per bed in some dormitories. The computers are too few. The books at the library are not helpful. (SS School 4, 2021)

The deficient infrastructure was also reported in the minutes of the end-of-year class council meeting held on June 16, 2021, and the principal of School 1 said, “We must bring the refectory and dormitories to standards” (p 2).

This theme and the entire findings revealed that there is a disconnection between school leadership and student learning, which comes from lack of leadership competency, poor relationships between principals, teachers, and students, and unsafe and insecure school contexts.

5.7 Theme 6: Proposed Alternative Strategies to Ensure Safe and Secure Learning Environments

In a bid to discover alternative strategies that can be implemented to ensure safe and secure student learning environments in PCCSS, principals, teachers, and students were asked to make suggestions. These strategies are grouped into two sub-themes, namely improving learning and environment, and reviving work conditions and relationships.

5.7.1 Sub-theme: Improving learning and environment

Students want a more learner-friendly atmosphere and suggested that the facilities and resources needed to study, such as laboratories, clean water, generators, fences, sports fields, and library material must be provided or improved. They also asked that teachers and principals take their opinions into consideration, especially concerning meals and canteen items. School 2 students asked that the school hire someone to cut the grass so they can have more time to learn. They also mentioned that principals should be trustworthy and fulfil their promises. Lastly, they want the principals to abolish corporal and humiliating punishments. The following comments are examples of these requests:

I suggest that the computer lab and refectory should be increased. Library books should be updated. They should also plan to purify the water constantly and buy an electric generator. The principal and teachers should not be too wild. They should consider our opinions in our meals, and the canteen is equipped with snacks for our basic needs. (SS School 5, 2021)

I think the school should look for a machine that can be used to clear grass so that we have more time to read. The principal should give us the meal he promised. The campus should be fenced. We need fields for games. Insults and floggings should stop. (SS School 2, 2021)

A teacher suggested that student meals be improved to the quality and quantity students need (ST School 5, 2021).

Lastly, many students asked for workshops on improving teacher-student relationships to be organised. One student put it as follows: “I wish seminars could be held with the teachers on how to interact with the students because the way students and teachers interact in this school is inferior” (SS School 1, 2021).

5.7.2 Sub-theme: Reviving work conditions and relationships

The principals and teachers proposed several strategies to improve their work conditions and relationships, such as better pay packages and regular pay, revising the PCC development/appointment strategy, sufficient modern teaching resources, approachability of principals, employment of skilled counselling personnel, improved teacher diligence, on-campus accommodation for duty post holders, improved relationships between the proprietor-staff, principal-teachers-students and teachers-students, and curbing students’ insolence and violence. They believed these proposals will help restore safe and secure learning environments in secondary schools. The quotes that follow attest to these findings:

Salaries should be motivating and regular. Principals and teachers should be encouraged to receive training by reconsidering the unfavourable conditions. Appointments should be based on merit. Internet should be installed to help us get current material for lessons. The principal needs to change the manner of interaction with teachers. We must learn to make the students feel free to open to us. I think this will reduce arrogance and fights by students. (ST School 3, 2021)

I am trying to improve the labs and make provisions for game facilities to stop students from frequent requests for permission. I propose that the proprietor abides by government regulation by providing trained counselling services for the students. Housing administrative staff to enhance commitment is also imperative. (SP School 6, 2021)

The teachers and principals also reiterated the need for training from the PCC and government to improve pedagogic and leadership practices. The following are examples of the comments:

The first is that the PEA needs to train leaders, not bosses. (ST School 6, 2021)

The government should create more forums for workshops for administrators and teachers where administrative and pedagogic issues are constantly discussed. (SP School 2, 2021)

The participants also asked for their workload to be reduced so they can be more effective and called on the government to settle the political crises so that peace can return to school environments: “The proprietor should cut down on the workload. The government

should resolve the Anglophone Crisis so that schools can be effective again” (ST School 5, 2021).

Most of the suggested strategies show that humans are relational beings and that leadership is all about relationships. Therefore, school leadership that connects to student learning requires principals to be excellent relational officers by establishing healthy relationships with the staff and students.

5.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented and analysed findings from the interviews with the three groups of participants. It discussed how principals understand the connection between context and student learning, and the findings revealed that not all school heads are able to interpret the relationship between the concepts. This indicates a leadership deficiency that affects principals’ ability to create healthy student learning environments in the schools. However, some principals understand the link between context and student learning and disclosed that a positive learning context positively affects student learning. The findings also showed that teachers are not familiar with the concept of student learning, and some even confessed that they have never heard of the concept. However, a participant likened student learning to the different ways in which students use their abilities to learn.

The findings also revealed that the principals and teachers are not professionally trained, and although the PEA uses internal workshops and seminars to support leadership and teaching, the lack of professional training may hinder leadership connection to student learning because the wrong leadership practices are used. The participants also noted that the training workshops do not happen regularly.

Despite the efforts by principals and teachers to create viable conditions for effective student learning, the study showed an urgent need for school leaders to realise that effective leadership is about building healthy relationships. Healthy relationships translate to conducive environments for students to learn effectively. The participants identified the measures used to create effective student learning, including creating an atmosphere of conviviality, staff involvement in decision-making, identifying students’ needs, and using

bullying, insults, and flogging. Unfortunately, the students stated that some of these measures create fear, tension, and insecurity. The findings showed that the relationship between principals and students, principals and teachers, and teachers and students do not reflect a learner-friendly context. While the principals decry the uncooperative attitude of teachers, the latter dislike the unapproachable character of the principals in some schools. At the same time, the principals and teachers frown at the disruptive behaviour of students while the students blame the staff for neglecting their social, emotional, and academic needs. Students' needs are neglected because of poor connection, and a lack of unequipped specialised rooms, medical facilities, electricity, and clean water. This is evidence of a disconnect between school leadership and student learning.

The data also revealed the challenges faced in the schools, including unavailability and inadequacy of modern academic facilities and services, poor relationships, weaknesses in the PCC educational policy, high teacher mobility rate, non-involvement in decision-making, insufficient meals, lack of trust, insecurity, violence, resistance from students, and humiliating punishments. The findings also showed that students' voices must be heard and considered. It was discovered that there is recurrent exaggerated deviant behaviour irrespective of the measures taken to discipline students, which requires a collective effort by all educational stakeholders. Steps taken to address the challenges were discussed and the findings showed that an educational institution void of basic facilities for learning and extracurricular activities coupled with poor communication and violence is a stumbling block to principals attempts to connect their leadership to student learning through the environment.

Finally, the participants proposed strategies that may help school leaders connect to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian school context. These were improving learning and environment and reviving work conditions and relationships. Generally, the findings from this research revealed an unhealthy climate for learning, and if this is not addressed, it may continue to damage the environment in which students learn, and by so doing, strain the connection between school leadership and student learning. The next chapter discusses the findings (themes) by connecting them to the literature reviewed and the relational leadership theory.

CHAPTER 6

DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 Introduction

The preceding chapter presented the research findings. The current chapter discusses the research findings in connection with the related literature to reinforce the findings (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Frank & Hatak, 2014). The relational leadership theory based on LMX and interpersonal trust is also used in the discussion. This theoretical framework emphasises the need for the leader (principal) to initiate healthy relationships with the members (students and teachers) of an organisation (educational institution) through quality conversations and interactions that bring members to work together to enhance trust and to promote members' ability to perform (Brower et al., 2000; Sklaveniti, 2016). The six identified main themes discussed are principals' perceptions of context and student learning; teachers' understanding of student learning; creating viable conditions for student learning; challenges faced by principals and teachers coupled with their coping measures; unsafe and insecure student learning environments in PCCSS; and alternative strategies for ensuring safe and secure learning environments.

6.2 Principals' Perceptions of Context and Student Learning

This theme assesses how PCCSS principals understand the connection between context and student learning, which was the foundation of this research. Different sub-themes emerged from the participants' knowledge and views on this subject. These sub-themes include leadership practices that promote enabling learning environments; practising appropriate leadership that provides teacher support for learning; and monitoring students' activities for success. The sub-themes are analysed and discussed in the following subsections.

6.2.1 A function of leadership practices that promote enabling learning environments

Examining the principals' perceptions of context and student learning was paramount in this study carried out in six PCCSS. It was noted that some principals were able to

interpret the school context's connection with student learning, and others were unfamiliar with the concepts and could not establish how they are linked. Of the six principals, only three responded correctly to the question, and they explained that the connection between context and student learning is a function of appropriate leadership practices that provide learning environments suitable for students' success. Effective school leaders must be able to articulate the vocabulary surrounding their functions and be conscious of the role a positive school climate plays in students' success because creating an effective school environment for teaching and learning is strongly connected to student learning. Participants revealed that students can only learn comfortably in a healthy school environment, considering internal and external environmental factors. Such an environment has modern infrastructure, learning facilities, love, and concern and is void of discrimination, violence, favouritism, nepotism, and corruption. They stated that the school context can also positively or negatively influence student learning and achievement.

Many scholars concur with the above findings on the school context's influence on student learning and performance. UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) stated that the prevalent environmental school conditions are a major determinant of student learning, and castigated harsh school environments that hinder student learning. The established linkage that learning conditions have with student learning and performance is backed by Kiliñç (2014), who argued that students' academic achievement is strongly connected to effective leadership. Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) agreed that the context of student learning is relevant. Findings from this study confirmed the connection between context and student learning because an environment that engages students' interests and attracts their attention facilitates learning (Allington, 2008, cited in Presseisen, 2008).

The consciousness of some principals about the connection that context has with student was a positive signal that suggest they can identify and relate with student-related concerns for facilitating student learning. However, awareness of this link is not proof that these principals correctly implement their practices by closely connecting their roles to the school context to enhance effective student learning, as the subsequent themes reveal. Usman and Syaputri (2020) established that leadership can contribute to student learning by connecting closely with the school environment. How and what principals do

to connect their roles directly to learning environments and how it influences a positive learning attitude and outcome were vital to this study. Connecting closely with the school context obliges principals to positively engage with the students, and these interactions enhance positive relationships and interpersonal trust (Sklaveniti, 2016). Quality interactions with students facilitate principals' awareness of students' interests, needs, and impressions about their learning. Exhibiting care and concern demands that principals consider students' voices and provides solutions to ensure a safe and secure environment. A conducive school environment enhances unity, confidence, love, and effective student learning. Applying the relational leadership model based on LMX and interpersonal trust is useful for principals to effectively connect their role to student learning.

6.2.2 Practising appropriate leadership that provides teacher support for learning

An important finding on the principals' perceptions of context and student learning in PCCSS was some principals understanding of it. The explanations of two principals under this sub-theme did not demonstrate a clear relationship between context and student learning, and one related the connection between the concepts to practising appropriate leadership styles to ensure teachers learn to teach students. When asked to clarify, the principal further explained that the relationship between context and student learning involves exercising a leadership style that reinforces student learning by ensuring teachers achieve their teaching goals. Though teacher support contributes to student learning (Leithwood et al., 2004), teacher support alone does not suffice for the overall school conditions that influence student learning. It is worth noting that instructional leadership practices geared towards empowering teachers do not reflect the intrinsic connection that context has with student learning, and therefore, this could mean that school contexts in PCCSS are not well attended to. The principal concerned did not understand these concepts and the connection between them, and he viewed it as more instructional-oriented. This shows that leadership in PCCSS is more focused on how teachers teach than how students learn.

However, lacking understanding of context's important role in enhancing student learning means lacking understanding of the environment in which students learn. When principals cannot articulate the school context, they cannot appropriately address students' current contextual needs, which negatively impacts student learning. This makes principals ineffective leaders, which indicates a gap between leadership and student learning in PCCSS.

These observations support Day et al.'s (2011) finding that there is a link between successful leadership and student learning and achievement. The researchers indicated that school heads must be able to correctly implement their practices in congruence with the contexts in which they operate in order to impact student learning positively. Day et al. insisted that the failure of principals to understand and respond suitably to the prevailing context indicates weak leadership, and Kelley and Shaw (2009) argued that such inadequacies are common in many schools. Although some principals could discern the vital link between context and student learning, Kelley and Shaw's assertion also shows that PCCSS have characteristics of weak leadership. Improving teacher quality at the expense of the student learning environment, as demonstrated by principals' responses in this study, has been an issue of concern to some educational bodies (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007), who agreed that neglecting school context is a huge deficiency in school leadership and student learning.

Although Holahan and Batey (2019) indicated that recent research showed rising interest in the school environment as an essential aspect of learning, Kraft and Falken (2020) argued that for quite some time educational reforms have been too focused on improving teacher quality and did not pay enough attention to teaching and learning contexts. Mufua (2019) confirmed that many Cameroonian school leadership studies focused on instructional supervision rather than leadership for student learning. Other researchers confirmed the exhaustive studies on the instructional leadership model (Gumus et al., 2018). The absence of sufficient research on the teaching and learning context vis-à-vis student learning seems to be the reason PCCSS principals pay more attention to instructional supervision than to context. Hallinger (2011) acknowledged that his finding on leadership for learning and change failed to link leadership to its context. In Day et al.'s (2011) study on leadership connectivity to student learning, they also noted that

school heads focused on academic achievement. According to the above findings, limited information on the context and student learning could hinder Cameroon's principals from keeping abreast with the context-related aspects of an educational institution, and no doubt harms student learning. However, ignorance is not an excuse for leadership deficiencies. Notwithstanding limited research into the link between school context and student learning, school principals must be sensitive to environmental factors that improve teaching and learning. Özgenel (2020) affirmed that disregarding the school environment may result in leadership ineffectiveness that hamper student learning.

The principals' shallow understanding of the relationship between the concepts under discussion was reflected in another principal's response that the concepts under review are associated with principals' efforts to ensure effective syllabus coverage for students' evaluation. This view implies that principals' leadership concentrates more on students' academic achievement rather than learning conditions. The literature on the influence of instructional leadership on students' outcomes supported this view (Costello, 2015; Fink & Markholt, 2013; Hung & Ponnusamy, 2010; Urlick, 2016). This idea in itself is not bad, but when leadership focuses more on assessment and push the conditions under which students learn to the background, it might negatively affect student learning and outcomes. I feel that of the four components of student learning (process, context, content, and outcomes), student learning context is the foundation that sustains the other components. The other three components will certainly crumble if the foundation is not strong. In South Africa, Marishane (2020) showed that principals must pay equal attention to the four components of student learning to ensure student achievement. Therefore, it would be costly for school heads who are supposed to have an in-depth knowledge of the components of student learning to be ignorant of the deep bond that context and student learning have. Thus, PCCSS leaders who cannot link the context to student learning are not likely to display such intelligence, which will undoubtedly set back student learning.

Leadership effectiveness is key to the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust as members' success depends on the leadership quality (Brower et al., 2000; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Sklaveniti, 2016). This theory supports leadership application of practical wisdom with some technical knowledge to enable members to perform at their best. Therefore, leaders (principals) must take responsibility to develop themselves to save

them from the embarrassment of performing below expectations. Getting and using the required knowledge about their leadership roles will promote awareness of the strong and inseparable relationship between these concepts and endow them with the wisdom and technical knowledge needed to attend to contextual situations that positively affect teaching and learning. The result will be healthy platforms that sustain positive interpersonal relationships for effective teaching and learning, which implies that linking leadership to student learning will mean less challenges for principals.

6.2.3 Monitoring students' activities for students' success.

It was also found that principals interpret the connection between context and student learning as monitoring students' activities. When asked for an explanation, the principal explained that students do various activities, and for students to learn and succeed in life, the leader must facilitate and monitor these activities. Hence, the principals understood the context and student learning connection as leadership monitoring students' success. This was yet another superficial response, which means this principal was also unable to establish the link between context and student learning, which indicates a gap between school leadership and the context in which students learn. This finding contradicts Marishane's (2016) finding that successful school leadership cannot be disconnected from the context in which it operates.

Principals should know that the environment is the foundation for students learning and they should secure a school climate that fosters student learning. The manner in which some principals expressed their understanding of context and student learning cast doubt on their capability. Wirba (2015) also conducted a study in Cameroon and expressed doubts as to the effective implementation of transformational leadership by principals. One may conclude that if principals cannot exhibit inspirational and motivational skills that influence teachers towards organisational commitment and job satisfaction (Lyonga, 2019), then the idea that they are aware of the importance of creating friendly student learning contexts may be far-fetched. This suggests that the leadership of PCCSS principals needs attention.

It was indeed shocking that three of the six principals could not define the link between context and student learning, especially as one of the principles have a post-graduate degree in leadership and management. This theme showed that there is a gap between leadership and student learning in PCCSS. This gap can be narrowed if principals try to bring the students closer to their leadership by expanding their roles beyond policy documents, directives, and job descriptions, and start building and improving everyday relationships with the teachers and students (Cunliffe & Ericksen, 2011). If principals do not only focus on the outcome of students' activities but also engage in conversations to discover the difficulties students face when learning, students will understand that principals are interested in their success, and this will create a good learning climate. Positive interpersonal relationships between principals and students automatically result in a favourable environment based on concern, which will positively impact student learning. In order for this to happen, principals must be professionally competent, as indicated in relational leadership theory and the findings of some researchers (Brower et al., 2000; Bush & Glover, 2014; Marishane, 2020; Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020).

PCCSS are owned by a private organisation (PCC) but operates under the supervision of the government. The PCC is expected to help the state provide sound education to the citizens and non-citizens in the country. The evidence of leadership incapability indicates that the state does not provide enough supervision over the running of the private education sector. Evaluating the quality of leadership in private secondary schools would make school providers aware of the contextual implications on student learning. This would help to breach the gap between leadership and student learning. Therefore, regular consultations between the RDSS, DDSS, and the providers of secondary educational institutions are important.

6.3 Teachers' Understanding of Student Learning

In this theme, various ways in which teachers understand the concept of student learning are discussed. These different interpretations were segmented into sub-themes based on the teachers' responses. The following sub-themes fall under this theme: Proper use of pedagogic approaches to enhance students' understanding; having qualified teachers to

teach students; students' different abilities to assimilate information; use of the learner-centred approach in teaching; and executing academic activities within a specified period.

6.3.1 Proper use of pedagogic approaches to enhance students' understanding

This sub-theme emerged from teachers' comments that student learning is the appropriate use of pedagogic methods to make sure teachers dispense the right knowledge to enhance students' comprehension. The findings showed that many teachers see student learning solely as the learning processes, though student learning goes beyond the methods used in teaching. Student learning cannot be related to only one of its aspects because students learn differently and one approach to teaching does not work for every student (Hawk & Shah, 2017). A report from the *World Bank Education Strategy* (2020, cited in De Siqueira, 2012) disclosed that student learning is at the centre of every learning institution, which means that teachers are in schools because students have to learn. Therefore, if teachers do not know the intricacies involved in the reason they are in schools, it means that they are ignorant of the influence that considering students' needs, interests, abilities, conditions, and backgrounds have on learning. Lacking this knowledge will make their interactions with students difficult, at the detriment of learning environments. Therefore, it is imperative that teachers have a sound knowledge of the intricacies involved in student learning (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). However, it is the responsibility of principals, as relational leaders with wisdom and technical knowledge, to ensure teachers are prepared to perform effectively as per the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust (Brower et al., 2000). Implementing some of this theory's leadership principles, which are dialogue, participation, effective performance, and concern, will give teachers an understanding of student learning and resolve this serious problem.

6.3.2 Having qualified teachers

The findings also showed teachers described student learning as having qualified teachers to educate students. Although Printy (2010) advocated for teachers to undergo training to equip them with professional abilities to enable them to handle the technology of teaching, the above definition of student learning is wrong. This description of student

learning also contradicts Darling-Hammond's (2008) definition that student learning must consider individual students' particular conditions and backgrounds. The participants' inability to provide a correct definition of student learning shows that their performance may not be up to standard, which is harmful to student learning in PCCSS. This lack of knowledge may be the result of a lack of professional training, which is discussed in subsection 6.5. The relational leadership theory states that principals must involve teachers in creating the organisational context (Sklaveniti, 2016), which makes it mandatory for principals to initiate regular in-service forums aimed at upgrading teachers' capacities. In doing so, teachers will have a better understanding of this concept and be able to contribute to school contexts to improve student learning.

6.3.3 Students' different abilities to assimilate information

Only one of the 12 participating teachers had some understanding of what student learning means. The teacher indicated that student learning refers to the different ways in which students use their abilities to assimilate what is taught. He further explained that students' ability to assimilate information depends on teachers' presentation. It is true that the student learning process must take into consideration the acquisition of knowledge, but it is not limited to that, and Andersen (2006) observed that students' retention ability is not enough to ensure learning. However, the teacher further explained that the way in which the teacher presents the lesson determines students' different retention capabilities, which is close to the definition of student learning by Fry et al. (2008), who defined student learning as the degree to which students learn and how teachers teach to enable learning to occur.

6.3.4 Use of the learner-centred approach to teaching

Other teachers believed that student learning means the use of the child-centred method in teaching. However, Entwistle and Ramsden (2015) described student learning as the way or state in which different students learn. As earlier discussed, the use of just one ingredient of pedagogy does not ensure student learning, and according to Entwistle and Ramsden, students' different abilities, interests, motivations, learning conditions, and expectations should be included in student learning.

If student learning is reduced to teaching style, it may mean that other aspects of student learning, such as learning conditions (context), content, and outcome are side-lined in PCCSS. Thus, these teachers' lack of understanding of student learning reinforces the urgent need for teachers to receive more training. It is also worrisome that the principals do not have the capacity to help teachers because of their limited knowledge of school leadership as discussed in section 6.2. This makes it unlikely that the PCCSS environment is conducive to student learning, and that leadership connects context to student learning.

6.3.5 Executing academic activities within a specified period

One teacher at first said that he was not familiar with the concept but then stated that student learning is how educational activities are carried out within a defined time period. This is incorrect because student learning refers to the conditions in and outside classrooms under which students learn, taking into consideration their collective and individual needs, concerns, interests, and abilities in order to ensure positive learning outcomes. Teachers are the providers of all professions (Law No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998) and are therefore very important in education. However, if they do not know what student learning means, which is the core business of schools (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001), they may not know about the aforementioned aspects. As such, they may struggle to offer good learning experiences to students and to cooperate with leadership to link student learning. According to the relational leadership theory, all members must have the ability to perform effectively for the growth of an establishment.

Although most teachers were unable to give satisfactory responses to what student learning is, one participant gave meaningful feedback. However, these findings show that learning contexts in PCCSS need urgent attention.

6.4 Creating Viable Conditions for Student Learning

This theme looked at how principals and teachers create suitable conditions for effective student learning. The following sub-themes emerged from this theme: making teachers duty conscious and providing for their needs; maintaining good principal-teacher

relationships; establishing a friendly atmosphere between principals and students; fostering teacher-student relationship; staff involvement in decision-making; availability of modern infrastructure and facilities; identifying students' needs and challenges; the use of flogging, bullying, and insults to maintain student discipline.

6.4.1 Making teachers duty conscious and providing for their needs

Principals were asked about the ways in which they strive to create conducive learning environments for students, and they listed ensuring teachers do their jobs, providing resources for teachers, and making sure teachers keep their learning material up to date. This ensures teachers are aware of their responsibilities with regards to implementing policies that guarantee proper preparation for teaching the students. This includes submitting lesson plans to vice principals for approval. A participant also mentioned that they use classroom observations, and according to Day et al. (2011), observations provide support, guidance, and advice for improvement. Teachers are visited by the principals and vice principals for lesson observations, and they provide feedback during individual teachers' meetings. The procedure mentioned here assures teachers are well prepared for effective student learning and can complete the curriculum in the allotted time. Many previous studies found that when principals focus on the educational mission of schools by overseeing, equipping, and empowering teachers, it provides meaningful learning experiences for students (Aburizaizah et al., 2019; Huguet et al., 2017; MacBeath, 2019; Msila, 2013).

However, in one school, teachers must provide evidence of having finished resources such as notebooks and pens before being supplied with more. This shows a lack of trust between the principal and teachers. This is a problem because Thornton (2010) pointed out that principals must invest in developing relational trust because it enhances student learning. However, the lack of trust can also be for the reason that some teachers have been dishonest in the past because many of the teachers have other part-time teaching jobs to help make ends meet due to their meagre pay packages.

Another problem is that it is difficult for teachers to follow the principals' instructions to upgrade their lessons because there are limited research facilities such as computers,

internet, and libraries in many of the selected schools. When teachers are poorly prepared, students cannot be taught well.

Many teachers are not comfortable with the classroom observations despite being informed of them ahead of time to avoid embarrassment. The fact that the teachers feel uneasy being supervised shows that they are not comfortable doing the tasks for which they are employed. This suggests that PCCSS teachers lack self-esteem, which may be because of inadequate training (see subsection 6.5.).

Lack of trust, research facilities, and self-esteem can all prevent the creation of conducive student learning environments. These negative conditions show that principals' efforts to create viable conditions for student learning through instructional supervision may not be as productive as desired. A good leader inspires and directs people to achieve goals (Helmrich, 2015), but resources and skills are necessary to achieve this. Chirichello (2004) indicated that good leadership goes beyond delegation and supervision. In the instances above, using the relational leadership theory based on interpersonal trust, which reiterates the necessity for the leader to consider members' needs and build trust, could ease principals' endeavours to create comfortable teaching and learning environments for teachers and students.

Some principals encourage teachers to make the study programme available to students so they are familiar with the syllabus and can be prepared. Meetings are regularly held with teachers to find out what they need and to evaluate the work pace. Asking teachers what they need without then providing what they need is useless. Theory without practice does not show results. It was also found that class prefects can report problematic teacher behaviour, such as arriving late, to the administration. This is done through monitoring sheets made available to the class prefects that they submit at the end of each day. This strategy of allowing prefects to give feedback on teachers is a good idea, provided the students are not taunted by the teachers. Evans (2000) observed that effective leadership provides an environment in which people are empowered and feel free to comment. Similarly, the relational leadership theory promotes involving all stakeholders in matters that concern them, irrespective of their status. This model encourages relational exchanges in which members belonging to the relationship appraises each other's

abilities, benevolence, and integrity for the activation of trust (Brower et al., 2000), as is the case between students and principals in this situation. Involving students helps the principal build a mutual relationship with them and portrays a degree of trust, which will in turn make the students love their principal. Love for their principal will increase their liking for the school environment and learning. Empowering students also makes them feel important and equips them with leadership qualities that may be useful in the future (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007).

6.4.2 Maintaining good principal-teacher relationships

The finding showed that ensuring a healthy relationship existed between principals and teachers is another method principals use to make their environments conducive to effective student learning. The principals also ensure there is cooperation between them and the members of the administrative bench. One principal motivates teachers who do a good job in kind or cash in order to lessen resistance and avoid friction. A good relationship between the principal and the staff can improve teachers' enthusiasm to improve student learning. The relational leadership model based on LMX and interpersonal trust confirms that principals should strive to initiate a cordial working connection with teachers by recognising their hard work. Since humans are relational beings (Eacott & Eacott, 2018), this helps create a stress-free environment and increases members' ability to perform (Brower et al., 2000). Good interactions may spill over and lead to positive relationships between teachers and students, which ensure a suitable context for student learning.

A participant acknowledged that being humble, approachable, and God-fearing are indispensable leadership qualities necessary to avoid resistance from teachers and create good relationships with them, which are imperative for safe environment for student learning. Gentilucci and Muto (2007) stated that for principals to have a strong influence on student learning, they must be approachable.

The fact that many principals and teachers have a bachelor's degree (Table 5.2) may cause problems between them because leaders are supposed to have an intellectual edge over the people they lead. Confirming my impression, Bush and Glover (2014)

stated that leadership is a process of influence based on personal and professional values leading to attaining the common objectives of the school, and therefore, when principals are not better educated than the teachers, it may affect their relationships, and consequently, the school environment.

6.4.3 Establishing a friendly atmosphere between principals and students

Establishing a friendly atmosphere between principals and students is another sub-theme that arose under this theme. Half of the principals could not say how they interact with the students to provide a friendly learning atmosphere. One of these participants revealed that she creates a warm relationship between her and the students by making sure the staff do their jobs well so that the students are satisfied. This response implies that the principal's leadership is not associated with the student learning context, which indicates a disconnect between leadership and student learning. This lack of awareness of some PCCSS principals on the positive influence the school climate has on student learning (Gray et al., 2017; Showers, 2019; Syahril & Hadiyanto, 2018) may be because so little educational research focuses on linking school leadership directly to the student learning context (Kraft & Falken, 2020; Marishane, 2020). Although the PEA Job Description (PCC, 2015) requires principals to guarantee a positive and healthy school climate for both teachers and students that results in quality school performance, it does not specify the context in which teachers and students teach and learn, and therefore, the document must be revised. The manner in which this principal interacts with students shows a poor relationship between her leadership and student learning and goes against the demands of the relational leadership theory, which lists three ways in which to improve the relationship. Firstly, principals must be aware of the vital role context plays in building cordial relationships with students. Secondly, allowing students to participate and engaging with them give principals a clear picture of the circumstances surrounding their learning, which can serve as a guide to build sound relationships with them. Thirdly, applying wisdom and technical knowledge help leadership explore better options to create friendly relationships with students that result in creating a viable context for learning.

Some principals create a friendly atmosphere by listening to students' concerns, providing solutions to their problems, making them feel at home, and reminding them to share their

worries using the official channels. Some scholars confirmed that creating a cheerful environment for students and staff members is central to a school's success and recommended that school leaders must support an open and safe learning environment that enables students to share their views freely (Anderson & Pounder, 2018). Similarly, De Maeyer et al. (2006) urged principals to create an academic climate in which students are listened to and receive help with their challenges. This implies that for school leadership to effectively connect to student learning, principals must create healthy relationships by paying attention to the contextual concerns of students. Again, the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust suggests positive interpersonal relationships between leaders and members.

6.4.4 Fostering positive teacher-student relationships

Fostering a positive teacher-student relationship is a sub-theme about how school leaders influence teachers' interactions with the students to provide a healthy student learning context. The results revealed that teachers are inspired by principals to establish friendly relationships with students by the principals' caring and friendly attitude. Teachers are further advised to provide exciting classrooms. As a mission school, the teachers are required to be considerate and demonstrate the fear of the Lord in all dealings with the students. Inspiring teachers is laudable as it is one of the qualities that a leader should possess to provide strong support to student learning (Kouzes & Posner, 1994, cited in Evans, 2009). Concerning the promotion of lively classrooms, Allington (2008) claimed that classrooms must be unique environments that encourage various skills and promote students' self-esteem. Researchers found high-quality interactions between students and staff initiated by the leader greatly contributes to student learning (Waters et al., 2003). Therefore, principals promoting sound teacher-student interactions contribute to creating contexts that support student learning.

The teachers claimed that they support the administration's creation of a positive student learning context by being friendly so that students feel free to communicate their worries to them. The study uncovered that, teachers take responsibility for monitoring students' activities and take care of sick students. Counselling the students on sensitive issues surrounding their social lives is another way in which teachers help foster a positive

student learning environment. The teachers are aware that showing care and concern towards students make them feel loved and valued, which allows them to excel in their academics. The relational leadership theory's implication for this sub-theme is that school leaders strive to bring their leadership, teachers, and students together for a supportive student learning context (Sklaveniti, 2016).

6.4.5 Staff involvement in decision-making

The research found that teachers participate in decision-making bodies, such as the PTA and staff meetings, where major decisions are taken in an attempt to create suitable conditions for student learning. However, the teachers felt that staff meetings are mostly used to discuss class council decisions, issues concerning social contributions, and their individual duty post commitments. Members of the administration are solely responsible for project prioritisation and disciplinary council decisions. It was also noted that currently enrolled students are not represented at any major decision-making body of the PEA. These revelations paint a picture of a tense environment resulting from leadership that is not open to suggestions for improvement. The exclusion of teachers and students in decisions-making shows a lack of trust, and without trust, there is nothing to motivate them to perform better. According to the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust, the teachers and students should be active contributors as fundamental school members (Brower et al., 2000). Leader and members become connected when they bring something of value to the leader-member exchange, which promotes trust (Hart et al., 2000). Contributions and feedback from such exchanges can keep principals informed for necessary action. Student representation at disciplinary council meetings and the prioritisation of school projects will strengthen the ties between students and principals, which will improve the student learning environment.

6.4.6 Availability of modern infrastructure and facilities

A few principals disclosed that modern infrastructure and facilities are necessary to create a student learning context that is conducive to teaching and learning, and therefore, they often ask the PEA and PTA for improved infrastructure. Authorised class size in well-arranged classrooms and quality lighting in classes were also discussed as ways of

making the context comfortable for students to study. Respecting class size is important for quality learning (Leithwood et al., 2004). The principals' efforts to ensure the students are well accommodated aligns with the relational leadership theory's suggestion that relationships can be strengthened between the organisational members when the leader considers the comfort of the members by identifying and making provision for their needs (Eacott & Eacott, 2018). However, though well-organised classrooms make for enjoyable learning that promotes productivity in teaching and learning (Magen-Nagar & Azuly, 2016), principals must also ensure student learning conditions outside classrooms are comfortable. Hunter (2006) affirmed this by advising school leadership to look beyond teaching and learning and look deeply within and around the school campus.

6.4.7 Identifying students' needs and challenges

This sub-theme looks at how principals identify the needs and challenges of students to safeguard a learning environment that is safe and secure. Some principals try to be approachable for students, so they feel free to communicate their worries to them; this is a positive way to fulfil students' needs and permits students to share their problems with principals without reservations. De Maeyer et al. (2006) and Marishane (2020) agreed that approachability is an important aspect of leadership to improve the context. Other criteria principals use to find out what students need is by paying extra attention to students who isolate themselves. However, it is dangerous to wait for students to isolate themselves before taking action, because isolation means the student had no one to talk to and became frustrated.

Apart from being approachable and taking note of isolated students, teachers who act as class advisers are solely responsible for identifying students' problems and providing solutions. However, it was revealed that problem-solving mainly happens at the teacher level, which is insufficient and may create distance between principals and students, which can result in failure, depression, and dropout. Day et al. (2011) and Marishane (2020) concurred that student learning can be negatively affected when principals fail to focus on problem identification and solving of students' problems. Principals must have problem-identification and problem-solving abilities to impact student learning effectively (Marishane, 2020). Thus, connecting leadership to student learning requires principals to

get closer to students, which enables them to identify the needs and challenges of even shy students for appropriate action. Using the relational leadership theory can strengthen their relationship to offer quality environments to students for effective learning and performance.

Another observation was that academic challenges can only be detected during assessments and evaluation. This implies that students who perform below average have challenges that were not identified before assessment, and this can be the reason some students do not improve despite pedagogic follow-up. It is ironic that a principal depends on feedback from students who had withdrawn to discover students' needs and challenges instead of finding out what the problems are while the students are still at school to prevent them from leaving. This finding shows a relational gap between some principals and students. It is for this reason that Leithwood et al. (2020) expressed the urgent need for school principals to adopt leadership strategies that align with the learning needs of students with positive relationships among school members to improve student learning.

6.4.8 Use of flogging, bullying, and insults to maintain student discipline

The outcomes of leadership that does not regard students' interests, needs, abilities, and challenges is clearly reflected in this sub-theme. It was found that there is a high crime rate in PCCSS. Gruesome and humiliating punitive measures are meted out on students in a bid to curb indiscipline in order to create safe and secure student learning environments. The study established that PCCSS contexts are not safe and secure for students as the principals, teachers, and students commit much violence. Participants testified that rebellious students are flogged, insulted, given hard labour, and bullied. The archaic mentality that an African child cannot behave without the cane is proof that the principals' leadership is still stuck in the past. Students are punished for the same disruptive behaviour that teachers commit, such as bullying. Injustice is not a virtue and should not be practiced in schools. As a measure of self-defence, a student fought so hard against a vice principal that the teacher's clothes were torn. These experiences of the participants do not create a picture of a peaceful learning environment. It is sad that in the 21st century, school campuses still harbour such harshness. A teacher indicated

that some teachers unleash their anger on students through corporal punishment, bullying, and insults, which is unprofessional. These principals and teachers fail to respect human rights. Students learning under such violent conditions live in hate and fear, and this may affect their relationships after they leave school.

Cameroon is not the only country where students learn in unsafe and insecure school environments, and violence in schools have also been reported in America (Bear, n.d.), Turkey (Karal, 2011), London (Raynor & Wylie, 2012), and Kenya (Nabiswa et al., 2016). Furthermore, a report from the World Bank (De Siqueira, 2012) revealed a disturbing picture of the academic outcome of students resulting from unsafe and insecure learning environments linked to poor performance of principals. Students cannot achieve in schools when they feel physically and emotionally unsafe and insecure because of violence and poor relationships (Bear, 2020; Palermo, 2018). Thus, it is vital that all educational stakeholders come together to put measures in place to completely eradicate violence and drug abuse in schools. Violence speaks of hostility, and a hostile context destroys relationships between the staff and students, making student learning frustrating. Respect for students' rights activates positive interactions that support teaching and learning, thereby closing the gap between leadership and student learning.

Another finding was that students commit serious offences, such as molestation, gross insubordination, consumption of hard drugs, violence, bullying, stealing, immorality, gambling, and scaling of the fence. These actions that may be caused by the unsafe environment of the schools show lapses in the principals' leadership (Ngwokabuenui, 2015). The violent reactions of principals and teachers to students' crimes is not only a violation of students' rights but is also evidence that PCCSS leadership do not have students' best interest at heart, which conflicts with *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007), which stated that students' best interest must be of primary importance to principals, and Article 3 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989), which requires the development of peaceful and student-friendly education. Positive student learning environments must be void of violence, humiliating punishment, aggression, and bullying (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The violent acts of the staff against the students and the issue of students fighting back widen the gap between the staff and students, thereby limiting the connection

between leadership and student learning. One would expect leadership in denominational schools to exhibit a strong sense of integrity, fairness, and love for humanity rather than bringing down students' self-esteem. As per the relational leadership theory, principals ought to be relational leaders who are good examples. Relational leaders focus on ethical issues such as respect, justice, care, and concern for the improvement of interpersonal relationships in establishments (Cunliffe & Ericksen, 2011). The violent and humiliating treatment given to students does not reflect these ethical issues.

Leadership setting a good example is vital because students learn what they see and hear. When students are respected, cared for, and valued by their teachers, students reciprocate, which improves discipline (Bear, 2020). The relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust recommend that the most effective way that leaders can identify and hold the needs and interest of members in high esteem is through dialogue and not bullying (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Dike (2019) urged principals to use restorative practices as alternative measures to behavioural change in students rather than the traditional sanctions of flogging, expulsion, and suspension to improve the school climate, and consequently, student learning. Restorative practices include counselling, caring, supporting, and respecting relationships (Obsuth et al., 2017). When principals use these practices, it builds positive relationships between principals, staff, and students, which guarantees healthy contexts for effective student learning.

6.5 Challenges Faced by Principals and Teachers

This theme looks at the challenges principals and teachers face and how they manage some of these challenges. The identified challenges are inappropriate school location, lack of qualified services, high teacher mobility rate, poor working conditions, inadequate accommodation amid insecurity, resistance from students, employer-employee relationships, and principals being unwelcoming to teachers. Coping measures for challenges are also discussed under this theme.

6.5.1 Inappropriate school location

This sub-theme was mentioned by the principals: Some PCCSS are not only operating in busy areas with many economic and social activities but also have insufficient space. To

make matter worse, the owners of the businesses and the government authorities refuse to cooperate with the school administrations to improve the environment. Although the location of schools is not decided by principals, it is important for the PCC to avoid opening schools in such areas as this indirectly affects the learning environment and strains the relationship between principals and students. In one instance, students become sick due to the irritating smell from the nearby government slaughterhouse. The government (DDSE & municipal authority) has failed in their responsibility to restore serenity and hygiene to the surrounding environments such as schools despite reports made by principals. The student population of one school is decreasing as a result of the surrounding school environment. In spite of principals' complaints, not much effort is being made to ensure students learn in suitable contexts. Principals must be aware that student learning and sickening environments do not work well together, and ignoring this means that the learning process, content, and outcome are prioritised at the expense of the learning context. This situation is serious enough that it affects students' health and student enrolment and therefore requires the proprietor's attention for intervention, which means that the principals must not relent to show love, concern, and interest for students' success as suggested by the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust.

The proximity of bars and beer parlours are a big distraction to students and teachers who sometimes listen to the music in class. The noisy and immoral community is a distraction and not healthy for an environment that promotes student learning and performance. UNICEF & UNESCO (2007) confirmed that school environments filled with distractions hinder students from concentrating on their leaning and called on states to ensure school environments appeal to teaching and learning.

Students and parents are also unhappy because some schools have limited space, which means students do not have playgrounds for relaxation and participation in sports. Five of the six schools participating in this study have inadequate space. Such environments are boring to students and affect their learning. One aspect that principals can focus on to create conditions that enhance student learning is integrating curricular and co-curricular activities. The integration of these activities for the enhancement of student learning was a major concern of the ACPA in 1994. Despite these challenges, robust

professional determination would have driven principals to insist on change and create better school contexts for learning (Rodriquez-Gomez et al. 2020).

6.5.2 Lack of qualified services

The participating schools lack qualified problem-identification and -solving structures such as counselling units. Principals and teachers act as counsellors to students in addition to their administrative duties and heavy workloads, making it difficult for them to have enough counselling time with students. The PCC do not equip teachers with counselling skills nor employ trained personnel, even on part-time basis. It was revealed that the Education Secretary repeatedly ignored the counsel of the DDSE to employ trained counsellors. The negligent attitude of the Education Secretary might have been due to inadequate training since the highest qualification at the time of appointment was a bachelor's degree, which could mean unawareness of the dangers involved in neglecting such an important service. Furthermore, assigned government counsellors were reported to have been reluctant to visit PCC schools. Qualified counselling services are an important unit in a school system, and when counsellors are not qualified, they cannot render appropriate services to students. The absence of counsellors indicates neglect of the psychological and mental needs of the students. Professional counsellors will be able give solutions to students' difficulties that impede their learning. Principals must ensure that students are socially and emotionally stable in order to impact student learning with their leadership. Robinson et al. (2009) and Day et al. (2011) also found that providing effective leadership to student learning calls for schools to work closely with educational psychologists in counselling units at schools.

6.5.3 High teacher mobility rate

Teacher shortage is another challenge that principals face. Seasoned teachers frequently move to better paid jobs, which is quite challenging to principals who have to then use the available teachers. For this reason, teachers are forced to teach subjects they were not originally employed to teach. This unprofessional strategy, which leaves teachers sad, hurts the relationship between principals, teachers, and students. Though teacher attrition is attributed to the low earned salaries instituted by Law No. 76/15 of July 8, 1976

(Mensah, 2000, cited in Ndongko & Tambo, 2000), imposing subjects on teachers will cause more teachers to leave because they are overworked. As they continue to leave, student learning is jeopardised; therefore, principals must stop forcing teachers to teach extra subjects. The relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust demand leaders initiate tasks that motivate members to grow in their individual assigned roles and not assign tasks that are outside their roles. The study also established that teachers feel inferior because of their lack of mastery of the subject matter, which may affect their performance and the students' trust in them. This may be the case because the PEA recruits untrained teachers. Another finding was that newly recruited teachers found the job challenging because of lack of professional training and because undergraduates are often recruited.

All these challenges could contribute to teacher attrition as well as leadership disconnection to student learning. Considering the impact that the educational system and schools have on a country's wellbeing, many scholars stated that all teachers must be well trained and should only teach subjects with which they are familiar. Darling-Hammond (2008) and Hightower et al. (2011) agreed that to support student learning, teachers must obtain pre-service training, which is why a bachelor's degree is not enough to ensure teacher quality without specialised training in classroom practices (Hightower et al., 2011). Hightower et al. also suggested that even after being employed, teachers should undergo development programmes to inform them of the challenges new teachers face and improve their content knowledge. Therefore, principals must initiate regular in-service workshops, and the PEA must reconsider their recruitment policy. Ensuring teachers are qualified and well trained will ensure they can do their job with confidence, which will build students' trust in them, resulting to good relationships.

6.5.4 Poor working conditions

Principals reported that they have poor working conditions because of the quality of the resources available at schools and the poor educational policy of the PCC. Some of these reports were supported by teachers. The participants revealed that there is insufficient infrastructure, such as classrooms, standby electricity, and pipe-borne water. Frequent electricity cuts, dirty water, coupled with a water shortage led to students becoming sick.

These inadequacies prevent principals from maintaining hygiene and learning. Some teachers do not have enough toilets. All the participating schools suffered one problem or another. It may be worth noting that effective schools ensure the cleanliness and brightness of the physical learning environments (Day et al., 2011). Students cannot learn when they lack basic amenities, and much less of when they are sick. It was also revealed that some schools do not have school buses or qualified health personnel that can transport or treat students at night. This is very risky for boarding schools and goes against the agreed conditions under which schools should operate as per UNICEF and UNESCO's (2007) standards.

The principals and teachers also lamented the lack and inadequacy of modern teaching aids and unequipped facilities, including internet facilities for research, modern staffrooms, libraries, laboratories, projectors, and whiteboards. School institutions that do not invest in teaching and learning resources are unlikely to make a difference to student learning and performance (Bush & Glover, 2014). A lack of resource is an even bigger challenge when teachers are not well trained, and it is a challenge for principals because of the strict budget imposed by the PCC (2014). The principals disclosed that schools are not only cautioned to avoid costly projects in their annual budgeting but are also expected to forward financial surpluses to the Synod Office, which prevents them from improving the school environment. The enactment of Laws No. 86/022 and 766/PJL/AN of 1987 gave private education providers the freedom to determine their fees so that they can provide adequate infrastructure and appropriate equipment for efficient teaching (Ndongko & Tambo, 2000). Therefore, this lack of resources is an oversight of the PCC because the deficiencies discussed are vital resources that schools cannot effectively run without. Annexure 9 shows that some PCCSS operate without authorisation, which explains why some schools operate in substandard environments without basic resources. According to the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust, the proprietor, principals, and teachers should dialogue and find solutions for challenges. This will not only reinforce leadership but will also provide supportive spaces for teachers and students to easily teach and learn.

The PCC restrictive policy on professional development, demotivating salaries with frequent cuts, and delayed pay are further difficulties that hinder principals and teachers

from creating conducive student learning environments. The church policy for secondary schools does not encourage teachers to further their studies as those who ask for study leave are expected to reapply for their jobs after finishing their studies, and if they are recruited, they are treated as new employees, irrespective of their positions before leaving to study. This discourages them from furthering their studies because it will have very little influence on the future salaries. Any educational policy that does not encourage intellectual growth is a bad one. This policy contradicts some of the general objectives of the PCC in education, which is to bring enlightenment and to save people from ignorance and want (PCC, 2007). Studying while working is also not easy for teachers because of their heavy workload. Principals decried the fact that in-service coaching programmes are insufficient to support their work. The lack of on-the-job-training also goes against a PCC education objective, which is to provide the necessary skills for the development of the self (PCC, 2007). This policy is not supported by the relational leadership theory, which expects members to perform at their best. The fact that knowledge is not static coupled with the 21st century school challenges are good reasons for the proprietor to revise this policy so that leadership, teaching, and learning can improve.

Other studies conducted in Cameroon found that many principals lack basic administrative competencies because they mostly learn on the job, which may be due to the lack of development programmes (Ashu, 2014; Mbua, 2003; Monjong & Fon, 2016). Oplakta (2004) confirmed that principalship in Africa lacks innovation as a result of limited knowledge of the leadership role of administration. The PCC policy for PEA principals and teachers goes against the recommendations of many scholars. Rodriguez-Gomez et al. (2019) noted that principals' professional development is critical to improve the quality of educational systems. Gray (2000) confirmed that employing qualified teachers can improve schools. Both proposed that principals and teachers undergo formal pre- and in-service development programmes and use informal learning opportunities as part of their professional development for effective student learning. Trained principals are furnished with managerial and supervisory competences that directly and positively impact teaching and learning environments (Siahaan, 2020). The fact that PEA principals and teachers do not undergo training upon recruitment and appointment coupled with inadequate in-house training may limit their ability to create safe and secure learning environments for

students. The rationale is that a novice in pedagogy is unlikely to have the expertise to handle student-related challenges, let alone know the intricacies of handling pedagogic-related issues. It is difficult for principals to effectively relate with student learning in these circumstances.

Low, irregular, and curtailed pay is another issue, and this issue can be traced as far back as 1919 after World War I when the German missions handed over their property to the English missions (Mensah, 2000, cited in Ndongko & Tambo, 2000). However, it is discouraging that despite the 1987 Education Law that gave private education providers the right to determine their fees, teachers' salaries have not improved (Ndongko & Tambo, 2000). These unsatisfactory conditions under which participants work create a tense atmosphere and affect teachers' commitment to class attendance and respect for leadership. Though Huang and Anyon (2020) stated that a positive school climate revolves around good relationships intentionally created by the principals, the principals cannot do much to better the situation because this is passed down from the Synod Office. The situations in this sub-theme present an unfriendly learning environment to students and even teachers, which may affect their relationships and limit leadership connectivity to student learning. Implementing the relational leadership theory can be valuable to meet workers' needs and promote a healthy alliance between the church leadership and staff, principals, and teachers, and staff and students for healthy contexts that facilitate student learning (Sklaveniti, 2016).

6.5.5 Inadequate accommodation amid insecurity

Insufficient housing for teachers amid insecurity was one of the serious challenges mentioned by the participants. The participants intimated that the housing shortage and bad roads to some schools affect duty post holders who must be at school early and also expose them to danger because of the Anglophone Crisis during which teachers and students are being abducted. The Synod Office was asked to look into the accommodation issue, especially for boarding schools, so that the assigned teachers can be comfortable and punctual. The absence or lateness of duty post holders, who monitor and organise activities for students such as sports, affect the participation of students in these pursuits that are meant to promote lively school environments for the amelioration

of student learning. State security personnel are deployed to protect the schools, which signals the danger teachers and learners are in. Bear (2020) highlighted that a feeling of safety is important when creating a positive school climate, but the reverse is happening at PCCSS. Insecurity at schools indicates lack of trust in the state that failed to negotiate with the opponents to avert the crisis that is now affecting teaching, learning, and relationships in schools. In this situation, awareness of the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust would have been a panacea to all parties to consider the wellbeing of the school members and ensure their peace and safety (Browel et al; 2000). This research calls for all educational partners to maintain healthy relationships at all levels to ease the connection of secondary school leadership to student learning through the context.

6.5.6 Resistance from students

Student resistance was also mentioned as a challenge. According to the participants, the students fight against teachers when they are being flogged. This highlights the violent environments in which students are expected to learn despite many researchers and organisations speaking out against violence in schools (Ngwokabuenui, 2015; Obsuth et al., 2017; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007; WBES, 2020, cited in De Siqueira, 2012). The relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust is also against violent work environments that deter trusting relationships and prevent members from achieving their goals (Brower et al., 2000; Cunliffe & Erikse, 2011; Sklaveniti, 2016). Thus, principals must focus on actions that foster good ties between them and students, and between teachers and students, in order to create conducive environments that support effective student learning.

6.5.7 Employer-employee relationships

The study established that teachers and principals have different impressions of what leads to someone being appointed as a principal. Principals revealed that appointments are based on merit, but teachers believe it is motivated by favouritism and tribalism. It was found that there is discrimination in the way salaries are awarded as some persons with lower qualifications earn more than ones with better qualifications in the same

position. According to the teachers, when they asked for an explanation, they were bullied and told they could leave if they wanted. This arrogant response from the then Moderator angered the teachers and left them low spirited. As a leader who should treat everyone equal (May & Delston, (2017) and bring people together, the proprietor was working against their own goals because they did not seem to understand that when teachers are unhappy, it affects student learning. This may be one of the reasons teachers flog students out of anger. These findings show that the difficult relationship between the PCC and teachers are harming principals' connection to student learning. The relational leadership theory does not support leadership behaviour that creates barriers between organisational members through authoritativeness. Instead, the model suggests that all members must be treated the same, and that leaders must engage in relational dialogue and be accountable to others (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). If the PCC adopted these practices, it would have promoted dialogue and cordial relationships, which would have motivated teachers to support the leadership and student learning. According to Durant (2016), school leadership should have good character and compassion for its members. The PCC has failed in this and came across as arrogant. A good leader listens rather than exercises authority (Bush & Glover, 2014). This finding proposes that the PCC should strive to treat teachers well because without them students will not be taught. When teachers are comfortable, they relate well with principals and students, which creates a healthy learning atmosphere and enhances the connection between leadership and student learning.

6.5.8 Principals being unwelcoming to teachers

Some teachers claimed that the principals are unwelcoming, do not welcome dialogue, and are authoritative. A principal who is not approachable has no respect for the valuable relationships with teachers and students and goes against the requirements of UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) that principals must be welcoming so teachers can participate in dialogue through which they can influence policy. Showers (2019) remarked that principals can establish a healthy school climate by initiating strong interpersonal ties with teachers and students. Therefore, PCCSS principals must improve their leadership strategies to create conducive teaching and learning contexts by creating good

relationships with students and staff, as echoed in the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust.

6.5.9 Coping measures for challenges

The teachers and principals mentioned some strategies they use to cope with the challenges. Even though the PEA policy forbade part-time teaching by PEA teachers in non-PEA schools, teachers are forced to find second jobs because of their low pay. Although teachers may gain new skills working at other schools (Day et al., 2011), doing so against organisational norms may be harmful. However, members may violate organisational norms when they are too hard (Bear, 2020).

Teachers also improvise when there is a lack of teaching facilities. UNICEF & UNESCO (2007) advised teachers to be creative to make classroom experiences livelier. To avoid conflict and resistance, some principals are diplomatic, respectful, polite, and persuasive when dealing with teachers. This measure falls in line with the UNICEF and UNESCO (2007) guideline that teachers, like students, must be heard and respected by school heads because their opinions about teaching and learning matter. Bear (2020) remarked that respect for school members produce respectful relationships that positively affect behaviour and academic outcomes. One principal reinforces teaching by organising internal workshops. Leadership support through in-service training supports quality teaching and improves student learning and achievement (Anderson & Pounder, 2018; Hightower et al., 2011). The violations of the policy on part-time teaching suggests a broken link between the policy makers and the implementers in PCCSS.

6.6 Unsafe and Insecure Conditions for Student Learning in Presbyterian Church in Cameroon Secondary Schools

Students were important participants in this investigation, and the study revealed the unsafe and insecure conditions under which students learn. This was necessary to identify the issues surrounding their learning contexts to improve leadership connection to student learning. The following sub-themes came from this theme: The use of obsolete and humiliating punishments; poor interactions and communication between the staff, guests, and students; low student engagement in decision-making processes; low-quality

meals; insufficient social activities; lack of social and emotional support; insufficient sanitary, health, and security care; and lack of other resources.

6.6.1 Use of obsolete and humiliating punishments

The use of obsolete and humiliating punishments emerged as a result of my attempt to discover students' impressions of the school climate. They shared how they felt about the different ways used to discipline them, and stated that disciplinary sanctions like severe corporal punishment, insults, bullying, and exaggerated hard labour (kneeling, picking a pin, and digging very deep pits) are not welcomed. The students reported that these sanctions brought down their self-esteem, especially when done in the presence of junior students and their peers. There are many empirical studies that agreed that to improve student learning, principals and teachers must embrace non-violent conflict resolution strategies (Farina, 2019; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). It was revealed that School 1 has a 'guillotine room' where students are taken for floggings so severe that students are injured and fall sick. This horrific picture was heightened when a student attempted to undress so I could see the terrible scars on her back. Students were also unhappy because innocent people are sometimes punished without being given a chance to explain the situation. As such, they feel angry and come to hate the principals and teachers. The obsolete and humiliating punishments go against Article 29 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) that indicates that education should be child-friendly and free from injustice, and the *United Nations Declaration of Human Rights* that stresses respect for the ethical rights of persons irrespective of their status (Momen, 2022).

In School 1, a student was flogged so badly that a security officer had to step in, the discipline masters in Schools 1 and 6 always make students nervous because of their unnecessary intimidation, and junior students are being maltreated by senior ones. The reactions of students established that PCCSS are violent environments. Principals are failing to create positive school climates that prevent and reduce violence and create safe environments for learning (Espelage & Hong, 2019). Furthermore, students with bad results are humiliated at assemblies by whipping and mocking. This is not a productive strategy for students who need encouragement. Students must be disciplined in the

correct way, and Drucker (2018) noted that organisational heads need the capacity to do things the right way. The above experiences are not healthy for school contexts. If students are humiliated, insulted, bullied, and severely flogged, they develop defensive measures that lead to violence, and positive relationships cannot be built on violence. Poor relationships in schools are a signal of distance between leadership and student learning. The relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust are based on respect and treatment of others as oneself, and therefore, using this theory could create safe and secure learning contexts to help principals link to student learning.

Students also complained that they are expected to cut all the grass at their school, which leaves them exhausted. Principals at these schools should employ labour so students can use their time and energy to study. It is urgent that PCCSS principals begin to respect students' rights and inject sanity into their learning contexts.

6.6.2 Poor interaction and communication between the staff, guests, and students

Poor interaction and communication between staff, guests, and students emerged as one weakness affecting students in their learning environments. This theme exposed the degree to which the principal, teachers, and students interacted and communicated, and also how the education officials (Education Secretary, Divisional Delegate for Secondary Education, and Regional Delegate for Secondary Education) who visited the schools interacted with the students. There are channels for students to follow to put their concerns through to the principal. Complaints pass through class advisers, house parents, discipline master, and vice principals, and only go to the principal if it cannot be handled by anyone else; only those who are seriously ill are allowed to go directly to the principal. This is a big problem for students who have issues that need the direct attention of the principal. For example, students cannot disclose issues they have with teachers through teachers. This is a type of master-servant relationship and not the leader-member relationship encouraged by the relational leadership theory where members and leaders communicate with each other (Sklaveniti, 2016).

Students in some schools said their principals' unfriendly demeanour scares them, and in other schools the students felt that their principals do not respect confidentiality, which harms interpersonal relationships (Grazia & Molinary, 2020). Students at a girls' school reported that they do not want to confide in a male principal, which is not good for student learning, and perhaps, female principals are preferable for girls' schools. The behaviour of some principals suggests that they pay little or no attention to the internal school environments, which may be because it is not emphasised in the PEA Job Description (PCC, 2015). According to the students, they would like to communicate through a suggestion box, but at most schools there are none or they are placed at inconvenient places. Improving the conditions of learning is hindered and becomes difficult for students if only very sick students can see the principal, and the rest of the students do not feel free to communicate with the teachers or even some principals. The many links in the complaints chain means that many of the students' pressing issues are unattended. If principals make themselves reachable and institute clear communication channels through which students can confidently express their concerns, the environment will be more favourable for students and their learning. For instance, suggestion boxes will keep principals informed about areas that need attention, which will create a conducive environment to effectively link leadership to student learning. Quality principal-student interactions require principals to be open and be attentive to students, which are important components of the relational leadership theory.

Most schools use noticeboards and verbal announcements to communicate school rules and regulations to students, and these announcements are done by prefects and teachers. Therefore, students' problems are not well handled because of poor interactions and communication. When student-related issues are not well attended to, there will be violence (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007), as shown in subsection 6.4.8. Some researchers noted that good communication is a signal of a positive school climate that enhances effective teaching and learning (Ismail et al., 2020). Similarly, Hahn (2017) revealed that clear communication is one of the leadership qualities that influences an environment that reinforces student learning. Poor communication is tantamount to poor relationships. This means that lack of proper interactions between principals, teachers, and students in PCCSS damages relationships, and consequently, creates a gap between leadership and

student learning. Leithwood et al. (2009) and Bezzina et al. (2018) found when principals ensure high-quality interactions with students and staff, it makes a great difference to student learning. School rules and regulations are important documents, and principals should take the responsibility to inform students of these. Failure to do so may lead to frequent violations by students. Relational leadership theory obliges leaders (principals) to use the best communicative measures that enable members (students) to have a clear understanding of organisational (school) rules.

The study also found that students from rich homes receive preferential treatment, which goes against Article 1 of the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* (UN, 1948; May & Delston, 2017) that demands that principals promote an atmosphere of respect for all students by giving them equal treatment. Students lamented that some teachers do not like students who have issues with other teachers, and that this dislike is extended to classrooms where only certain students receive attention, and those who cannot answer questions are called 'dull'. These attitudes are not healthy for student learning because students' ability to achieve optimum development is limited when they feel hated and discriminated against (Holahan & Batey, 2019; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The students also dislike it when teachers waste their lessons on unimportant matters because they are unprepared. Making students feel that they are not good enough undoubtedly affects their learning, which shows that the leadership failed to pay attention to the contextual needs of students, such as good communication, justice, and equity (UN, 1948; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Thus, principals must create environments that promote positive relationships for effective student learning.

Regarding the interaction of students with educational authorities, it was pointed out that even when asked to interact with the guests, the students were not comfortable to tell the visitors about matters that bother them because the staff is always present during the meetings. If students are allowed to interact with educational visitors without being monitored, principals can benefit from feedback that will improve on their connection to student learning. At School 3, students were selected to meet with visitors but instructed to say only positive things about the school. Intimidating students to tell lies shows that there is much wrong in the school environment because their ethical rights are not respected (Momen, 2022). Aligning these findings with the relational leadership theory

and interpersonal trust requires principals and teachers to better communicate with students to establish trust and allow students to express themselves (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Furthermore, Cameroon's *Policy on Good Governance* (Republic of Cameroon, 2004) states that good communication and freedom of speech must be upheld in schools by creating positive contexts in which all stakeholders feel free to express their concerns. Yet, this is not the case in PCCSS because students are unhappy with their learning environments, which creates a gap between principals and student learning. Therefore, to create school contexts that are conducive to student learning, principals must prioritise healthy relationships and respect for students' rights, and value for students' freedom of expression.

6.6.3 Low student engagement in decision-making processes

This sub-theme showed low engagement in affairs that directly concern the students, such as the student menu (in the case of boarding schools), canteen items, and the prioritisation of school needs, and students are not also asked to give feedback on such aspects. However, one school asked students' opinion on meals. Lack of participation creates resistance to leadership. For example, if students are consulted in the planning of their meals, they would like the outcome, which would remove resistance. Cunliffe and Eriksen (2011) concurred that people feel involved when they take part in dialogue, which strengthens relationships and organisational practices. Further information from principals, students and the principals' end-of-year reports to the DDSE revealed that current students are represented at Board of Governors and PTAs by the ex-student associations' president, mainly for school development projects. As such, there is no direct participation by present students at such important decision-making bodies because the ex-student representatives do not experience what the current students experience. The absence of current students at such meetings limits the students who cannot share their worries with the representative of the ex-students association who only comes to school to attend these meetings.

Cameroon's *Policy on Good Governance* (Republic of Cameroon, 2004) also requires student participation in making decisions that affect their lives. Hunter (2006) and Hallinger and Heck (2011) agreed that student involvement in making decisions in affairs

related to them is important. Hunter noted that one way to help students succeed in their learning is by increasing their involvement in decision-making processes and giving them increased attention, which promote feelings of belonging in the internal environment of the school. According to UNICEF & UNESCO (2007), students can provide valuable information when they are considered and treated as active partners in school life. Since dialogue strengthens relationships and organisational practices, it is necessary to engage in relational dialogue for relational leadership (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). This theme therefore showed that there is a gap between students and principals because of low student involvement in issues that affect the students and the lack of opportunity for feedback. The gap between leadership and student learning must be closed using the features of relational leadership theory based on LMX and interpersonal trust that promote participation in decision-making, engagement, dialogue, and communication. LMX supports contributions from members in areas apart from their defined roles in an organisation (Brower et al., 2000).

6.6.4 Low-quality meals

All the boarding school students revealed that they are unhappy with the low-quality meals they receive, which leads them to violate school rules by leaving the campus without authorisation to get quality food and socialise. The questionable quality of meals was confirmed in the reports to the annual general meeting of the PTA by the principal of School 4 who expressed concern for the fact that students broke bounds to buy the same food that was given them in school. This observation should have been enough for the principals to realise there is a problem and to take action. Parents pay a lot of money for their children to attend boarding schools (Mufua, 2019), and therefore, students should be well fed. Sneaking out of school, especially at night, to satisfy needs that the school should have provided is risky for adolescents. Meeting students' needs is important and was highlighted in the *World Declaration on Education for All* (UNESCO, 1990). Cameroon president's Vision 2035 (Mufua, 2019) demanded more children to go to secondary school to improve youth employment. If students do not eat well in school, they will not want to stay in school, and Vision 2035 will not be realised. The reaction of students to the low-quality meals is a serious situation that warrants dialogue between

principals and students, but the absence of dialogue escalated the situation and led to students taking the risk of leaving the school campus. When students are not involved in making decisions, they are not committed to them (Bear, 2020). Refusing to meet students' expectations for meals is a breach of trust that portrays unhealthy learning conditions, which is a big barrier to student learning. Dialogue and trust are the basic principles of relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust, and implementing these principles will solve the conflict. Good meals in quantity and quality will attract high school enrolment, strengthen the bond between principals and students, and boost students' enthusiasm for learning and achievement.

6.6.5 Insufficient social activities

Students indicated discontent with insufficient social activities at schools. To increase students' interest in learning, social and curricular activities must be interwoven (Day et al., 2011) because students need a blend of learning and daily life to excel in academics. The absence of co-curricular activities in some schools takes a toll on student learning because learning becomes boring without some distraction. Instituting these activities (for example, clubs and games) gives students a balance between their social and academic lives and keeps them focused on their learning because relationships outside the classroom influence the feelings, attitudes, moods, and perceptions of students towards learning (ACPA, 1994).

6.6.6 Lack of social and emotional support

Issues of fear, lack of trust, and social and emotional support are discussed under this theme. The study found that students lack trust in principals and teachers because they have been betrayed by them. Lack of trust and fear of betrayal have negatively influenced students' emotional and social lives. Students at School 4 were furious at the principal for breaking his promise to change the menu and make items in the canteen cheaper. Similarly, School 6 students do not trust their principal because he will tell confidential information to the whole school. These principals do not act as good leaders because their actions do not match their words (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Kouzes and Posner (1994, cited in Evans, 2009) concurred that an important quality of a good principal is

honesty. The relational leadership theory also requires leaders to be honest by being accountable to others and having others hold them to account (Brower et al., 2000). PCCSS students cannot count on their principals even though the PCC is charged with making the truth available to each generation (PCC, 2007). Teenagers who are supposed to be supported emotionally and socially are instead intimidated by teachers who make advances towards them. Female students at Schools 5 and 6 were concerned because the teachers involved scared them into not telling the principals about the events, and because the students do not really trust their principals, they keep the information to themselves. At School 2, students were asked to make financial contributions towards a wall that must be constructed in their dormitory to ensure their privacy even though their parents already contribute to school projects through PTAs. This request was extortion and an obvious threat to the good relationship between the leader and students.

The principals and teachers do not seem concerned for the students' wellbeing, which makes it difficult for students to trust them. Since trust is required for the school to run smoothly (Anderson & Pounder, 2018), its absence makes students feel insecure, which affects relationships (Eacott & Eacott, 2018). Effective student learning cannot take place if principals do not pay attention to the emotional wellbeing of students (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Furthermore, Darling-Hammond (2008) highlighted how important it is for teachers to understand adolescent development to support students' social, physical, and emotional growth. If principals and teachers fail to protect school environments so that both male and female students have equal learning opportunities, then something must urgently be done so students can feel protected at school. The current situation can be reversed if principals are truthful when dealing with students. When principals and teachers act as substitute parents (Drucker, 2018), they will give students the social and emotional support they need to face challenges. Then students will feel comfortable to discuss their problems with teachers and find solutions to issues that hinder their learning. The relational leadership theory strongly recommends that leaders consider trust as a lubricant that fosters members' commitment and performance.

6.6.7 Insufficient sanitary, health, and security care

The research revealed insufficient sanitary, health, and security care for students. Most schools not only still use pit toilets but also do not have enough toilets or clean bathrooms. However, in School 1 the principal has started improving the toilet situation at the girls' camp. There is also a shortage and absence of clean drinking water, which leads to students getting sick. This finding shows that the schools fail to uphold the conditions for effective student learning created by UNICEF and UNESCO (2007), which stated that students must learn under hygienic conditions with clean potable water, and sufficient clean toilet and urinal facilities for both sexes. The students also mentioned that some of the schools do not have enough medicine to treat minor illness, and also do not have qualified personnel to administer the medicine. School 1 is a boarding school but does not have a health unit. This forces students to regularly leave school for medical attention, which is detrimental to learning. Furthermore, students do not like some of the medical staff because they are unfriendly and do not believe the students when they say they are ill. In these schools the principals have failed to create positive relationships to support students' learning (McCormick, 2019). Lateness, wrongly administered injections, and treating all problems with the same medicine show that the principals have not instituted safe health care services for the students.

The students also feel unsafe because of unfenced campuses that exposes them to kidnappings and killings during the Anglophone Crisis. Delpit (2006) pointed out that parents want schools to provide a security for their children's survival and socialisation. Thus, reports on the lapses in sanitation, health, and security in PCCSS are proof of contexts that are not conducive to learning and obvious leadership disassociation from student learning. Comfortable school environments promote positive student behaviour, and therefore, providing security, basic health, and sanitation amenities will provide a supportive learning climate that enhances student learning. Thus, strictly following the suggestions in *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) that the best interest of the students must be prioritised and the requirement of the relational leadership theory that leaders must treat members as human beings will solve these problems.

6.6.8 Lack of other resources

With respect to the quality of available resources, the students are unhappy with the available resources, just like the teachers (section 6.5). All the schools currently have inadequate study material at the library, laboratory equipment, playgrounds, and beds. Overcrowded refectories and dorms with poor ventilation is yet another safety concern. This unsafe situation was confirmed by the principal of School 1 in the minutes of the end-of-year class council meeting held on June 16, 2021. Teaching and learning cannot happen in unsafe and uncomfortable situations. Therefore, the ACPA (1994) stated that principals should intentionally create environments that strengthen student learning by ensuring standard school resources are available because students learn better when facilities such as laboratories, libraries, and health care services are available. According to the Cameroon government regulations, schools must meet certain specifications before being authorised to operate (Law No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998). The absence of these resources suggests that the government did not do a proper inspection of PCCSS prior to their opening. Ensuring that the schools meet the conditions for opening would have guaranteed the comfort of students, and consequently, facilitated student learning. Therefore, principals must focus on urgently providing these resources that will give students the advantage of exploiting their different interests and abilities. Providing enough spaces for students with good ventilation promotes good health. Healthy students learn easier. If these resources are available, it will create a favourable climate for students and ease leadership connection to student learning. A major concern of the relational leadership theory is leaders' responsiveness to the needs of the members for effective organisational performance.

Overall, the participants in this investigation established that the school leadership is separated from student learning. The study unveiled the prevalence of leadership deficiencies, poor relationships between principals, teachers, and students, and unsafe and insecure school contexts created by both principals and teachers and the bad policies of the PCC for PEA for the development of human and material resources, workers' financial motivation, and discrimination and favouritism. This situation requires the prompt attention of the leadership to effectively connect to student learning in PCCSS.

6.7 Proposed Alternative Strategies to Ensure Safe and Secure Learning Environments

This study revealed that the principals of PCCSS find it difficult to connect their leadership to student learning as a result of their inability to initiate good interpersonal relationships that promote a healthy school climate for effective teaching and learning. As a follow-up to the fourth objective of this research, which aimed to develop alternative strategies to help PCCSS principals effectively connect their leadership to student learning, some strategies were identified. These proposed strategies come from the participants, the literature review, and the relational leadership theory based on LMX and interpersonal trust (Brower et al., 2000; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Sklaveniti, 2016). Generally, the strategies revolve around ways in which principals can build and promote positive relationships among school members to establish conducive environments through which leadership can directly influence student learning and achievement (Anderson & Pounder, 2018; Hahn, 2017; McCormick, 2019; Printy, 2010; Webster, 2020). These suggestions fall under the two sub-themes of improving learning and environment, and reviving work conditions and relationships.

6.7.1 Improving learning and environment

Every student wants a friendly learning environment. The students participating in this study asked for adequate laboratories, clean water, electric generators, fences, playing fields, social activities, and library material to allow them to study easily and comfortably. The students also asked for their opinions to be consulted in matters that directly affect them, like food and items at the canteen; a teacher suggested that students' meals must be better quality and quantity. In School 2, students wished that the school would hire labourers to cut the grass, so they have enough time and energy to study and read. The principals were also asked to keep their promises to the students. The students strongly asked that corporal and humiliating punishments be abolished. Finally, the students asked for seminars that can help the teachers to improve communication with them. These requests, backed by literature, are discussed in the following subsections with practical examples of how to solve the problems.

6.7.1.1 Focusing on students' needs

The main purpose of an educational institution is to educate students, which means that student learning is the central business of schools as indicated in the World Bank Education Strategy for 2020 (De Siqueira, 2012; Klees et al., 2012). If this is the case, then focusing on students' needs is vital in principals' pursuit to connect their leadership to student learning (Hahn, 2017). Focusing on students' needs means principals must prioritise students' welfare to ensure students are comfortable. Students feel they have a place in the world when they are given attention (Freiberg, 2005). There must be enough resources, such as clear potable water, electricity, health services, playgrounds, social activities, adequate infrastructures, libraries, laboratories, and quality meals in schools (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) if principals want to connect their leadership to student learning. Ensuring that these resources are available gives students to opportunity to explore their different interest and abilities and improve their reasoning for effective learning and achievement (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). For example, playgrounds are necessary for students to relax because students must blend their learning and daily life to excel in academics, and to form strong relationships between students and between students and the teachers supervising them (ACPA, 1994). Enhancing the curriculum with social activities such as clubs, (Day et al; 2011), student organisations, student exhibitions, and celebrations of special days makes learning interesting. Comfortable school spaces result in positive relationships between principals and students and foster effective student learning and performance.

6.7.1.2 Providing and ensuring security

Humans feel safe when their security is assured. It is the principal's duty to provide a safe teaching and learning environment for the promotion of student learning. Thus, it is very important for principals to make tremendous efforts towards providing and ensuring safety that give students the psychological balance needed to focus on their learning, which makes it critical that principals know and apply educational laws to create safe environments. The first thing principals can focus on is fencing campuses to make it safer, especially for boarding schools (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). This is especially important

as during the Anglophone Crisis students live in fear as schools are being invaded and students kidnapped. Principals can also focus on respecting the rights of students (UN, 2000). Treating students with dignity means they are treated like human beings and are not discriminated against. For instance, instead of flogging or humiliating students, other preventive and restorative measures that promote child-friendly and safe environments should be employed as indicated in Article 29 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) and *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The use of restorative practices by principals as alternative measures to behavioural change in students reduces violence (Obsuth et al., 2017), improves the school climate (Dike, 2019), and consequently, enhances student learning. Examples of such preventive and restorative measures are counselling; caring, supporting and respecting relationships (Obsuth et al., 2017); monitoring; encouraging; and being honest and impartial. Therefore, schools must be free from all forms of violence, discrimination, insults, and bullying. Principals must also create non-discriminatory environments by treating all students the same. Promoting students' integrity and safety create positive school climate for learning. In addition, though Law No. 98/004 of April 14, 1998, does not exempt students from manual labour, it will be wise for principals at schools with big campuses to supplement labour so that students are not overworked and fall sick or sustain injuries that may affect their learning. Feeling safe promotes trust (Bear, 2020) and motivates students to stay in school. It is only under positive learning conditions that promote positive relationships that principals can effectively connect their leadership to student learning.

6.7.1.3 Rendering social, emotional, and academic support

Principals must care for their students by responding to their social, emotional, and academic challenges. As adolescents, students face social and developmental challenges that can hinder them from learning if not properly addressed. Therefore, principals must be approachable and friendly so even shy students can interact with them (Day et al., 2011; De Maeyer et al., 2006; Marishane, 2020). Initiating cordial interactions between students and staff creates supportive environments for students (Bear, 2020). Organising conferences with students to educate them on how to handle social and

emotional troubles is also necessary. Students can reveal their challenges when the principal spends time interacting with them (Smith & Piele, 2006). Respectful and supportive relationships between principals, teachers and students will have positive influences on the social and academic life of the students, such as less violence in the schools (Obsuth et al., 2017); strengthening student-student relationships through mutual respect; and students respecting school rules and expectations because they want to maintain the positive relationships (Bear, 2020).

6.7.1.4 Instituting problem-identification and problem-solving structures

Principals can provide effective leadership by creating professional counselling units at schools and using educational psychologists to help identify and solve students' psychological and academic problems (Robinson et al., 2009). Principals must work closely with these structures to ensure timely interventions in issues that pose a threat to student learning. Effective counselling will reduce student indiscipline, strengthen the ties between school leaders and students, and facilitate effective student learning.

6.7.1.5 Promoting effective communication

Effective communication requires principals to clearly communicate vital school information to students (Hahn, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2004; Webster, 2020), and establish communication links that are easily accessible to students (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). School rules, regulations, and punishment codes are vital information that must be well communicated for effective comprehension, assimilation, and respect by students. For instance, I do not think verbally communicating the school rules during devotion is enough because there are large groups at assemblies, which may mean that some students are not paying attention or are unable to retain all the information. Since most secondary school students are minors, sending them the school rules before the school opens so parents can discuss it with their children may be a better approach. Parents and students should also be asked to sign the documents and submit them to the school, which means that everyone is aware of the information. Caution should be taken to ensure school rules and enforcement are fair because this will lead to less behaviour-related troubles like bullying, physical violence, and discrimination (Bear,

2020). After students and parents had read and signed the document, it should be placed on noticeboards where students can easily see it and be reminded of the rules (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007).

Suggestion boxes is a good way for students to communicate with principals (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). However, these boxes must be placed where students can anonymously drop compliments, complaints, and suggestions. This communication strategy will inform principals of issues students do not feel free to discuss in other spaces. Responding promptly and positively to the information will improve leadership effectiveness, relationships, teaching and learning environments, and student learning and performance. Students should have the freedom to speak with secondary school officials (RDSS, DDSS, Education Secretary, & Moderator, in the case of Cameroon) during school visits without being supervised by the principal or teachers (De Maeyer et al., 2006). Feedback from these interactions may be helpful to improvement of the principals' leadership.

6.7.1.6 Increased student engagement in decision-making

Principals must increase students' involvement in crucial decision-making bodies. Students can play an important role in school success when their opinions, especially on sensitive issues that concern them, are sought and valued (Bear, 2020; Day et al., 2011; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). An example of a sensitive issue that can affect student learning is the meal menu and canteen items, especially in boarding schools. Students cannot learn well when they are not satisfied with their meals because they need enough energy to concentrate and work. Student representation in decision-making bodies that make decisions about important issues that directly influence students are vital. These bodies include disciplinary council meetings, the PTA and Board of Governors (in the situation of PCCSS), and in the drafting of school rules and regulations. Students will be more committed to decisions if they were a part of them (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). A slot can be introduced into the agenda of such meetings during which student representatives present a brief report on their impressions of the school and what they think needs to be done to improve their welfare. This will make students feel loved, which will improve their development. Students can make valuable contributions that can help

principals to solve some school problems (Anderson &Pounder, 2018) when their opinions are sought. Since working out dialogically what is meaningful to others strengthens relationships and organisational practices (Cunliffe & Ericksen, 2011), student involvement will enhance the connection of principals to student learning through the positive interactions between them.

6.7.1.7 Reflecting on the leadership practice

In my opinion, principals should assess their own actions, decisions, experiences, and the outcomes of their actions because it is a helpful measure to improve their leadership for better connectivity to student learning. Spending quality time to reflect on and assess one's input into an organisation help identify the strengths and weaknesses of one's contributions towards that organisation. Through this practice, the principals will know which aspects of their leadership duties need reinforcement. Taking immediate action to address the lapses will continue to bridge any gap between leadership and student learning. However, this approach only works if one is honest with oneself.

6.7.1.8 Enhancing positive interactions between teachers and students

In this domain, principals are expected to direct teachers and students towards loving being part of their school by educating them on the importance of self-worth and treating them as humans (McCormick, 2019). This good example set by the leader will spur teachers to deal with students in the same manner. Furthermore, principals must remind and encourage teachers to play the role of substitute parents to students (Drucker, 2018; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) because this will prompt teachers to give the contextual and classroom support students need to excel in their academics. This awareness will, for example, alert teachers that making advances toward students can make them feel unsafe, strain their relationship, and negatively affect learning (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Ensuring schools are well equipped with standard tools, gadgets, and facilities (libraries, laboratories, projectors, white boards, internet etc.) will boost teachers' enthusiasm, ease teaching, and facilitate student learning. When teachers can easily do their work to facilitate students understanding, relationships among principals, teachers, and students will greatly improve. Principals can also strengthen the rapport between

teachers and students through development programmes (Webster, 2020). In my opinion, seminars that can improve interactions between teachers and students should be about topics such as “the benefits of giving equal opportunities to students in and out of class” and “how to create positive relationships between teachers and students”. Promoting an atmosphere in which teachers and students are respected and treated with fairness will increase their dignity, build their trust, and foster their feeling of belonging, thereby, enhancing positive relationships that foster effective teaching and inspire students to excel in their learning (Brower et al., 2000; Eacott & Eacott, 2018; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Instituting annual awards, such as ‘teachers of the year’, nominated and voted for by students, can also moderate teachers’ reactions towards students. Assigning staff mentors to groups of students to provide support and guidance will enhance positive interactions between them (Andersen, 2006). Good exchanges between school members ensures healthy school environments that nurture effective leadership associations with student learning.

On the whole, the bottom line of all these strategies is if leaders implement the relational leadership theory based on LMX and interpersonal trust, which require leaders to ensure healthy workspaces through quality interactions with members, principals will have the required knowledge to connect their leadership to student learning (Brower et al., 2000; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). I strongly believe that following these guidelines will produce collaborative school environments and positively link leadership to student learning and achievement.

6.7.2 Reviving work conditions and relationships

Reviving the work conditions and relationships of principals and teachers was a big concern to participants. The proposals made by principals and teachers involved salary increases and regular payments, revising the PCC development/appointment strategy, availability and sufficiency of modern teaching resources, approachability of principals, employment of skilled counselling personnel, positive changes in teacher assiduity, and enhancing relational ties between proprietor and staff; principals, teachers, and students; and teachers and students to curb students’ insolence and violence. The participants also highlighted the need for the PCC and government to enforce pedagogic and leadership

practices through training. In order to be more effective, participants asked for their workload to be reduced and called on the government to ensure the return of peace to school environments by solving the Anglophone Crisis. In a nutshell, most of the strategies imply that building and nurturing healthy relationships is the main factor necessary to create conducive environments for student learning. By so doing, leadership will connect to student learning. The participants believed that complying to these strategies will help create safe and secure learning environments in PCCSS. These proposals are discussed in the following subsections.

6.7.2.1 Improvement of employer-employee relationship

The participants revealed that it is important to improve the employer-employee relationship because when people feel repressed, it may lead to violence (Bear, 2020), which creates an unsuitable environment for students. Showing concern for teachers' needs, treating them the same, listening to them (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007), and responding politely to their worries will establish a good rapport between the employer, principals, and teachers. For instance, reducing their workload, increasing their pay packages, and ensuring appointments are based strictly on merit will not only motivate teachers to be more committed but will also improve on the relationship between principals and teachers. Happy teachers want to be there for students, and teachers will be happy to collaborate with principals, which will positively impact student learning and foster healthy school relationships that will result to positive teaching and learning environments and improve the leadership links to student learning.

6.7.2.2 Nurturing positive principal-teachers interactions

Schools must operate as cooperative bodies with welcoming relationships (Anderson & Pounder, 2018), and it is the responsibility of principals to ensure this. Operating as cooperative bodies requires principals to be available for teachers for quality exchanges that promote trust (Brower et al., 2000). Like students, teachers need principals to care about their needs and challenges. For instance, relieving teachers of a task (counselling) that makes work too challenging because they lack the expertise and using skilled personnel instead is a way of empathising with teachers. The rationale is that principals

may find it difficult to lead teachers if teachers do not believe principals care (Eacott & Eacott, 2018). This doubt may negatively affect teachers' commitment to teach and their interactions with students. Teachers' participation in decision-making invokes a sense of involvement that strengthens their relationships with principals (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011). Making sure the school has quality institutional resources (ACPA, 1994), and supporting teachers through growth schemes strengthen their capacities (Webster, 2020) and show principals' concern for teachers' performance, which eventually influence teachers' behaviour towards leadership, teaching, and learning. Good relationships between principals and teachers bring about positive changes in teacher assiduity (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). By implication, positive teacher behaviour towards student learning will have positive influence on student behaviour, which can curb negative reactions from students. Therefore, attending to the relational situation of school life (Grazia & Molinari, 2020) will help principals link their leadership roles to student learning.

6.7.2.3 The necessity for professional development for principals and teachers

This study found that unprofessionalism is a major barrier to effective leadership and teaching because principals and teachers cannot properly initiate what they are not aware of. For principals to effectively connect their leadership to student learning via the context, having an in-depth knowledge of teaching, learning, and leadership skills are key factors. This is why this study stresses the importance of principals and teachers acquiring the required knowledge and skills for successful leadership and teaching. Principals are expected to have undertaken formal pre-service training in educational management (Anderson & Pounder, 2018; Connelly & Schooley, 2013; Day et al., 2011; Marishane, 2020; Siahaan, 2020; Usman & Syaputri, 2020). Since proper preparation prevents poor performance, formal pre-training on educational leadership will equip principals with the professional ability (wisdom) to handle student learning with maximum care. This will equip principals to work with school members and coordinate school activities in a way that all members remain poised and devoted towards achieving collective and individual goals, as highlighted in the relational leadership theory (Brower et al., 2000). Even while on the job, principals are obliged to continue developing themselves through formal in-service and other learning options so they can effectively impact student learning amid

the 21st century leadership challenges (Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007).

Formal pre- and in-service training coupled with extra efforts to upgrade leadership skills will teach principals the professional values needed to effectively impact student learning. Examples of such professional values are confidence, enthusiasm, professional brilliance, knowledge of subject matter, exemplary character, integrity, approachability, problem identification, problem solving, strong professional will power, and fostering good interpersonal relationships (Bush & Glover, 2014; Marishane, 2020; Rodriguez-Gomez et al., 2020). In this regard, continuous professional education is a panacea principals need to be able to display professional competence. Therefore, school leadership capabilities can be improved by upgrading their abilities in management so they can successfully empower teachers to effectively teach students and interact with them positively (Anderson & Pounder, 2018; Hightower et al., 2011; Siahaan, 2020). For example, violence can be curbed in school environments through training on non-violent conflict resolution measures (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The emphasis here is that obtaining formal pre- and in-service training will give principals skills with which they can establish good interpersonal relationships with teachers and students. Establishing good relationships will create conducive environments, and by implication, their leadership will be appropriately linked to student learning. Apart from professional values, leadership that supports student learning requires personal values like compassion, inspiration, and honesty (Bush & Glover, 2014; Kouzes & Posner, 1994, cited in Evans, 2009). Importantly, the values most highly valued by the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust are justice, care, respect, concern, kindness, and unity (Brower et al., 2000). Having and displaying these values plus technical knowledge and practical wisdom are important for cultivating trusting relationships and closeness among school members for effective productivity.

Teachers as principals need to be professional in the discharge of their duties because student learning can be positively impacted if teacher quality is improved (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). When teachers do their jobs well, they interact better with principals and students. This positive behaviour creates a better atmosphere for students to learn and ease principals' efforts to connect to student learning. Nevertheless, teachers without

professional training need to be given special support by incorporating continuous training to improve their teaching performance and their interactions with students in and out of the classroom. Such training seminars must include content that is consistent with working in student-friendly colleges and paying attention to students' needs (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Considering that education is the backbone of every nation (Mbua, 2003), it is urgent that nations invest in professional training for principals and teachers. Furthermore, this research was conducted at a time when the political situation in Cameroon was unstable: Solving the Anglophone Crisis will ensure peace returns to school environments.

This study established that the context in which students learn is of critical importance to principals. Hence, connecting leadership to student learning by improving learning conditions is a priority for principals. Since leadership is all about relationships (Eacott & Eacott, 2018), direct and effective leadership connectivity to student learning demands that principals foster trusting, caring, and respectful relationships between themselves, teachers, and students. Principals must also enhance supportive disciplinary, physical, and academic environments. Principals are further required to promote safety and be personally and professionally competent. I strongly believe that implementing the above strategies based on the specifications of the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust will close the gap between school leadership and student learning (Brower et al., 2000; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Sklaveniti, 2016).

6.8 Chapter Summary

The chapter presented discussions on how principals connect their leadership to student learning in secondary schools. The study established that many principals and teachers have little or no idea of how context is connected to student learning and what student learning is about, respectively. The research also revealed that principals and teachers of PCCSS are untrained, and the PCC policy for the PEA does not encourage professional development because of the unfavourable conditions attached to further studies. Principals and teachers learn on the job, and as a result, school heads and teachers do not excel at their jobs, and struggle enough that students notice. This investigation further established that in trying to create conducive environments for

teaching and learning, obsolete punitive and humiliating measures, which is violence according to *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) and the African Union (2006), are used on students by principals and teachers, and students fight back against teachers in self-defence. The study further established that there is a lack of modern basic social and institutional resources for both staff and students, which hampers teaching and learning.

Another finding was the poor relationships that exist between the Synod Office hierarchy, principals, and teachers, and between principals, teachers, and students. These poor relationships manifest in displays of arrogance, poor development strategies, low pay, discrimination, and favouritism by the Synod Office hierarchy, being unapproachable by the principals, and high levels of violence and intimidation against the students by the principals and teachers. The poor treatment teachers receive affects their commitment towards student learning. Students on the other hand are unhappy with the unpleasant contextual conditions affecting their wellbeing, and consequently, their learning. Lack of accountability, intelligence, wisdom, respect for human rights, participation in decision-making, security, care, justice, respect, emotional support, trust, and good communication networks among all the stakeholders, which are contrary to the guidelines of relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust, contribute to the ineffective leadership connection to student learning via the context. To overcome some difficulties, principals and teachers adopted coping strategies that are not in line with the PEA policies, such as part-time teaching jobs.

Proposed alternative strategies were discussed based on participants' responses, the reviewed literature, and the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust. These strategies that can heal the leadership disconnect from student learning are geared towards revamping positive relationships for the improvement of teaching and learning environments that will help principals connect their leadership roles directly and effectively to student learning.

The summary, limitations and delimitations, contribution of knowledge, suggestions for further research, recommendations, and conclusions of the study are explored in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Introduction

The previous chapter discussed the findings of this investigation in connection to the research questions. The present chapter draws conclusions and recommendations on how to connect school leadership to student learning in secondary schools. The conclusions drawn are based on the research findings. This chapter is divided into five sections. The first section explores the summary of the study's findings, followed by a section that looks at the limitations of the study. The third section discusses the contributions to new knowledge, the fourth examines the study's conclusions and recommendations for improvement, while the last section suggests further research.

7.2 Summary of Key Findings

The main focus of the study was to investigate how school principals connect their leadership to student learning in the PCC school context. To gain a thorough understanding of this investigation, I used the qualitative approach, which allowed me to collect data in the participants' natural setting to find out what principals do to connect their leadership to student learning. Detailed information on this topic was obtained from documents and interviews with 54 participants who are principals, teachers, and students at six PCCSS. Incorporating the various ideas, opinions, and experiences of the participants enhanced the credibility of this study. This study used four major research questions infused within the diverse themes presented in Chapter 5. The summary of the findings follows the research questions in the following subsections.

7.3 Responding to the Research Questions

7.3.1 Primary question: How do principals connect their leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian school context?

It was found that many principals could not establish the connection that learning context has with student learning. Teachers also fell short of demonstrating an understanding of

what student learning means. These participants' inability to show mastery of their functions means they are incapable of performing effectively and to connect with students correctly. These lapses are due to the fact that the PCC not only recruits untrained teachers but also has a poor educational policy that discourages professional development by attaching less value to qualifications. Principals and teachers are expected to train on the job despite the irregularity and insufficiency of in-service training. In as much as learning on the job is possible, it cannot be as efficient as training for the job. Lack of leadership skills limits principals from effectively carrying out their responsibilities, and consequently, connecting appropriately with students and their learning. Principals as school leaders must be very capable in carrying out their duties according to the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust, and therefore, it is vital that principals and teachers make an effort to upgrade their knowledge and for the PCC to revise their policy on staff development.

The study established that principals connect with students by focusing more on teaching than on how students learn. Principals ensure that teachers are aware of their responsibilities and ensure their instructional needs are provided for; for example, teachers must submit lesson plans to vice principals for observation. Despite these efforts by principals, it was revealed that teachers are not comfortable with classroom observations by principals and vice principals despite being informed about them ahead of time. This indicates unpreparedness, which means that students are not well taught. Treating teachers to regular in-service workshops will resolve this issue. Principals also connect with students through maintaining and fostering positive principal-teacher and teacher-student relationships. For instance, teachers who do a good job are motivated in kind or cash, and all teachers are advised to institute lively classrooms for better student learning. These are good gestures; however, some principals only try to connect to students by ensuring they are taught well, which shows poor leadership connection to students, especially as they could not explained how they receive feedback from students to ascertain whether their measures are productive.

Poor communication and interactions between principals and students hamper a smooth connection between them because students are not permitted to directly tell principals of their worries and needs except via house parents, class advisers, discipline masters and

vice principals. Thus, problem solving for students is mostly limited to the level of teachers, which is not a positive approach. This approach creates a rift between principals and students and result in violence, failure, and dropout. According to the relational leadership theory, an essential quality of effective school leadership is the ability of the principal to identify students' problems and take quick action to improve student learning. School rules and regulations are poorly disseminated in PCCSS, which means some students are unfamiliar with the details of the rules. This prevents students from having a rapport with leadership and ask questions for clarity. There are no suggestion boxes in several schools, leaving students who find it difficult to share their personal concerns with teachers without options. The relational leadership theory based on LMX requires leaders to establish clear communication mediums, so members have a clear understanding of organisational goals.

Violence is the main disciplinary tool used by principals to connect with students. Obsolete punitive measures are used to curb students' deviant behaviour. Punitive measures meted out on students by principals and teachers include kneeling, digging, bullying, insults, and severe floggings. For example, one school has a designated room, the 'guillotine room', for flogging students. This is a violation of students' human rights. As a result, students feel humiliated and frustrated, which triggers fights between them and the staff. These experiences imply that principals do not relate well to students, which undoubtedly creates unhealthy learning contexts for students and thereby strain principal-student and teacher-student relationships. These circumstances are the opposite of what is expected of school leaders according to the relational leadership theory and interpersonal trust, which requires leaders to treat members as they would do to themselves. For example, instead of using humiliating punishments, preventive and restorative actions (section 6.7) can be used. Such an approach that treats students with dignity, respect, and love will reduce violence and promote learning conditions that support effective student learning.

Low student engagement in decision-making processes concerning issues related to their wellbeing was noted in this research. For instance, students are relegated to the background even when it comes to matters such as their food menu (in the case of boarding schools), canteen items, and prioritisation of school needs, and they are also

not asked for their feedback on these aspects. As a result, students sneak out of school at night to buy food. This implies that a gap exists between principals and students. However, at one school, students' perspectives were sought about meals, which is good. Enrolled students are also not represented at Board of Governors, PTA and disciplinary council meetings. The non-participation of students in the formulation of school rules and regulations may also be the reason behind the high rule violation rate. Since lack of participation creates resistance to leadership, engaging students in decision-making will compel them to remain committed to school rules, thereby curbing indiscipline. Engaging students in dialogue, as advocated by the relational leadership theory, will give principals the opportunity to find out how students feel about their learning conditions.

The study revealed that lack of trust, justice, safety, and security are stumbling blocks to leadership connectivity to students and their learning. The lack of trust stems from principals not keeping their promises to improve the school meals, which angered the students and strained their connection. Students feel unfairly punished for the same crimes committed by teachers, such as violence and bullying. Principals have also betrayed students who disclosed confidential issues to them that involved teachers. For these reasons, some students decided to keep their problems to themselves. Principals' and teachers' failure to provide students with social and emotional support make students live in fear and distrust. If principals can guarantee confidentiality, it will create trust, which will strengthen the relationship between them and students. It was also disclosed that school campuses are unfenced, and students at a girls' boarding school live in fear. This means that principals fail to create safe learning environments that foster effective leadership connection with students. Ensuring students' safety creates a positive school climate for learning that result in positive principal-student relationships.

The lack of institutional resources (laboratories, libraries, projectors, playgrounds, and generators) make teaching and learning quite challenging. Lack of academic resources imply that principals do not care enough about students who are supposed to benefit from well-prepared teachers. However, as a coping measure, teachers improvised when they lack teaching facilities. Clean water, which is a basic human need, is either lacking or in short supply, and there are also poor sanitary and health facilities. These unattractive conditions result in poor relationships between principals, students, and teachers.

Improving the physical environment is vital for effective leadership connection to student learning. The findings further established that professional counselling services are absent in PCCSS, which means students do not receive enough academic, social, and emotional support to learn effectively. Lack of basic services and facilities in schools make coordinating teaching and learning challenging to leadership, and by implication, harms principals' direct connection to students and their learning.

Generally, this study established that the relationships between principals and students, principals and teachers, and teachers and students are not learner-friendly. Strained relationships reflect a gap between leadership and student learning. The inability of school leadership to foster conducive school contexts that sustain effective student learning was proven in the findings, and it implies that principals do not connect appropriately with the students in PCCSS. This situation needs urgent intervention. Applying the strategies discussed in section 6.7, which are founded on the relational leadership theory principles based on LMX and interpersonal trust, will enable principals to close this gap.

7.3.2 Research question 1: How do principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools understand the connection between context and student learning?

Three principals in PCCSS understood the connection between context and student learning as a function of appropriate leadership practices that provide learning environments suitable for students' success. From this explanation, the study established that making the school environment right for teaching and learning is strongly connected to student learning. Yet, two principals described the connection of the concepts as the application of a leadership style that fosters student learning through the reinforcement of teaching. This description is not a suitable response to the inquiry as it emphasises only how teachers teach and ignores students' learning conditions. Another principal referred to the connection between these concepts as monitoring students' activities at a given time. Therefore, the study established that not all principals understood the connection between context and student learning.

7.3.3 Research question 2: How do school principals create viable conditions for effective student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?

School principals create viable conditions for student learning in PCCSS in different ways, such as how they interact with teachers and students. However, most of the methods they use negatively impact student learning if not addressed. Principals focus more on ensuring that teachers are duty conscious, properly prepared for teaching, and meet their deadlines. Principals reinforce duty consciousness by reminding teachers to upgrade their notes, holding meetings with teachers to assess work coverage, conducting classroom observations and providing feedback thereafter. The fact that viable contexts for student learning is determined by teachers' performance indicates a poor relationship between principals and students and an obvious split between leadership and student learning. However, the study revealed that class prefects can evaluate teachers' assiduity daily and report to the dean of studies.

As per the findings, principals try to ensure they have good relationships with both teachers and students. To maintain these ties, financial and verbal motivation are offered to staff who perform well. This is intended to create resistance and friction-free work contexts, which revitalises their relationships for better work performances. The principals also try to remind students to share their problems with their superiors following the chain of command. Only students with severe health conditions meet face-to-face with principals, which may create a barrier in this relationship that result in unsuitable learning conditions. Positive teacher-student relationships are also encouraged by principals who inspire teachers to be caring and friendly towards students, which may make students feel loved and valued, improve teacher-student relationships, and create positive conditions for student learning. Teachers also have to counsel students on sensitive issues surrounding their social lives, but this is not effective because of teachers' heavy workload and their lack of counselling experience.

To create conducive student learning conditions, teachers are involved in decision-making, though they contribute very little or nothing to these meetings because of restrictions. Teachers can only contribute in staff meetings on matters that concern them, such as social contributions. Project prioritisation and disciplinary council decisions are

the sole responsibility of members of the administration. It was noted that enrolled students are not represented at any major decision-making body of the PEA such as disciplinary council meetings. The exclusion of teachers and students in important school matters means a possible breach of trust and poor linkage between leadership and members, which create unfriendly teaching and learning environments.

Principals use measures to identify students' challenges; however, these measures created adverse conditions for student learning. For example, principals only focus on students who isolate themselves, yet isolation means that the students had no one to talk to, which frustrated them. This is very dangerous to learning. Additionally, it was observed that academic challenges are detected only during assessments and evaluation. This implies that students who perform below average may have challenges that were not identified and addressed before assessment. These measures reveal that problem identification and solving for students are not handled well by principals as these measures create a relational gap between principals and students.

Principals also maintain student discipline to create effective learning environments, but the principals of PCCSS strongly believe that an African child cannot behave without the cane. This mentality is evidence that principals fail to match their leadership with educational norms that require respect for students' rights and having students' best interest at heart. Students are subjected to horrific and humiliating punishments, such as severe flogging, bullying, insults, and kneeling. Students learning under such violent conditions obviously live in hate. These punishments negatively affect students' self-esteem, behaviour, relationships, and learning, which disconnects direct leadership association with student learning.

7.3.4 Research question 3: What challenges do school principals in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools experience when creating an environment that enables them to connect directly with the students?

Principals face numerous challenges that affect their capability to create environments that enable them to connect directly with students. Schools are located at inappropriate places with limited spaces or in the heart of cities where business activities and noise

interrupt learning, and playgrounds are absent, undeveloped, or below standard because of limited spaces. It was reported that both parents and students are unhappy with the situation. Another challenge is the lack of qualified counselling personnel, which are required by government regulations, but government-assigned counsellors have apparently been reluctant to visit PCC schools. Principals and teachers act as counsellors, but they struggle because they are not trained for this and do not have time.

The high mobility rate of experienced teachers and the recruitment of untrained teachers are also barriers to leadership directly connecting to student learning. The study revealed that these factors force principals to make teachers teach additional subjects for which they are not employed to teach. This is met with resistance from teachers and affects their performance. Students also stated that some teachers do not know their subject matter, which means students lose faith in them and this contributes to the leadership split from student learning. Poor interactions between the employer and staff also kill teachers' enthusiasm and harm principals' connection to student learning.

The investigation established that poor working conditions for principals and teachers is another factor that affects teaching and learning. There are insufficient resources for both teachers and students (sections 6.5 and 6.6). Frequent electricity cuts, dirty water and water shortages that make students sick interrupt learning. Worse still, there are no school buses and qualified health personnel at some boarding schools, putting students' lives at risk. The inadequacy or lack of modern teaching aids and specialised rooms hinder effective teaching, and obviously, effective learning. Low salaries and the PCC's poor educational policy that hinders professional development also affect the quality of learning and teaching. Insufficient in-service training programmes organised by Synod Office hierarchy limit the abilities of principals and teachers to function effectively and provide enabling environments for students. These unsatisfactory conditions under which the participants work create a tense atmosphere as teachers' commitment towards class attendance and respect for leadership are negatively affected, which in turn affects leadership connectivity to student learning.

Insufficient accommodation on campuses for duty post holders amid insecurity at the research sites prevent teachers from supervising school activities. As a result, student

participation in activities meant to promote a lively school environment are badly affected and challenging to leadership. Principals are also challenged by students resisting flogging and fighting against the staff because it creates an uproar that adversely affects the serenity of the school environment. Principals must safeguard actions that enhance positive ties among school members to create contexts that support effective student learning.

7.3.5 Research question 4: What alternative strategies can be implemented to ensure a safe and secure learning environment in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools?

Detailed descriptions of possible strategies that can be implemented to ensure a safe and secure learning environment in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools are given in section 6.7. These strategies are categorised into two sections. The first section, improving learning and environment, looks at focusing on students' needs, providing and ensuring security, rendering social, emotional and academic support, instituting qualified problem-identification and problem-solving structures, promoting effective communication, increasing student engagement in decision-making, reflecting on the leadership practice, and enhancing positive interactions between teachers and students. The second section, reviving work conditions and relationships, comprise improvement of employer-employee relationships, nurturing positive principals-teacher interactions, and professional development for staff.

This last research question was vital to the study, and therefore, a leadership model for direct and effective leadership connection to student learning rooted in the relational leadership theory based on LMX and interpersonal trust and the study's findings were developed and are set out in subsection 7.5.2. This leadership framework provides very useful information on direct leadership connection to students for effective learning and performance through principals' initiation of meaningful exchanges with school members to establish conducive learning environments. The ensemble effect of the implementation of these strategies will create school contexts based on positive, trusting, caring, honest, kind, dialogical, impartial, participatory, and loving relationships that necessitate effective leadership liaisons with students and their learning.

7.4 Study Limitations

A number of limitations emanated from the data sampling procedure. A qualitative approach was used to obtain the lived experiences of the participants (Cohen et al., 2011), and a case study design, as one of the qualitative methods favoured by interpretivists (Willis, 2007), was applied to get a wider understanding of the leadership role of school principals to connect to student learning (Creswell, 2013). Convenient sampling was used to select the schools that were easily available (Acharya et al., 2013; Rahi, 2017) and criterion sampling was used to decide on the typical characteristics and the number of participants used for the investigation (Mugo, 2002; Patton, 2002). Because of the suitable methodology applied in this research, I gathered rich information. However, despite triangulating the collected data by collecting data from various sources (principals, teachers and students) to increase the trustworthiness of the study's results, the findings cannot be generalised because of the small sample size.

Another limitation is that the study was limited to Presbyterian secondary schools in Cameroon, which excluded other faith-based schools, and lay private and public schools. Furthermore, the research focused on students, teachers, and principals. School members such as support staff, parents, and other stakeholders were not part of the study. These limitations open up avenues for further research in other settings.

7.5 Contribution of the Research

The gap identified in this research is that, studies on successful school leadership have been rarely linked to the school context. As such, school environments are uncondusive for students because principals focus more on improving teacher quality as a way of creating enabling context for students than linking their leadership directly to the context in which students learn. Thus, this study provides new information on a leadership model and knowledge of alternative leadership strategies which will help principals connect their leadership roles directly to the context in which students learn for effective student learning.

7.5.1 Relevance of the investigation to policy and practice

In this section, the new knowledge this study brings to public policy implementation is discussed. A unique contribution was identified in the course of discussing the findings of this study that relates to effective public strategy application for the amelioration of direct and effective leadership connectivity to student learning via the creation of favourable school environments.

To start, I identified administrative, social, and pedagogic deficiencies in leadership and teaching skills owing to a lack of professional training for principals and teachers. As a result, these groups train on the job, which makes their jobs too challenging and student learning ineffective due to their ignorance of the vital role school environments play in the enhancement of student learning. This ignorance results in poor relationships between school members, uncondusive student learning contexts, and a gap between leadership and student learning. Acquiring formal pre-service training is critical to equip principals with in-depth knowledge of educational leadership (Marishane, 2020). Understanding the professional values listed in subsection 7.5.2 will give principals the competency required to successfully give teachers and students appropriate support and establish direct and effective connections with students and their learning (Hightower et al., 2011). Leadership proficiency reduces teachers' disrespect for authority. Pre-training for teachers is also vital because it helps them master their subject matter, which positively impacts student learning and improves their support of the leaderships' connections to student learning (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The relational leadership theory based on LMX justifies the need for leaders to possess practical wisdom and technical knowledge for optimum results. Therefore, governments must invest more in professional training for principals and teachers.

To continue, uncondusive learning environments result from lack of psychological and academic support to students (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007), which are connected firstly to unapproachable leadership, and secondly, to the absence of qualified problem-identification and problem-solving structures in schools. Logically, principals can only do that which they know. Leadership approachability, honesty, and friendliness are key elements because to create supportive learning environments, principals must listen and

respond promptly to students' challenges and initiate cordial interactions between students and staff (Bear, 2020; Day et al., 2011; De Maeyer et al., 2006). Hence, the PEA must institute professional counselling units in their schools and work with educational psychologists.

Additionally, school environments do not foster student learning because they lack basic and modern institutional resources for teaching and learning, resulting from failure of the state, the PEA and principals to ensure educational regulations pertaining to school opening are respected. Focusing on school needs for students and teachers is vital in the quest for school leaders to connect their leadership role to student learning (Hahn, 2017; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The rationale is that the availability of quality institutional resources gives students the advantage of exploiting their different interests and abilities and improving their reasoning (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). School providers, policy makers, and principals must show love and concern by ensuring the convenience of students before and during school operations, as propagated by the relational leadership theory.

Another contribution is that students do not feel safe in schools due to insecurity, violence, and the abuse of students' rights. Violent student environments characterised by unenclosed boarding campuses, flogging, bullying, insults, and discrimination result from principals' failure to align with educational norms in *A Human Rights-based Approach to Education for All* (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007) that discourages the abuse of students' rights and Article 29 of the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child* (UN, 1989) that requires the development of education that is peaceful and student-friendly. Enclosed campuses are more secure for schools and crucial for conducive learning (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). Replacing violence with preventive and restorative measures to change students' behaviour will reduce violence (Obsuth et al., 2017), improve the school climate (Dike, 2019), and thus, enhance student learning. Such measures include counselling, caring, supporting, respecting relationships (Obsuth et al., 2017), monitoring, encouraging, and being honest and impartial with students. These measures will improve principal-teacher-student relationships and reduce student indiscipline. The relational leadership theory calls for leaders to treat all members as

themselves with respect, dignity, and justice, and such treatment will provide students with safe learning environments.

Furthermore, lack of participation in decision-making contributes to unhealthy student learning contexts, and subsequently, leadership disconnection from student learning. It is necessary for principals to increase student engagement in decision-making related to issues that directly concern their welfare, such as meals, disciplinary councils, canteen items, and school rules. Seeking and valuing students' views will positively impact school success (Bear, 2020; Day et al., 2011) because problem solving is enhanced (Anderson & Pounder, 2018; Bear, 2020) and relationships are strengthened (Cunliffe & Ericksen, 2011), which enhance principals' connection to student learning. The relational leadership theory based on LMX reiterates that all members must participate in making decisions to effectively attain individual and school goals.

School environments are not conducive for student learning because of poor communication. Effective communication requires principals to clearly communicate key school information to students (Hahn, 2017; Leithwood et al., 2004; Webster, 2020). For example, apart from reminders at assemblies, crucial information like school rules should be sent to parents for endorsement as well as posted on noticeboards for effective comprehension and as a continuous reminder. Even so, caution should be taken to ensure that school rules and enforcement are fair in order to reduce behaviour-related troubles (Bear, 2020). Placing suggestion boxes at convenient places so students can communicate their complaints, compliments, and suggestions are also a better way of promoting effective communication between principals and students (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007).

The prevalence of leadership disassociation from student learning also results from poor interactions between principals and teachers and teachers and students. Apart from safeguarding healthy relationships with students, investing in nurturing and enhancing positive and trusting interactions among the said members by principals are vital to create viable conditions for student learning. These relationships are important because they provide a platform on which healthy school contexts that facilitate student learning are built. To promote positive interactions between principals and teachers, principals should,

be reachable to teachers through quality exchanges that promote trust (Brower et al., 2000), involve teachers in decision-making to initiate a sense of belonging (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011), institute growth schemes that strengthen their capacities (Webster, 2020), and show empathy for effective performance.

On the other hand, dealing with teachers as valued humans (McCormick, 2019) influences teachers to do same with students. Reminding and encouraging teachers to play the role of substitute parents to students will prompt teachers to give the necessary contextual and classroom support students need to excel in their academics (Drucker, 2018; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The awareness of this fact will, for example, alert teachers that making advances at students can make them feel unsafe, strain their relationship, and negatively affect learning (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The inclusion of content that is consistent with working in student-friendly colleges in workshops will enhance positive relationships that foster effective teaching and learning (UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). In my view, instituting annual awards for 'teacher of the year', nominated and voted for by students, can help a great deal to moderate teachers' reactions towards students' behaviours. Hence, attending to the relational situation of the school life (Grazia & Molinari, 2020) is one way in which principals can assure healthy school environments that sustain direct and effective leadership liaisons with student learning.

By extension, tense school contexts arise from poor employer-employee rapport because teachers take out their frustrations with their working conditions on the students by using violence. This situation calls for the improvement of employer-employee relationships. Reviving work conditions for teachers by listening and responding to them with respect, showing concern for their needs, and awarding salaries and promotions without discrimination would establish good rapport among the employer, principals, and teachers as well as curb violence between teachers and students (Bear, 2020; UNICEF & UNESCO, 2007). The cumulative effect in schools would be increased collaboration among principals and teachers, which will result in positive teaching and learning environments.

In a nutshell, this study clearly established that uncondusive learning environments are linked to principals' poor performance that creates a gap between their leadership and student learning. As a result, school contexts are not conducive to learning. In this study, my contribution to knowledge is geared towards bridging the gap between school leadership and student learning on the platform of learner-friendly contexts. The provision of schools is useless if students cannot learn. Therefore, neglecting learning conditions is a leadership mistake that should be addressed urgently. Schools must be safe places for students because according to the Millenium Development Goals (2000) cited in UNICEF & UNESCO (2007), students have the right to education. Creating viable learning contexts encompasses leadership awareness and implementation of all the aforementioned aspects aimed at nurturing and fostering positive relationships among principals, teachers, and students. This was the rationale for using the relational leadership theory based on LMX and interpersonal trust for this study that states that effective leadership is all about relationships (Brower et al., 2000; Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Eacott, 2018; Sklaveniti, 2016). The next subsection gives the proposed relational leadership model for direct and effective leadership connection to student learning via the context.

7.5.2 Proposed effective relational leadership model for secondary schools based on principal-student-teacher exchanges

This section explains and demonstrates how principals can connect their leadership to the context so that teaching and learning can be highly effective. The leadership model in Figure 7.1 is based on the relational leadership theory, which is based on LMX and interpersonal trust, as well as the study's findings. The relational leadership model shows how principals in secondary schools can create enabling contexts that help them connect directly and effectively to student learning.

In Figure 7.1 alphabetical letters (A, B, C, D, E) are assigned to the different boxes to ease understanding. The figure shows arrows from principals (A) to students (B) and down to teachers (C), and there are also arrows from teachers to students and up to principals. These arrows show that principals and teachers, at different levels, must interact and support students specifically and student learning generally. These arrows

also indicate that interactions between these school members should be peaceful and uninterrupted. The application of professional and personal values indicated under principals and teachers in boxes A and C are the enablers of strong support for student learning. The position of students (box B) in the middle indicates that students are at the centre of secondary schools, and therefore, principals must ensure that students are given the attention they deserve. The two pointers linking students (box B) and learning context (box D) show that the learning context (box D) has features of the relational leadership theory based on LMX namely dialogue, participation, decision-making, and effective communication and demonstrate that student learning can be strongly influenced by the learning context, and vice versa. The one-way arrow from principals (A) to learning context (D) signals that learning context requires principals to employ their professional and personal values to promote the aspects indicated in box D to foster positive teaching and learning contexts. The one-way arrow linking teachers (C) to learning context (D) simply reiterates that principals must empower and work with teachers to ease leadership links to student learning. The pointer from learning context (D) to outcome 1 (E) communicates the general result of favourable learning contexts in D, such as the establishment of trusting and positive relationships for a healthy school climate. Lastly, the indicator from outcome 1 (E) linking outcome 2 (F) gives the final result, which is that a healthy school climate leads to direct and effective leadership connection to student learning.

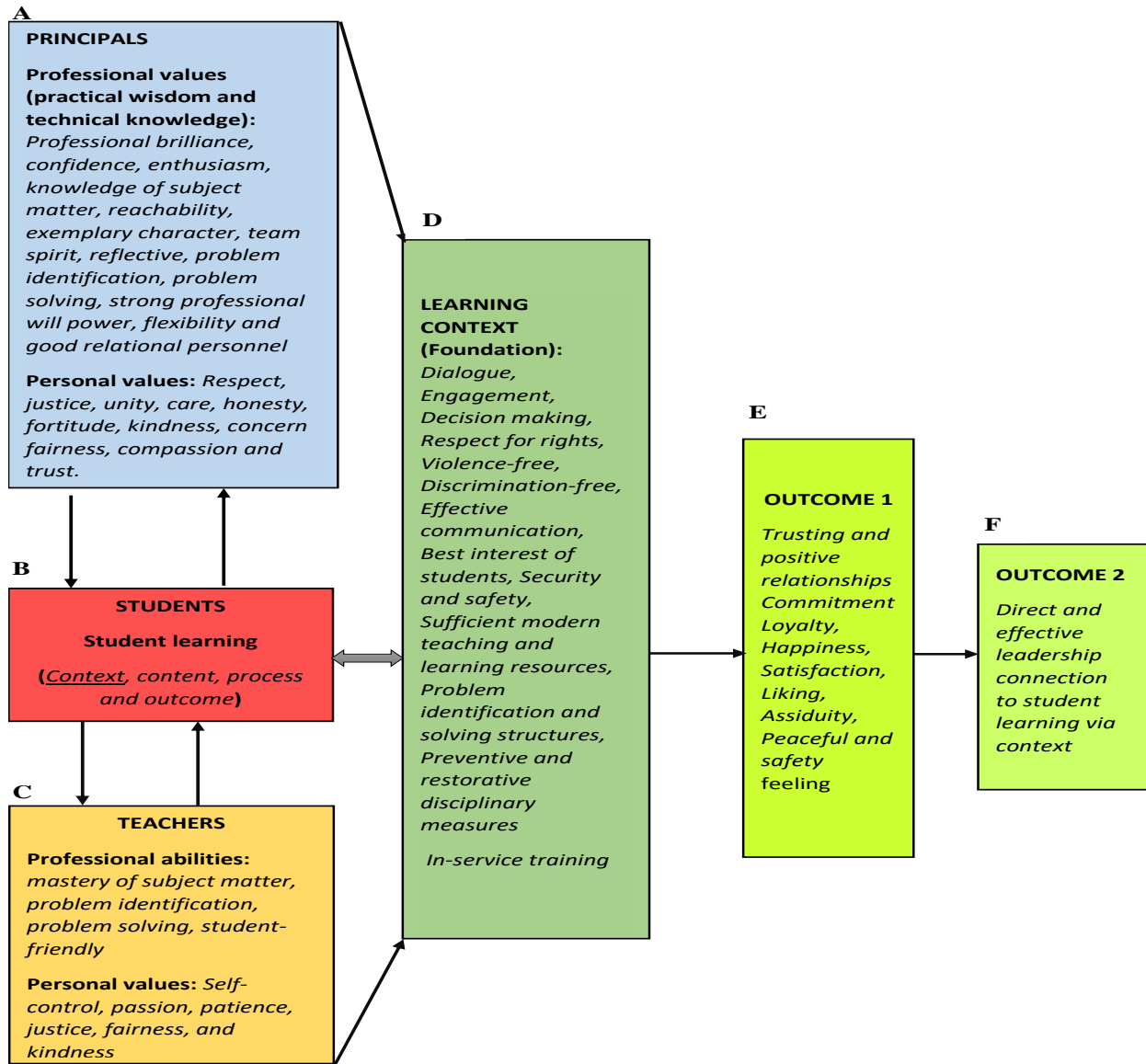


Figure 7.1 Proposed effective relational leadership model for secondary schools based on principal-student-teacher exchanges

7.6 Conclusions of the Study

Creating suitable learning environments is important for the implementation of direct and effective leadership connection to student learning. Leadership connection to student learning is not done well in PCCSS as principals attend more to instructional supervision than the conditions (contexts) of learning. Leadership neglect of student learning conditions results in poor interactions among principals, teachers, and students because of harsh school climates. Nevertheless, the findings demonstrated that a few principals

understood the relationship that context has with student learning, and one teacher's view aligned with the meaning of student learning. At a low level, the findings further indicated that principals make efforts to initiate healthy environments by asking class proctors to appraise teachers' assiduity, inspiring teachers to maintain good relationships with students, and teacher participation in some decisions. Hence, the following conclusions can be drawn from the study:

- The competency of secondary school leadership is questionable as principals are unable to articulate the link between context and student learning. Teachers' performances are also questioned by principals and students. These lapses are attributed to lack of professional training for teachers and principals before employment and appointment respectively. This situation takes a heavy toll on leadership connection to student learning.
- Insufficient and irregular in-service training means that principals and teachers cannot upgrade their knowledge to perform their different roles effectively. This may have left principals ignorant and confused regarding what needs to be done to initiate and maintain positive relationships among school members.
- The fact that principals attempt to support teachers, involve class proctors to give appraisal of teachers' attendance, motivate teachers to maintain good relationships with students, and involve teachers in some decisions are positive ways of instituting suitable environments for effective student learning, but these are not enough.
- Low student engagement in decision-making plus poor communication between principals and students are unfavourable for learning contexts. These loopholes lead to depression, frustration, and untrustworthiness, which are indicators of strained relationships among principals, students, and teachers. It is clear that this increases adversity to students and their learning.
- In trying to connect their leadership roles to student learning, principals face challenges that hinder this connection. These difficulties include inappropriate school location, teacher shortages, lack of qualified personnel, resistance from teachers, and a PCC educational policy for PEA that does not encourage professional development. Lack of trained counselling personnel is also a

challenge to leadership and students who need social, emotional, and educational support to excel in their learning.

- Teachers face problems that prevent them from supporting their leaders, such as principals being unapproachable, poor working conditions, poor employer-employee relationships, absence or insufficient modern institutional resources, and resistance from students.
- Students expressed dissatisfaction with their learning conditions arising from violence, low-quality meals, insufficient and absent learning resources, insecurity, injustice, and intimidation. Such harsh environments not only show the leadership's weakness but are unlikely to connect leadership to student learning.

For secondary school principals to create conditions that can directly and effectively connect their leadership roles to student learning, the following recommendations are made:

- It is urgent for the government and private educational providers to invest in professional training for principals and teachers before and during employment to improve the quality of leadership, teaching, and learning.
- The provision of qualified counselling services to take care of the psychological needs of students is unavoidable to PCCSS. Even so, government should supplement private schools with educational psychologists to provide social, emotional, and pedagogic support to students.
- It is crucial for the government to conduct proper inspections of the private education sector before schools open to ensure the schools are ready for student learning.
- It is vital for educational stakeholders to implement measures to eradicate violence and drug abuse in schools.
- The PCC must revise their professional development policy so that leadership, teaching, learning, and employer-employee relationship can be improved.
- The Job description of PEA workers must be revised to include and emphasise that principals must pay attention to learning conditions.

- Principals must improve their communication with students and place suggestion boxes in areas that are easily accessible to students so that students can communicate their experiences for improvement.
- Student engagement in decision-making is essential because it gives principals valuable information and fosters principals-students relationship.
- Principals should adopt non-violent measures to restore students' discipline.
- Installing cameras at strategic places in schools will be helpful to maintain discipline and safety.
- This research was conducted at a time when the unstable political situation of Cameroon affected schools; solving the Anglophone Crisis will improve school environments and student learning.

7.7 Recommendations for Future Research

The subsequent topics are proposed for further research:

- Connecting leadership to student learning at university;
- The impact of principal-teacher relationships on student learning;
- Positive school climate: How can this motivate parents' interest in the education of their children?
- Teacher attrition: Negative and positive impact on student learning; and
- Professional development and performance: What is the correlation and how does it affect student learning?

7.8 Chapter Summary

This investigation established that principals fail to institute favourable contexts in PCCSS through which they can directly and effectively connect their roles to student learning. The findings showed that some principals lack leadership capacity as they could not explain the correlation between context and student learning. The research revealed that PCCSS principals and teachers learn on the job, and as a result, lack professional skills. As such, teachers were also unable to explain the meaning of student learning. The relational leadership theory based on LMX and interpersonal trust is useful to understand that the

only way school leaders can function effectively is by demonstrating practical wisdom and technical knowledge.

The study also revealed that principals struggle to ensure viable conditions for student learning by focusing more on teaching than learning. Principals focus on teachers by ensuring teachers are duty conscious, have their needs provided, receive verbal and financial motivation, and are involved in some decision-making. However, principals do show concern for students as some principals promote positive relationships between them and students and between teachers and students. In this regard, principals inspire teachers to be friendly with students, provide exciting classrooms, involve class prefects in reporting teachers' assiduousness, and remind students to always follow the protocol to have their problems addressed. However, these efforts are not enough as only students with serious health issues have direct access to principals, which limits interactions between principals and students.

The findings further revealed that PCCSS contexts are characterised by violence promoted by principals and teachers. The injustice, intimidation, and dishonesty exhibited by principals and teachers against students adversely affect the leadership link to student learning. In retaliation, students display violence by resisting and confronting staff. Tense school contexts are not peaceful or conducive to student learning.

The study also disclosed the unsafe and insecure conditions under which PCCSS students learn. These conditions include use of obsolete and humiliating punishments to discipline students, low student engagement in decision-making, low-quality meals, insufficient social activities, lack of social and emotional support, and absence and insufficiency of basic school resources. Additional insecure conditions are, principals being unapproachable, insecure sanitary conditions, poor health care, inadequate security, and poor communication between staff, educational visitors, and students. These issues violate student' rights.

This research showed that principals and teachers face challenges when trying to create suitable learning environments and collaborate with leadership respectively. It was revealed that principals face difficulties such as poor working conditions, high teacher attrition rates, lack of qualified services, inappropriate school locations, and disrespect

from teachers. However, to cope with disrespect from teachers, principals must be diplomatic, respectful, polite, and persuasive when dealing with them. Concerning unqualified personnel, principals organise internal workshops to reinforce teaching, but the teachers consider these insufficient. The challenges teachers face include insecurity, principals' being unapproachable, resistance from students, and poor employer-employee relationships. However, teachers try to cope by improvising and taking on other part-time teaching jobs, despite it being against the PCC-PEA policy. This violation of the PCC-PEA policy means there is a broken link between policy makers and the implementers, which indicates unhealthy teaching and learning contexts in PCCSS.

In conclusion, this study established that there is a big gap between secondary school leadership and student learning as a result of unwelcoming school environments arising from many facets. The relational leadership theory founded on LMX and interpersonal trust that underpinned this study may be useful to close this gap. This theory does not only emphasise the necessity of leadership applying professional brilliance but also highlights aspects of dialogue, engagement, participation in decision-making, and good communication. The theory further reiterates that leaders must promote respect, justice, honesty, trust, empathy, care, togetherness, concern, and above all, positive interpersonal relationships. Thus, the effective implementation of this theory requires governments, the PCC-PEA, and principals to work together to ensure safe and secure learning contexts that serve as the foundation for which school leadership can directly and effectively connect to student learning.

REFERENCES

- Aburizaizah, S., Kim, Y., & Fuller, B. (2019). Principal leadership and student achievement: Decentralising school management in Saudi Arabia. *Compare: A Journal of Comparative and International Education*, 49(5), 795–816. Doi: [10.1080/03057925.2018.1462145](https://doi.org/10.1080/03057925.2018.1462145)
- Acharya, A. S., Prakash, A., Saxena, P., & Nigam, A. (2013). Sampling: Why and how of it. *Indian Journal of Medical Specialties*, 4(2), 330-333. Doi: [10.7713/ijms.2013.0032](https://doi.org/10.7713/ijms.2013.0032)
- Adams, D., & Muthiah, V. (2020). School principals and 21st century leadership challenges: A systematic review. *Journal of Nusantara Studies (JONUS)*, 5(1), 189–210. <http://dx.doi.org/10.24200/jonus.vol5iss1pp189-210>
- Agboola, A. A., & Salawu, R. O. (2011). Managing deviant behaviour and resistance to change. *International Journal of Business and Management*, 6(1), 235-242. <https://citeseerx.ist.psu.edu/document?repid=rep1&type=pdf&doi=a15ce7377d7a2fced7069a5725d9456676cd6160>
- American College Personnel Association. (1994). *The student learning imperative: Implications for student affairs*. Washington, D.C.: Author
- Andersen, C. F. (2006). Why teaching first-year students is rewarding for everyone. *First-Year Programs*, 20. In K. M. Goodman, & E. Pascarella, (2006). *Peer review: Emerging trends and key debates in undergraduate education*, 8(3), 1-32. Association of American Colleges.
- Anderson, E., & Pounder, D. G. (2018). Shaping the school-wide learning environment through supervisory leadership. In S. J. Sepeda, & J. A. Pnticell (Eds.), *The Wiley handbook of educational supervision* (pp. 533–554). Wiley.
- Ashu, F. E. (2014). *Effectiveness of school leadership and management development in Cameroon: A guide for educational systems, schools and school leaders*. Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

- Ashu, F. E. (2016). History as it relates to educational leadership and management of education in Cameroon. *Educational Leadership and Management Studies (ELMS)*, 35(2), 10.
- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 315–338. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1048984305000263>
- Bailey, L. F. (2014). The origin and success of qualitative research. *International Journal of Market Research*, 56(2), 167–184. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.2501/IJMR-2014-013>
- Baxter, P., & Jack, S. (2008). Qualitative case study methodology: Study design and implementation for novice researchers. *The Qualitative Report*, 13(4), 544–559. <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR13-4/baxter.pdf>
- Bear, G. (n.d.). *School safety research and recommended interventions*. https://scholar.google.com/scholar?q=School+safety+research+and+recommended+interventions,+Bear,+G&hl=en&as_sdt=0,5&inst=3850658151283745516
- Bear, G. G. (2020). *Improving school climate: Practical strategies to reduce behavior problems and promote social and emotional learning*. Routledge.
- Berg, B. L. (2001). *Qualitative research methods for the social sciences*. Allyn and Bacon.
- Bezzina, C., Paletta, A., & Alimehmeti, G. (2018). What are school leaders in Italy doing? An observational study. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(5), 841–863. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1741143217694896>
- Blase, J., & Blase, J. (2000). Effective instructional leadership: Teachers' perspectives on how principals promote teaching and learning in schools. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 38(2), 130–141. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/09578230010320082/full/html>
- Bondarenko, E. V., Dekhnich, O. V., Fedyunina, I. E., Zubritskiy, O. A., & Khasanov, T. D. (2018). Cameroon variant of English and French: Historical background and

- some specific features. *National Academy of Managerial Staff of Culture and Arts Herald*, 3. <https://doi.org/10.32461/2226-3209.3.2018.173595>
- Bowen, G. A. (2009). Document analysis as a qualitative research method. *Qualitative research journal*, 9(2), 27-40. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.3316/QRJ0902027/full/html>
- Bratton, J. (2020). Relational and distributed theories of leadership. *Organizational Leadership*, 171.
- Bray, Z. (2008). Ethnographic approaches. In D.D. Porta, & M. Keating (Eds.), *Approaches and methodologies in the social sciences. A pluralist perspective* (pp. 296–315). Cambridge University Press.
- Briggs, A. R., Morrison, M., & Coleman, M. (2012). *Research methods in educational leadership and management* (3rd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Brinkmann, S. (2022). *Qualitative interviewing: Conversational knowledge through research interviews*. Oxford University Press.
- Brower, H. H., Schoorman, F. D., & Tan, H. H. (2000). A model of relational leadership: The integration of trust and leader–member exchange. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 11(2), 227–250. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1048984300000400>
- Bryk, A., & Schneider, B. (2002). *Trust in schools: A core resource for improvement*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Bush, T. (2013). Instructional leadership and leadership for learning: Global and South African perspectives. *Education as Change*, 17(sup1), S5–S20. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/16823206.2014.865986>
- Bush, T., & Glover, D. (2014). School leadership models: What do we know? *School Leadership & Management*, 34(5), 553–571. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13632434.2014.928680>
- Bush, T., Kiggundu, E., & Mooros, P. (2011). Preparing new principals in South Africa: The ACE School Leadership Programme1. *South African Journal of Education*,

31(1), 31–43. <https://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/view/63489> Doi:
[10.15700/saje.v31n1a356](https://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/view/63489)

Cameron, D. H. (2010). Working with secondary school leadership in a large-scale reform in London, UK: Consultants' perspectives of their role as agents of school change and improvement. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 38(3), 341–359. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1741143209359715>

Cameroon Ministry of Education. (1995). *National forum on education, 1995*. MINEDUC.

Cameroon Ministry of Education. (1996). *Handbook for heads of secondary and high schools*.

Cashman, J., Dansereau Jr, F., Graen, G., & Haga, W. J. (1976). Organizational understructure and leadership: A longitudinal investigation of the managerial role-making process. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance*, 15(2), 278–296. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0030507376900428>

Chirichello, M. (2004). Collective leadership: Reinventing the principalship. *Kappa Delta Pi Record*, 40(3), 119–123. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00228958.2004.10516420>

Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2013). Teaching thematic analysis: Overcoming challenges and developing strategies for effective learning. *The Psychologist*, 26(2), 120–123. <https://uwe-repository.worktribe.com/preview/937606/Teaching%20>.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2007). *Research methods in education*. Routledge Falmer.

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research methods in education* (7th ed.). Routledge.

Connelly, G., & Schooley, M. (2013). *Leadership matters: What the research says about the importance of principal leadership*. National Association of Elementary School Principals. <https://wyoleg.gov/Interimcommittee/2013/SEARptNAESP.pdf>

Cornell, R., & Mosley, M. L. (2006). Intertwining college with real life: The community college first-year experience. *Peer Review*, 8(3), 23.

- Costello, D. (2015). *Challenges and supports of instructional leadership in schools*. Antistatic.
- Cowie, H., Hutson, N., Jennifer, D., & Myers, C. A. (2008). Taking stock of violence in UK schools: Risk, regulation, and responsibility. *Education and Urban Society*, 40(4), 494–505. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0013124508316039>
- Creswell, J. W. (2003). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2005). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (4th ed.). Pearson Education.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Qualitative approaches inquiry and research design: Choosing approaches*. Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry: Qualitative inquiry and research design*. SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (4th ed.). SAGE.
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage.
- Creswell, J. W., & Poth, C. N. (2016). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2017). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*. Sage Publications.

- Cunliffe, A. L., & Eriksen, M. (2011). Relational leadership. *Human Relations*, 64(11), 1425–1449. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/0018726711418388>
- Damtie, C. (2020). *the Current Practice and Challenges of Managing Financial and Physical Resources in Secondary Schools of Metema Wereda West Gondar Zone* (Doctoral dissertation). University of Gondar Institutional Repository. <http://hdl.handle.net/123456789/3446>
- Dansereau Jr, F., Graen, G., & Haga, W. J. (1975). A vertical dyad linkage approach to leadership within formal organizations: A longitudinal investigation of the role making process. *Organizational Behaviour and Human Performance*, 13(1), 46–78. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/0030507375900057>
- Darling-Hammond, L. (2008). Teacher learning that supports student learning. *Teaching for Intelligence*, 2(1), 91–100.
- Davidovich, R., Nikolay, P., Laugerman, B., & Commodore, C. (Eds.). (2010). *Beyond school improvement: The journey to innovative leadership*. Corwin Press.
- Day, C., Sammons, P., Leithwood, K., Hopkins, D., Qing Gu., Brown, E., & Ahtaridou, E. (2011). *Successful school leadership: Linking with learning and achievement*. Open University Press.
- Delpit, L. (2006). *Other people's children: Cultural conflict in the classroom*. The New Press.
- De Maeyer, S., Donche, V., Rymenans, R., & Van Petegem, P. (2006). The influence of learning styles on pupil achievement and the role of these learning styles in research on school effectiveness. *Conference: British Educational Research Association, Warwick, UK*.
- Denscombe, M. (2010). *Ground rules for social research* (2nd ed.). Open University Press.
- Denzin, N. K & Lincoln, Y. S (Eds.). (2000). *The discipline and practice of qualitative research*. In *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 1–28). SAGE Publications.
- De Siqueira, A. C. (2012). The 2020 World Bank education strategy: Nothing new, or the same old gospel. In *The World Bank and Education* (pp. 67–81). Brill Sense.

- Dike, V. E. (2019). *Students' perception of their school culture and its traditional disciplinary practices: Understanding their implication for teaching and learning*. Available at SSRN 3424198. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3424198>
- DiPaola, M., & Wagner, C. A. (2018). *Improving instruction through supervision, evaluation, and professional development*. IAP.
- Drucker, P. F. (2018). *The effective executive*. Routledge.
- Dupraz, Y. (2019). French and British colonial legacies in education: Evidence from the partition of Cameroon. *The Journal of Economic History*, 79(3), 628–668. <https://www.cambridge.org/core/journals/journal-of-economic-history/article/abs/french-and-british-colonial-legacies-in-education-evidence-from-the-partition-of-cameroon/0B44494F6D3ABF43C1D7D84D0B1D4EFC>
[Doi.10.1017/S0022050719000299](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0022050719000299)
- Durant III, J. M. (2016). What is a Leader. In Schwartzbach, M. G. (2016). *Lawyers as leaders in the United States*. *Leadership* 33(5) 30. GPSolo.
- Eacott, S., & Eacott, S. (2018). *Beyond "Leadership"* (pp. 95-111). Springer Singapore.
- Entwistle, N., & Ramsden, P. (2015). *Understanding student learning*. Routledge.
- Enyew, M. (2018). *A thesis Submitted to the partial fulfillments of the requirement for the Degree of master of arts in school leadership* (Doctoral dissertation). <http://213.55.79.198/xmlui/bitstream/handle/123456789/2761/Dires%20research.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>
- Espelage, D. L., & Hong, J. S. (2019). School climate, bullying, and school violence. In M. J. Mayer, & S. R. Jimerson (Eds.), *School safety and violence prevention: Science, practice, policy* (pp. 45–69). American Psychological Association. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2018-36942-003> [Doi.org/10.1037/0000106-003](https://doi.org/10.1037/0000106-003)
- Evans G. R. D. (2009). What is a leader?. *Plastic and Reconstructive Surgery*, 123(2), 757–759. [Doi.org/10.1097/PRS.0b013e3181958ef9](https://doi.org/10.1097/PRS.0b013e3181958ef9)

- Farina, K. A. (2019). Promoting a culture of bullying: Understanding the role of school climate and school sector. *Journal of School Choice*, 13(1), 94–120. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15582159.2018.1526615>
- Fink, S., & Markholt, A. (2013). The leader's role in developing teacher expertise. In M. Grogan (Ed.), *The Jossey-Bass reader on educational leadership* (pp. 317–333). Wiley.
- Finnigan, K. S., & Stewart, T. J. (2009). Leading change under pressure: An examination of principal leadership in low-performing schools. *Journal of School Leadership*, 19(5), 586–621. Doi 10.1177/105268460901900504
- Fonkeng, E. G., & Tamajong, E. V. (2009). *Secondary school administration and principalship*. Press Universitaires d'Afrique.
- Frank, H., & Hatak, I. (2014). Doing a research literature review. In Fayolle, A. & Wright, M. (Ed), *How to get published in the best entrepreneurship journals* (94-117). Edward Elgar Publishing. <https://research.wu.ac.at/en/publications/doing-a-research-literature-review-3>
- Freiberg, H. J. (2005). *School climate: Measuring, improving and sustaining healthy learning environments*. Taylor & Francis e-Library. <https://www.taylorfrancis.com/books/mono/10.4324/9780203983980/school-climate-jerome-freiberg>
- Fry, H., Ketteridge, S., & Marshall, S. (2008). Understanding student learning. In S. Ketteridge, H. Fry, & S. Marshall (Eds.), *A handbook for teaching and learning in higher education* (pp. 26–44). Routledge.
- Gallego, F. A., & Woodberry, R. (2010). Christian missionaries and education in former African colonies: How competition mattered. *Journal of African Economies*, 19(3), 294–329. <https://academic.oup.com/jae/article/19/3/294/725105>
- Gentilucci, J. L., & Muto, C. C. (2007). Principals' influence on academic achievement: The student perspective. *NASSP Bulletin*, 91(3), 219–236. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0192636507303738>

- Gibbs, G. R. (2007). Thematic coding and categorizing. *Analysing qualitative data*, 703, 38-56. <https://study.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/analyzing-qualitative-da.pdf>
- Glickman, C. D. (2002). *Leadership for learning: How to help teachers succeed*. ASCD.
- Goldring, E., Huff, J., May, H., & Camburn, E. (2008). School context and individual characteristics: What influences principal practice? *Journal of Educational Administration*, 46(3), 332–352. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09578230810869275>
- Graen, G. & Cashman, J. F. (1975). A role making model in formal organizations: A developmental approach. In J.G. Hung, & L. L. Larson (Eds.), *Leadership frontiers* (pp. 143-165). Kent State University Press.
- Graen, G. B. (1976). Role-making processes within complex organizations. In M.D. Dunnette (Ed.), *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (pp. 1201-1245). Rand McNally.
- Graen, G. B., & Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 6(2), 219–247.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/1048984395900365>
- Gray, C., Wilcox, G., & Nordstokke, D. (2017). Teacher mental health, school climate, inclusive education and student learning: A review. *Canadian Psychology*, 58(3), 203. <https://psycnet.apa.org/record/2017-31810-001>
- Gray, D. E. (2004). *Doing research in the real world*. Sage Publications
- Gray, J. (2000). *Causing concern but improving: A review of schools' experiences on special measures*. Department for Education and Employment.
<https://core.ac.uk/download/pdf/4154282.pdf>
- Grazia, V., & Molinari, L. (2020). School climate multidimensionality and measurement: A systematic literature review. *Research Papers in Education*, 36, 1–27.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/02671522.2019.1697735>
- Grbich, C. (2007). *Qualitative data analysis: An introduction*. SAGE Publications.

- Grix, J. (2010). *Demystifying postgraduate research*. A&C Black.
- Guest, G. (2014). Sampling and selecting participants in field research. *Handbook of methods in cultural anthropology*, 2, 215-250 (2nd edition). USA.
- Gumus, S., Bellibas, M. S., Esen, M., & Gumus, E. (2018). A systematic review of studies on leadership models in educational research from 1980 to 2014. *Educational Management Administration & Leadership*, 46(1), 25–48. Doi: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1741143216659296>
- Gurr, D., & Drysdale, L. (2020). Leadership for challenging times. *International Studies in Educational Administration*, 48(1).
- Gwanfogbe, B. (2018). *Changing regimes and educational development in Cameroon*. African Books Collective.
- Gwanfogbe, M. B. (2020). *Basel mission education in Cameroon: 1886-1968*. Spears Books.
- Hadfield, M. (2003). Building capacity versus growing schools. In A. Harris, C. Day, D. Hopkins, M. Hadfield, A. Hargreaves, & C. Chapman (Eds.), *Effective leadership for school improvement* (pp. 107–120). Routledge Falmer.
- Hahn, E. A. (2017). *Leadership characteristics, school climate, and employee engagement in high performing, high-needs schools* [Doctoral dissertation]. Georgia State University. Doi.org/10.57709/9971670
- Hallinger, P. (2003). Leading educational change: Reflections on the practice of instructional and transformational leadership. *Cambridge. Journal of Education*, 33(3), 329-352. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/0305764032000122005>
- Hallinger, P. (2011). Leadership for learning: Lessons from 40 years of empirical research. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 49(2), 125-142. <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/09578231111116699/full/html>

- Hallinger, P., & Heck, R. H. (2011). Collaborative leadership and school improvement: Understanding the impact on school capacity and student learning. In T. Townsend, & J. MacBeath (Eds.), *International handbook of leadership for learning* (pp. 469–485). Springer.
- Hamilton, L., & Corbett-Whittier, C. (2013). *Using case study in education research*. Sage.
- Hart, K. M., Capps, H. R., Cangemi, J. P., & Caillouet, L. M. (1986). Exploring organizational trust and its multiple dimensions: A case study of General Motors. *Organization Development Journal*, 4(2), 31-37.
<https://psycnet.apa.org/record/1987-26814-001>
- Hawk, T. F., & Shah, A. J. (2007). Using learning style instruments to enhance student learning. *Decision Sciences Journal of Innovative Education*, 5(1), 1–19.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/j.1540-4609.2007.00125.x>
- Helmrich, B. (2015). 30 ways to define leadership. *Business News Daily*, 5.
<https://reachingnewheightsfoundation.com/rnhf-wp/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/33-Ways-to-define-Leadership.pdf>
- Hersted, L., & Gergen, K. J. (2013). *Relational leading*. Taos Institute Publications.
- Hesse-Biber, S. N., & Leevy, P. (2006). *The practice of qualitative research*. SAGE Publications.
- Highfield, C. (2010). Disparity in student achievement within and across secondary schools: an analysis of department results in English, maths and science in New Zealand. *School Leadership and Management*, 30(2), 171-190.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13632431003685860>
- Hightower, A. M., Delgado, R. C., Lloyd, S. C., Wittenstein, R., Sellers, K., & Swanson, C. B. (2011). *Improving student learning by supporting quality teaching: Key issues, effective strategies*. Editorial Projects in Education.
- Hittleman, D. R., & Simon, A. J. (2006). *Interpreting educational research: An introduction for consumers of research* (4th ed.). Merrill Publishing Company.

- Holahan, C., & Batey, B. (2019). *Measuring school climate and social and emotional learning and development: A navigation guide for states and districts*. Council of Chief State School Officers & Education Counsel LLC.
- Huang, F., & Anyon, Y. (2020). The relationship between school disciplinary resolutions with school climate and attitudes toward school. *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 64(3), 212–222.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1045988X.2020.1722940>
- Huguet, A., Farrell, C. C., & Marsh, J. A. (2017). Light touch, heavy hand: Principals and data-use PLCs. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 55(4), 376–389.
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/JEA-09-2016-0101/full/html>
- Hung, D. K. M., & Ponnusamy, P. (2010). Instructional leadership and schools effectiveness. In *World summit on knowledge society* (pp. 401–406). Springer.
- Hunter, M. S. (2006). Fostering student learning and success through first-year programs. *Peer Review*, 8(3).
- Interstate School Leaders Licensure Consortium. (1996). *Interstate school leaders licensure consortium: Standards for school leaders: Adopted by full consortium, November 2, 1996*. Council of Chief State School Officers.
<https://www.easds.org.uk/uploads/docs/Inter%20state%20standards%20USA.pdf>
- Ismail, F. A., Bungsu, J., & Shahrill, M. (2023). Improving students' participation and performance in building quantities through think-pair-share cooperative learning. *Indonesian Journal of Educational Research and Technology*, 3(3), 203-216.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Masitah-Shahrill-2/publication/364336647_Improving_Students'_Participation_and_Performance_in_Building_Quantities_through_Think-Pair-Share_Cooperative_Learning/links/634af1d976e39959d6c50bcb/Improving-Students-Participation-and-Performance-in-Building-Quantities-through-Think-Pair-Share-Cooperative-Learning.pdf
- Ismail, S. N., Rahman, F. A., & Yaacob, A. (2020). School climate and academic performance. In *Oxford Research Encyclopaedia of Education*.

- Jacobsen, C. B., & Andersen, L. B. (2019). High performance expectations: Concept and causes. *International Journal of Public Administration*, 42(2), 108–118. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/01900692.2017.1405443>
- Kallio, H., Pietilä, A. M., Johnson, M., & Kangasniemi, M. (2016). Systematic methodological review: developing a framework for a qualitative semi-structured interview guide. *Journal of advanced nursing*, 72(12), 2954-2965. <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/full/10.1111/jan.13031>
- Kelley, C. J., & Shaw, J. J. (Eds.). (2009). *Learning first! A school leader's guide to closing achievement gaps*. Corwin Press.
- Khatri, K. K. (2020). Research paradigm: A philosophy of educational research. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Science*, 5(5). <https://journal-repository.theshillonga.com/index.php/ijels/article/view/2497>
- Kiger, M. E., & Varpio, L. (2020). Thematic analysis of qualitative data: AMEE Guide No. 131. *Medical Teacher*, 42(8), 846–854. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0142159X.2020.1755030>
- Kilingç, A. Ç. (2014). Examining the relationship between teacher leadership and school climate. *Educational Sciences: Theory and Practice*, 14(5), 1729–1742. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1050494>
- Klees, S. J., Samoff, J., & Stromquist, N. P. (Eds.). (2012a). *The World Bank and education: Critiques and alternatives* (Vol. 14). Springer Science & Business Media.
- Klees, S., Samoff, J., & Stromquist, N. P. Eds. (2012b). *Human rights in the World Bank 2020 education strategy*. Sense Publishers
- Kombo, D. K., & Tromp, D. L. A. (2009). *Proposal and thesis writing: An introduction*. Pauline Publications Africa.
- Kraft, M. A., & Falken, G. T. (2020). Why school climate matters for teachers and students. *State Education Standard*, 20(2), 33-35. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1257758>.

- Lang, M. K. (2014). The Presbyterian Church in Cameroon and rural missionary work. The case of the Menchum Valley in Northwest Cameroon. *Rural Theology*, 12(2), 119-129.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1179/1470499414Z.00000000031>
- Layder, D. (2013). *Qualitative data & mixed strategies. Doing excellent small-scale research*. Sage.
- Leedy, P., & Ormrod, J. (2010). *Practical research planning and design* (9th ed.). Boston.
- Leithwood, K., Harris, A., & Hopkins, D. (2020). Seven strong claims about successful school leadership revisited. *School Leadership & Management*, 40(1), 5–22.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13632434.2019.1596077>
- Leithwood, K., & Seashore-Louis, K. (2011). *Linking leadership to student learning*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Leithwood, K., Seashore, K., Anderson, S., & Wahlstrom, K. (2004). *Review of research: How leadership influences student learning*. American Educational Research Association.
- Leithwood, K., Sun, J., & Pollock, K. (Eds.). (2017). *How school leaders contribute to student success: The Four Paths Framework* (23). Springer.
- Leskiw, S. L., & Singh, P. (2007). Leadership development: Learning from best practices. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 28(5), 444–464.
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/01437730710761742/full/html>
- Li, Y., Li, N., Wu, M., & Zhang, M. (2019). The sustainability of motivation driven by high performance expectations: A self-defeating effect. *Sustainability*, 11(16), 4397.
<https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/11/16/4397>
- Liamputtong, P. (2009). Qualitative data analysis: conceptual and practical considerations. *Health promotion journal of Australia*, 20(2), 133-139.
<https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/abs/10.1071/HE09133>
- Lietz, C. A., Langer, C. L., & Furman, R. (2006). Establishing trustworthiness in qualitative research in social work: Implications from a study regarding spirituality. *Qualitative*

Social Work, 5(4), 441–456.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1473325006070288>

- Lincoln, Y. S., & Guba, E. G. (2013). *The constructivist credo*. Left Coast Press.
- Lincoln, Y. S., Lynham, S. A., & Guba, E. G. (2011). Paradigmatic controversies, contradictions, and emerging confluences, revisited. *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*, 4(2), 97-128.
- Linneberg, M. S., & Korsgaard, S. (2019). Coding qualitative data: A synthesis guiding the novice. *Qualitative Research Journal*, 19(3), 259–270.
<https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/QRJ-12-2018-0012/full/html>
- Lodico, M. G., Spaulding, D. T., & Voegtler, K. H. (2010). *Methods in educational research: From theory to practice* (Vol. 28). John Wiley & Sons.
- Lyonga, N. A. N. (2019). Principals' transformational leadership skills and teachers' job satisfaction in secondary schools in Meme Division of Cameroon. *European Journal of Education Studies*, 6(1). <http://dx.doi.org/10.46827/ejes.v0i0.2409>
- MacBeath, J. (2019). Leadership for learning. In T. Townsend (Ed.), *Instructional leadership and leadership for learning in schools* (pp. 49–73). Palgrave Macmillan.
- MacBeath, J., & Townsend, T. (2011). Leadership and learning: Paradox, paradigms and principles. In T. Townsend, & J. MacBeath (Eds.), *International handbook of leadership for learning* (pp. 1–25). Springer.
- Mack, L. (2010). The philosophical underpinnings of educational research. *Polyglossia*, 19.
http://en.apu.ac.jp/rcaps/uploads/fckeditor/publications/polyglossia/Polyglossia_V19_Lindsay.pdf
- MacNeill, N., Cavanagh, R., & Silcox, S. (2003). Beyond instructional leadership: Towards pedagogic leadership. In *Paper submitted for presentation at the 2003 Annual conference for the Australian Association for Research in Education: Auckland*.
- Magen-Nagar, N., & Azuly, D. (2016). The contribution of school climate and teaching quality to the improvement of learning achievements, according to an external

- evaluation system. *Creative Education*, 7(13), 1773–1784.
Doi: [10.4236/ce.2016.713181](https://doi.org/10.4236/ce.2016.713181)
- Marczyk, G., De Matteo, D., & Festinger, D. (2005). *Essentials of research design and methodology*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Maree, K. (2020). *First steps in research* (Third). Van Schaik.
- Maree, K. (2007). *First steps in research*. Van Schaik Publishers.
- Maree, K. (Ed.). (2012). *First steps in research*. Van Schaik.
- Marishane, N. R. (2016). Leadership and context connectivity: Merging two forces for sustainable school improvement. *Education Provision to Everyone: Comparing Perspectives from Around the World BCES Conference Books*, 14(1).
- Marishane, R. N. (2020). *Contextual intelligence in school leadership*. Brill Sense.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2013). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach*. SAGE.
- Mbua, F. N. (2003). *Educational administration: Theory and practice: The management of organizations and individuals*. Design House.
- McCormick, C. (2019). *Principal actions that foster positive school climate* [Thesis] Concordia University. https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/teacher-education_masters/3
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry*. My Education Lab Series. Pearson.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2001). *Research in education: A conceptual introduction* (5th ed.).
- MacMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2006). *Research in education. Evidence-based inquiry*. International Edition.
- McQueen, M. (2002). *Language and power in non-profit/for-profit relationships: A grounded theory of inter-sectoral collaboration* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Technology Sydney.
<https://opus.lib.uts.edu.au/bitstream/10453/20193/2/02whole.pdf>

- May, L., & Delston, J. B. (2017). United nations universal declaration of human rights. In *Applied Ethics* (pp. 54-57). Routledge.
- Momen, M. N. (2022). United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights. In *Encyclopedia of Quality of Life and Well-Being Research* (pp. 1-5). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- Monjong, N. E., & Fon, T. P. (2016). A study of teachers' perceptions of involvement in decision making within secondary schools in Cameroon. *Journal of Educational and Social Research*, 6(2), 165. Doi: [10.5901/jesr.2016.v6n2p165](https://doi.org/10.5901/jesr.2016.v6n2p165)
- Morgan, H. (2022). Conducting a qualitative document analysis. *The Qualitative Report*, 27(1), 64-77. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2022.5044>
- Morgeson, F. P., DeRue, D. S., & Karam, E. P. (2010). Leadership in teams: A functional approach to understanding leadership structures and processes: Erratum. *Journal of Management*, 36(2), 579. <https://scholars.ttu.edu/en/publications/erratum-to-leadership-in-teams-a-functional-approach-to-understan>
Doi.org/10.1177/0149206310363277
- Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2018). Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 3: Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European journal of general practice*, 24(1), 9-18. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13814788.2017.1375091>
- Motala, S., Ngandu, S., Mti, S., Arends, F., Winnaar, L., Khalema, E., & Martin, P. (2015). *Millennium development goals: Country report 2015*. <https://repository.hsrc.ac.za/handle/20.500.11910/9580>
- Msila, V. (2013). Instructional leadership: Empowering teachers through critical reflection and journal writing. *Journal of Social Sciences*, 35(2), 81–88. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/09718923.2013.11893149>
- Mufua, N. G. (2019). *Instructional supervision by principals: An appraisal from the perspective of teachers job performance in some selected secondary schools in Boyo Division* [Doctoral dissertation]. University of Buea.
- Mugo, F. W. (2002). Sampling in research. Pdf.

- Mukhibat, M. (2023). Differentiate Learning Management to Optimize Student Needs and Learning Outcomes in An Independent Curriculum. *QALAMUNA: Jurnal Pendidikan, Sosial, dan Agama*, 15(1), 73-82. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.37680/qalamuna.v15i1.2386>
- Munir, U., Annum, G., Delos Reyes, L., & Hassan, S. (2017). Research instruments for data collection. *Diakses daripada* https://www.academia.edu/34823600/RESEARCH_INSTRUMENTS_FOR_DATA_COLLECTION
- Nabiswa, J., Misigo, B. L., & Makhanu, F. N. (2016). Analysis of student deviant behaviour most prevalent in schools of Bungoma County. *Journal of Research in Humanities and Social Science*, 4(11), 19–23. https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ferdinand-Makhanu/publication/309787423_Analysis_of_student_deviant_behaviour_most_prevalent_in_schools_of_Bungoma_County/links/582375f508aeebc4f89875ef/Analysis-of-student-deviant-behaviour-most-prevalent-in-schools-of-Bungoma-County.pdf
- Nana, G. (2016). Language ideology and the colonial legacy in Cameroon Schools: A historical perspective. *Journal of Education and Training Studies*, 4(4), 168–196. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1091452>
- National Association of Elementary School Principals. (2001). *NAESP standards for what principals should know and be able to do*.
- Natow, R. S. (2020). The use of triangulation in qualitative studies employing elite interviews. *Qualitative research*, 20(2), 160-173. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/1468794119830077>
- Ndongko, T. M., & Tambo L. (2000). *Educational development in Cameroon*. Lincoln.
- Neuman, M., & Simmons, W. (2000). Leadership for student learning. *Phi Delta Kappan*, 82(1), 9–12. Doi:10.1177/003172170008200105
- Neuman, W. L. (2014). *Social research methods: Qualitative and quantitative approaches* (7th ed.). Pearson.
- Ngwokabuenui, P. Y. (2015). Students' indiscipline: Types, causes and possible solutions: The case of secondary schools in Cameroon. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6(22), 64–72. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1079558>

- Nieuwenhuis, J. (2013) Introducing qualitative research. In K. Maree (Ed.), *First steps in research*. Van Schaik Publishers.
- Nind, M., & Todd, L. (2011). Prospects for educational research. *International Journal of Research and Method in Education*, 34(1), 1–2.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1743727X.2011.552590>
- Obsuth, I., Sutherland, A., Cope, A., Pilbeam, L., Murray, A. L., & Eisner, M. (2017). London Education and Inclusion Project (LEIP): Results from a cluster-randomized controlled trial of an intervention to reduce school exclusion and antisocial behaviour. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 46(3), 538–557.
<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-016-0468-4>
- Oplatka, I. (2004). The principalship in developing countries: Context, characteristics and reality. *Comparative Education*, 40(3), 427–448.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/0305006042000274872>
- Özgenel, M. (2020). An organizational factor predicting school effectiveness: School climate. *International Journal of Psychology and Educational Studies*, 7(1), 38–50.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.17220/ijpes.2020.01.004>
- Palermo, J. (2018). Book review—Beyond leadership: A relational approach to organizational theory in education. *Journal of Organizational & Educational Leadership*, 4(2), 3. <https://digitalcommons.gardner-webb.edu/joel/vol4/iss2/3/>
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research & evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Pratomo, B. D., & Arifin, Z. (2020). The effect of school principal’s servant leadership of vocational schools in Temanggung Regency. *International Journal of Applied Business and International Management (IJABIM)*, 5(3), 1-12.
- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (n.d). *About the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon*.
<https://pcconline.org/about/>
- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (n.d). *World Council of Churches*.
<https://www.oikoumene.org/member-churches/presbyterian-church-of-cameroon>

- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. (1982). *The journey in faith: The story of the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon on the occasion of her silver jubilee: 1957–1982*.
- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. (2004). *The internal rules and regulations of the Presbyterian Education Authority*.
- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (2007). *The Presbyterian education authority*.
<https://www.pccweb.org/education/education.htm>
- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. (2014). *The constitution of the Presbyterian church in Cameroon*.
- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. (2015). *The job description of the Presbyterian Education Authority*.
- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. (2020). *The education secretary's end of year report to the Ministry of Education*.
- Presbyterian Church in Cameroon. (2021). *The education secretary's beginning of year report to the Ministry of Education*.
- Presseisen, B. Z. (Ed.). (2008). *Teaching for intelligence*. Corwin Press.
- Printy, S. (2010). Principals' influence on instructional quality: Insights from US schools. *School Leadership and Management*, 30(2), 111–126.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13632431003688005>
- Rahi, S. (2017). Research design and methods: A systematic review of research paradigms, sampling issues and instruments development. *International Journal of Economics and Management Sciences*, 6(2), 1-5. DOI:10.4172/2162-6359.1000403
- Raynor, S., & Wylie, A. (2012). Presentation and management of school bullying and the impact of anti-bullying strategies for pupils: A self-report survey in London schools. *Public Health*, 126(9), 782–789.
<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0033350612001540>
- Republic of Cameroon. (1976). *Law no. 76/15 of July 8*.
- Republic of Cameroon. (1987). *Law no. 766/PJL/An on The Rules and Regulations on the organization and functioning of Private Education in Cameroon*.

- Republic of Cameroon. (1987). *Law no. 86/022*.
- Republic of Cameroon. (1998). *Law no. 98/004 of 14 April 1998, to Lay Down Guidelines for Education in Cameroon*.
- Republic of Cameroon. (1980). *Law no. 80/293*.
- Republic of Cameroon. (1980). *Circular letter No. 27/BI. APP.3 and 7*.
- Republic of Cameroon. (2004). *Cameroon: The way forward for good governance*. Yaounde: Imprimerie saint-paul.
- Roberts, H. (2017). Listening to children: And hearing them. In P. Christensen, & A. James (Eds.), *Research with children: Perspectives and practices* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Robinson, V. M., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2007). *School leadership and student outcomes: Identifying what works and why* (Vol. 41, pp. 1–27). Winmalee: Australian Council for Educational Leaders.
- Robinson, V., Hohepa, M., & Lloyd, C. (2009). *School leadership and student outcomes. Identifying what works and why best evidence synthesis*. Ministry of Education, New Zealand.
- Robinson, V. M., Lloyd, C. A., & Rowe, K. J. (2008). The impact of leadership on student outcomes: An analysis of the differential effects of leadership types. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 44(5), 635–674.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0013161X08321509>
- Robinson, V., & Gray, E. (2019). What difference does school leadership make to student outcomes?. *Journal of the Royal Society of New Zealand*, 49(2), 171-187.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/03036758.2019.1582075>
- Rodriguez-Gomez, D., Ion, G., Mercader, C., & López-Crespo, S. (2020). Factors promoting informal and formal learning strategies among school leaders. *Studies in Continuing Education*, 42(2), 240–255.
<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/0158037X.2019.1600492>

- Ronald, B. (2014). Comprehensive leadership review-literature, theories and research. *Advances in Management*, 7(5), 52.
https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Ronald-Busse/publication/331564071_Advances_in_Management_-_Comprehensive_Leadership_Review_-_Literature_Theories_and_Research/links/5c80e83492851c69505c984b/Advances-in-Management-Comprehensive-Leadership-Review-Literature-Theories-and-Research.pdf
- Rule, P., & John, V. (2011). *Your guide to case study research*. Pretoria: van Schaik.
- Saldana, J. (2011). *Fundamentals of qualitative research*. Oxford University Press.
- Saldana, J. (2021). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers*. sage.
- Schneider, J. (2018). Views of continuity and change: The press photo archives in Buea, Cameroon. *Visual Studies*, 33(1), 28–40.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1472586X.2018.1426224>
- Scotland, J. (2012). Exploring the philosophical underpinnings of research: Relating ontology and epistemology to the methodology and methods of the scientific, interpretive, and critical research paradigms. *English Language Teaching*, 5(9), 9–16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.5539/elt.v5n9p9>
- Scott, D., & Usher, R. (2010). *Researching education: Data, methods and theory in educational enquiry*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Showers, S. C. (2019). *Building a positive school climate: What principals have done to effect change, an ethnographic case study* [PhD dissertation]. University of Nebraska.
- Shuttleworth, M., & Wilson, L. T. (2008). *Qualitative research design*. <https://explorable.com/qualitativeresearch-design/>
- Siahaan, M. (2020). Influence of school principal performance in terms of school climate factors, managerial competence and supervision competence, case study in Medan City Vocational School. *JURNAL ILMIAH KOHESI*, 4(1), 152–152.
<https://www.kohesi.sciencemakarioz.org/index.php/JIK/article/view/119>

- Silverman, D. (2005). *Doing qualitative research*. SAGE Publications.
- Sklaveniti, C. (2016). Relational leadership theory. In A. Farazmand (Ed.), *Global encyclopedia of public administration, public policy, and governance*. SpringerLink.
- Smith, S. C., & Piele, P. K. (Eds.). (2006). *School leadership: Handbook for excellence in student learning*. Corwin Press.
- Spillane, J. P. (2005). Distributed leadership. *The Educational Forum*, 69(2), 143–150. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00131720508984678>
- Stake, R. E. (2000). Case studies. In N. K. Denzin, & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 435–454). Sage Publications.
- Steiner-Khamsi, G. (2012). For all by all: The World Bank's global framework for education. In *The world bank and education* (pp. 1–20). Brill Sense.
- Syahril, S., & Hadiyanto, H. (2018). Improving school climate for better quality educational management. *Journal of Educational and Learning Studies*, 1(1), 16–22. Doi: <https://10.32698/0182>
- Tamasang, C. F., Effala, C., & Tassah, I. T. (2021). Country report for Cameroon. In O. C. Ruppel, & H. Ginzky (Eds.), *African soil protection law* (pp. 53–176). Nomos.
- Terr Blanche, M., Durrheim, K., & Painter, D. (2006). *Research in practice*. University of Cape Town Press.
- Terry, G., Hayfield, N., Clarke, V., & Braun, V. (2017). Thematic analysis. *The SAGE handbook of qualitative research in psychology*, 2, 17-37.
- Thanh, N. C., & Thanh, T. T. (2015). The interconnection between interpretivist paradigm and qualitative methods in education. *American Journal of Educational Science*, 1(2), 24–27.
- Thoonen, E. E., Slegers, P. J., Oort, F. J., & Peetsma, T. T. (2012). Building school-wide capacity for improvement: The role of leadership, school organizational conditions, and teacher factors. *School Effectiveness and School Improvement*, 23(4), 441–460. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09243453.2012.678867>

- Thornton, K. (2010). 'School leadership and student outcomes': The best evidence synthesis iteration: Relevance for early childhood education and implications for leadership practice. *Journal of Educational Leadership, Policy and Practice*, 25(1), 31. <https://search.informit.org/doi/abs/10.3316/INFORMIT.275303131953925>
- Tosun, U., Gülsen, C., Tas, B., & Simsek, M. (2015). *Secondary school administrators' opinions on the prevention of violent behaviours in schools. Online Submission.* <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED626909>
- Tubin, D. (2011). From principals' actions to students' outcomes: An explanatory narrative approach to successful Israeli schools. *Leadership and Policy in Schools*, 10(4), 395–411. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15700763.2011.610556>
- Union, A. (2006). Second decade of education for Africa (2006–2015), draft plan of action. *African Union, Addis Ababa.*
- United Nations. (1948). *Universal declaration of human rights (UDHR)*, GA Res. 217A (III), UN GAOR, 3d Sess. UN Doc. A/810. <https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights>
- United Nations. (1989). *United Nations convention on the rights of the child (UNCRC).*
- United Nations (2000) *United Nations Millennium Declaration: Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly, Fifty-fifth Session, Agenda Item 60(b)* New York.
- Nations, U. (2012). The millennium development goals report 2012. *Millennium Development Goals Report.* <https://cir.nii.ac.jp/crid/1361981468705351424>
Doi: <https://doi.org/10.18356/32f1e244-en>
- United Nations. (2020). *Universal declaration of human rights (UNDHR).*
- UNESCO. (1990). World declaration on Education for All. *Paper presented at the World Education Forum. Jomtien, Thailand: UNESCO.*
- UNICEF & UNESCO. (2007). *A human rights-based approach to education for all: A framework for the realization of children's right to education and rights within education.* United Nations Publications.

- United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. (2021). *Cameroon situation report*. <https://reports.unocha.org/en/country/cameroon/>
- Urick, A. (2016). Examining US principal perception of multiple leadership styles used to practice shared instructional leadership. *Journal of Educational Administration*, 54(2), 152–172. [Doi.org/10.1108/JEA-07-2014-0088](https://doi.org/10.1108/JEA-07-2014-0088)
- Usman, O., & Syaputri, S. (2020). The influence of teacher’s pedagogic competence, teacher’s professional competency, and student learning environment to student learning motivation. <http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3641598>
- Vaismoradi, M., & Snelgrove, S. (2019). Theme in qualitative content analysis and thematic analysis. <https://nordopen.nord.no/nord-xmlui/bitstream/handle/11250/2627867/Vaismoradi.pdf?sequence=4>
- Van Breukelen, W., Schyns, B., & Le Blanc, P. (2006). Leader-member exchange theory and research: Accomplishments and future challenges. *Leadership*, 2(3), 295–316. <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1742715006066023>
- Wagner, T. (2001). Leadership for learning: An action theory of school change. *Phi Delta Ka*, 82(5), 378–383.
- Walker, A., & Hallinger, P. (2016). School leadership for learning and change: Progress of an Asian agenda. In *leadership in Diverse Learning Contexts*, (pp. 145-171. https://link.springer.com/chapter/10.1007/978-3-319-28302-9_8
- Waters, T., Marzano, R. J., & McNulty, B. (2003). Balanced Leadership: What 30 years of research tells us about the effect of leadership on student achievement (pp. 1-19). *Aurora, CO: Mid-Continent Research for Education and Learning*. A Working Paper. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=ED481972>
- Webster, R. (2020). *International school leadership: A phenomenological study of climate and culture*. [Doctoral dissertation]. University of New England. <https://dune.une.edu/theses/304/>
- West, M., Ainscow, M., & Stanford, J. (2005). Sustaining improvement in schools in challenging circumstances: A study of successful practice. *School Leadership &*

- Management*, 25(1), 77–93.
<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/1363243052000317055>
- Weller, S. C., Vickers, B., Bernard, H. R., Blackburn, A. M., Borgatti, S., Gravlee, C. C., & Johnson, J. C. (2018). Open-ended interview questions and saturation. *PLoS one*, 13(6), e0198606. Doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0198606
- Wellington, J. (2015). *Educational research: Contemporary issues and practical approaches*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Wells, C., MacLeod, A., & Frank, B. (2012). Queer theory, ethnography, and education. *Handbook of qualitative research in education*, 108-125.
- Willig, C. (2001). *Introducing Qualitative Research in Psychology: Adventures in theory and method*. Open University Press.
- Willis, J. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. sage.
- Willis, J. W., Jost, M., & Nilakanta, R. (2007). *Foundations of qualitative research: Interpretive and critical approaches*. Sage Publications
- Wirba, A. V. (2015). Leadership style: School perspective in Cameroon. *Education Research International*, Article ID 439345. Doi.org/10.1155/2015/439345
- Witziers, B., Bosker, R. J., & Krüger, M. L. (2003). Educational leadership and student achievement: The elusive search for an association. *Educational Administration Quarterly*, 39(3), 398–425.
<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/0013161X03253411>
- Wlodkowski, R. J., & Ginsberg, M. B. (2017). *Enhancing adult motivation to learn: A comprehensive guide for teaching all adults*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Woods, P. A., Woods, G. J., & Cowie, M. (2009). 'Tears, laughter, camaraderie': professional development for headteachers. *School Leadership and Management*, 29(3), 253–275. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13632430902793825>
- Schwartz-Shea, P., & Yanow, D. (2013). *Interpretive research design: Concepts and processes*. Routledge.

- Yin, R. K. (2003). *Case study research: Design and method* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2009). *Case study research: Design and methods* (4th ed.). Sage.
- Yin, R. K. (2011). *Qualitative research from start to finish*. Guildford publications.
- Yin, R. K. (2012). *Applications of case study research* (3rd ed.). Sage.
- Zhou, X. T., & Schriesheim, C. A. (2010). Quantitative and qualitative examination of propositions concerning supervisor–subordinate convergence in descriptions of leader–member exchange (LMX) quality. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(5), 826–843. <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1048984310001268>

ANNEXURE 1: LETTER FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Ethics Committee

21 June 2021

Ms GE Mokoko

Dear Ms GE Mokoko

REFERENCE: EDU041/21

We received proof that you have met the conditions outlined. Your application is thus **approved**, and you may start with your fieldwork. The decision covers the entire research process, until completion of the study report, and not only the days that data will be collected. The approval is valid for two years for a Masters and three for Doctorate.

The approval by the Ethics Committee is subject to the following conditions being met:

1. The research will be conducted as stipulated on the application form submitted to the Ethics Committee with the supporting documents.
2. Proof of how you adhered to the Department of Basic Education (DBE) policy for research must be submitted where relevant.
3. In the event that the research protocol changed for whatever reason the Ethics Committee must be notified thereof by submitting an amendment to the application (Section E), together with all the supporting documentation that will be used for data collection namely; questionnaires, interview schedules and observation schedules, for further approval before data can be collected. Non-compliance implies that the Committee's approval is null and void. The changes may include the following but are not limited to:
 - Change of investigator,
 - Research methods any other aspect therefore and,
 - Participants.

The Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Education does not accept any liability for research misconduct, of whatsoever nature, committed by the researcher(s) in the implementation of the approved protocol.

Upon completion of your research you will need to submit the following documentations to the Ethics Committee for your

Clearance Certificate:

- Integrated Declaration Form (Form D08),
- Initial Ethics Approval letter and,
- Approval of Title.

Please quote the reference number EDU041/21 in any communication with the Ethics Committee.

Best wishes

Prof Funke Omidire
Chair: Ethics Committee
Faculty of Education

ANNEXURE 2: LETTER AND CONSENT FORM TO PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN CAMEROON HEAD REQUESTING AUTHORISATION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH



Faculty of Education

Department of Education Management, Law and
Policy

University of Pretoria

23 October 2021

The Moderator and Proprietor

PCC Schools

Cameroon

Dear Right Rev. Sir,

REQUEST FOR AUTHORISATION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT IN PCC SCHOOLS

My name is Mokoko Grace Emade and I am currently enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a PhD in Education Management, Law and Policy under the supervision of Prof. Nylon Marishane. The title of my approved research study is: *Connecting school leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools*. The purpose of this research is to examine how school principals connect their leadership role to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian school context. Generally, the study is intended to reveal possible strategies that could assist secondary school principals to create enabling school environments that are more productive for the enhancement of student learning. It is hoped that the findings of this study will provide new knowledge on how and what PCC principals should do that will connect their leadership directly to student learning. As part

of my study, I have to collect data by interviewing principals, teachers, and students in secondary schools. For this reason, I would like to request your permission to conduct interviews in your secondary schools. The interviews will be held at your schools and will last for approximately 35–50 minutes. In order not to interfere with their normal daily duties, these interviews will be held outside formal school hours. With your permission, I will also request the use of some important school documents from the principals such as; minutes of staff meetings, principals' end-of-year reports, minutes of board meetings, annual PTA minutes, disciplinary council minutes, school rules, regulations and punishment codes. These documents will provide more information that will support the data collected from the interviews. In this study, there is no envisaged risks or harm. However, the fact that the interviews will be conducted on a face-to-face basis may expose both the participants and the researcher to health risks during this period of pandemic. As a measure, I will ensure that both parties respect the COVID-19 safety measures.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and participants are free to withdraw at any time during the course of the interview without fear or providing any reason for doing so. To avoid any possible harm and ensure privacy, their identity as well as that of their schools will be protected by using pseudonyms in the place of real names. All information obtained during the interview will be treated confidentially. For this reason, only my supervisor and I will have access to the data recorded during the interview.

The findings and recommendations of this study will be made available to your schools in the form of a thesis on completion of this study. We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Should you be willing to authorise the researcher to carry out this study, kindly sign the attached form.

Regards

Mokoko Grace Emade

Signature

Date

Researcher`s Contact Details Supervisor`s Details

Name: Mokoko Grace Emade Name: Prof. Nylon Marishane

Cell: 0656709894 Cell: 061 523 3871

E-mail: mokokgrace@yahoo.com E-mail: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I, -----, (full name) understand the information given to me and I am willing to permit the researcher to conduct interviews in PCC secondary schools with the title *Connecting school leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools*. I also authorise the principals to make the required documents available, for the facilitation of the research project. I understand that participation in this study is voluntary and that the identity of the participants and the schools will be protected and remain confidential.

Moderator`s signature Date

ANNEXURE 3: LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR PRINCIPALS



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

Dear Principal,

REQUEST FOR AUTHORISATION TO CONDUCT INTERVIEWS, AND PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERVIEW FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Mokoko Grace Emade and I am currently enrolled at the University of Pretoria for a PhD in Education Management, Law and Policy under the supervision of Prof. Nylon Marishane. The title of my approved research study is: *Connecting school leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools*. The purpose of this research is to examine how school principals connect their leadership role to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian school context. The study is intended to reveal possible strategies that could assist secondary school principals to create enabling school environments that are more productive for the enhancement of student learning. As part of my study, I have to collect data by interviewing principals, teachers, and students in secondary schools. For this reason, I would like to request your participation in an interview session, focusing on your experiences, convictions, skills, and knowledge of being a school leader. The interview will be held at your own school and will last for approximately 35–50 minutes. In order not to interfere with your normal daily duties, this interview will be held outside formal school hours. With your permission, I will also request the use of some important school documents such as minutes of staff meetings, principal's end-of-year reports, minutes of board meetings, annual PTA minutes, disciplinary council minutes, school rules, regulations and punishment code. These documents will provide more information that will support the data collected from the interviews. I would like to solicit your assistance in the selection of two teachers who have served for more than a year in the PEA, and two students each from Forms 4, 5 and 6. In

order not to expose both the participants and the researcher to health risks during this period of pandemic, it will be necessary for both parties to respect the COVID-19 safety measures.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary and you are free to withdraw at any time during the course of the interview without fear or providing any reason for doing so. To avoid any possible harm and ensure privacy, your identity as well as that of your school will be protected by using pseudonyms in the place of real names. This will ensure that any information you give, including your own views on the issue of student learning, will not be linked to your name or that of your school. As part of data collection, I will be using an audio recorder for the purpose of capturing the interview for subsequent transcription and data analysis. All information obtained during the interview will be treated confidentially. For this reason, only my supervisor and I will have access to the data recorded during the interview.

The findings and recommendations of this study will be made available to your school in the form of a thesis on completion of this study. We also would like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Should you be willing to participate in this study, kindly sign the attached form.

Regards

Mokoko Grace Emade

Signature Date

Researcher`s Contact Details Supervisor`s Details

Name: Mokoko Grace Emade

Name: Prof. Nylon Marishane

Cell: 0656709894

Cell: 061 523 3871

E-mail: mokokgrace@yahoo.com

E-mail: nylon.marishane@up.ac.za

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

I, -----, (full name) understand the information given to me and I am willing to participate in the study with the title *Connecting school leadership to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools*. I understand that my participation in this study is voluntary and that my identity will be protected and remain confidential.

Participant`s signature Date

ANNEXURE 4: LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR STUDENTS



Faculty of Education

Dear Student,

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERVIEW FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Mokoko Grace Emade and I am currently doing a PhD degree in Education Management, Law and Policy through the University of Pretoria. As part of the requirements for completing the degree, I will be conducting a research study to explore how school principals connect their leadership role to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools. I would like to invite you to participate in my study.

Please note that the participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. In such a case, please notify me of your decision to withdraw. You will not be penalised should you choose to withdraw. Your participation in this study will consist of one semi-structured interview lasting 35 to 50 min and, being able to withdraw at any time, you may also refrain from answering any question(s) you may find uncomfortable to answer. Your interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed into a written format thereafter. May I advise that during the interview, you will be expected to maintain social distance due to the pandemic.

You will not be exposed to any risk or harm in the study. The discussions held will be recorded in order to assist me to compile the necessary research report. Your information will be kept confidential and no one other than the research supervisor and myself will have access to the information that you contribute to and your information will be stored at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. Your identity will be kept confidential and your name will not be included in the final report. You will not be subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. Additionally, I

cannot promise any type of reward for participating in the research study. It is completely of a voluntary nature.

The study is not of such nature that you may experience any injuries or harm. If you feel psychologically vulnerable from the semi-structured interview in any way, please inform me so I can arrange for the appropriate support.

I would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Once the study is completed, a summary of the results will be emailed to you on request.

Please feel free to ask me or my supervisor about any concerns or questions that you may have regarding the study.

Yours sincerely,

Mokoko Grace Emade

Researcher

mokokograce@yahoo.com or 0656709894

Prof. Ramodikoe Marishane

Supervisor

nylon.marishane@up.ac.za

Declaration and signature

Consent

I, _____ declare that I have read and understood all the above and hereby consent / agree to participate in the study.

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Research Participant

Date & Time

ANNEXURE 5: LETTER AND CONSENT FORM FOR TEACHERS



Faculty of Education

Dear Teacher,

REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATION IN AN INTERVIEW FOR A RESEARCH PROJECT

My name is Mokoko Grace Emade and I am currently doing a PhD degree in Education Management, Law and Policy through the University of Pretoria. As part of the requirements for completing the degree, I will be conducting a research study to explore how school principals connect their leadership role to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian schools. I would like to invite you to participate in my study.

Please note that the participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time. In such a case, please notify me of your decision to withdraw. You will not be penalised should you choose to withdraw. Your participation in this study will consist of one semi-structured interview lasting 35 to 50 min and, being able to withdraw at any time, you may also refrain from answering any question(s) you may find uncomfortable to answer. Your interview will be recorded using a digital voice recorder and transcribed into a written format thereafter. May I advise that during the interview, you will be expected to maintain social distance due to the pandemic.

You will not be exposed to any risk or harm in the study. The discussions held will be recorded in order to assist me to compile the necessary research report. Your information will be kept confidential and no one other than the research supervisor and myself will have access to the information that you contribute to and your information will be stored at the University of Pretoria for 15 years. Your identity will be kept confidential and your name will not be included in the final report. You will not be subjected to any acts of deception or betrayal in the research process or its published outcomes. Additionally, I

cannot promise any type of reward for participating in the research study. It is completely of a voluntary nature.

The study is not of such nature that you may experience any injuries or harm. If you feel psychologically vulnerable from the semi-structured interview in any way, please inform me so I can arrange for the appropriate support.

I would also like to request your permission to use your data, confidentially and anonymously, for further research purposes, as the data sets are the intellectual property of the University of Pretoria. Further research may include secondary data analysis and using the data for teaching purposes. The confidentiality and privacy applicable to this study will be binding on future research studies.

Once the study is completed, a summary of the results will be emailed to you on request.

Please feel free to ask me or my supervisor about any concerns or questions that you may have regarding the study.

Yours sincerely,

Mokoko Grace Emade

Researcher

mokokograce @yahoo.com or 0656709894

Prof. Ramodikoe Marishane

Supervisor

nylon.marishane@up.ac.za

Declaration and signature

Consent

I, _____ declare that I have read and understood all the above and hereby consent / agree to participate in the study.

Printed Name of Research Participant

Signature of Research Participant

Date & Time

ANNEXURE 6: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR PRINCIPALS



Faculty of Education

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SCHOOL PRINCIPALS

My name is Mokoko Grace Emade. I am carrying out research focusing on how school principals connect their leadership role to student learning in Cameroonian Presbyterian school context. I will like to hear your views, experiences and opinions regarding this study. As you share your experiences, I would like to audio record the experiences and I may as well take down notes. I may use the notes to seek certain clarifications later. Can you please tell me about yourself, the good and difficult moments regarding appointment as principal in the PEA.

1. What is your understanding of “the connection between context and student learning”?
2. What do you think are the contextual factors that may have a negative impact on student learning?
3. How do you create a learning environment that is conducive for student learning in your school?
4. What challenges do you experience in your efforts towards creating an enabling environment for teaching and student learning?
5. What may be responsible for some of the disruptive behaviours put forth by students and teachers?
6. What measures are taken to prevent such destructive practices?
7. In what ways do these measures help the school? Please explain.
8. What is your opinion about “flogging”? How does it help?
9. What services exist within the school (e.g., professional counselling unit, apart from the chaplain,) and which ones are lacking based on students’ needs?
10. What criteria do you use to identify students’ needs and challenges? Please explain.

11. Who is responsible for the annual evaluation of the staff and what aspects are taken into consideration?
12. How do students interact with educational officials (e.g., DDSE, ES) during official visitors?
13. What can you say about your working conditions?
14. In addition to your efforts, what other alternative strategies do you think can be put in place to ensure that students learn more effectively?
15. What criteria does the PCC use in the recruitment and appointment of teachers and principals respectfully?

THANKS

ANNEXURE 7: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR TEACHERS



Faculty of Education

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SCHOOL TEACHERS

1. Please tell me about yourself.
2. Tell me about your school in terms of the principal's leadership, student behaviour, school environment and student learning.
3. What is your understanding of the concept "student learning"?
4. How can the school environment influence student learning?
5. How do you assist in creating a safe and secure learning environment in your school?
6. What challenges do you encounter in your efforts towards creating a conducive environment for students to learn?
7. How do you deal with the challenges?
8. What additionally do you think needs to be done to improve on the school environment for effective student learning?
9. What do you think are some of the reasons why students violate school rules?
10. What are some of the measures taken against violators?
11. What can you say about the adequacy and quality of resources (For example, staffroom, health care service for students and toilet facilities for both teachers and students?)
12. Why do you think the use of bullying, flogging and insult by teachers are effective corrective measures? How do these practices help the students?

13. What are some of the demotivating factors surrounding your teaching function with the PEA?

14. What do you suggest can be done to improve on the situation?

THANKS

ANNEXURE 8: INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR STUDENTS



UNIVERSITEIT VAN PRETORIA
UNIVERSITY OF PRETORIA
YUNIBESITHI YA PRETORIA

Faculty of Education

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR STUDENTS

1. Tell me about yourself please.
2. Why did you choose this school? Please give reasons why you would like to complete your studies in this school?
3. What are some of the things that students do which are against school rules?
4. What do you think could be some of the reasons for such behaviour?
5. How are you informed of school rules and regulations?
6. What are some of the various measures used by the administration and teachers to punish the students?
7. Why do you consider some of these measures humiliating? Please explain.
8. How do students communicate their worries to the principal? In what situations can a student be given direct access to the principal's office?
9. What do you think could be the reason (s) why some students do not feel free to discuss their problems directly with the principal?
10. What are your observations about the quality of available facilities such as, library, health care service, laboratories, toilets, washrooms, dormitories etc.)? Please elaborate.
11. What do some teachers and or students do which may make life uncomfortable for students in school? Please explain.
12. What can you say about the way students are treated by the principal and teachers? Please give examples.

13. What role do students play in the decision-making process of important aspects of the school life (e.g., student menu, canteen items, prioritising school needs etc.)? How are your contributions helpful?
14. How do students interact with educational authorities such as the Regional Delegates, Divisional Delegate and the Education Secretary during their official visits to your school?
15. What do you dislike about this school and what are your suggestions for improvement?

THANKS

ANNEXURE 9: AUTHORISATION NUMBERS FOR PCCSS

S/N	Name of school	Authorisation number
1	Cameroon Protestant College, Bali	321/JI/24/MINEDUC/DEP/SCAFES
2	Presbyterian Secondary School, Mankon	01224/JI/MINEDUC/DEP/SAFE
3	Presbyterian High School Kumba	5/9/64/MINO/J2/MINEDUC
4	Presbyterian High School Besongabang	0129/JI/71//MINEDUC/DEP/SAPE
5	Presbyterian High School, Batibo	321/JI/MINEDUC/DEP/SCAFES
6	Presbyterian Girls' School of Science and Technology, Bafut	351/JI/7/MINEDUC/SG/DE/SEC/SCAFEP
7	Presbyterian Comprehensive High School, Kumbo	162/JI/7/MINEDUC/DEP/SCAPES
8	Presbyterian Secondary School, Bafut	323/JI/MINEDUC/DEP/SCAFES
9	Presbyterian Secondary School, Andek	
10	Presbyterian Secondary School Nkambe	012/2403/MINEDUC/DEP
11	Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School, Buea	270/16/MIN/SG/DESG/SDSDESG
12	Presbyterian Girls' Secondary School, Limbe	T1/7/MIN/SG/DEP/SECP/SCAFES
13	Presbyterian Secondary School, Wum	092/J2/3240/MIN/SG/DEP/SCAFEP
14	Presbyterian Secondary School, Nkwen	442/12/3440/MIN/SO/DEP/SD/ESP/SAAO
15	Presbyterian Secondary School, Mbengwi	3683/08MINESEC/SG/DESG
16	Presbyterian Secondary School, Douala	83/19/MIN/SG/DESG/SDSEPEG/SGEPES
17	Presbyterian Comprehensive High School, Limbe	-
18	Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School, Fiango	-
19	Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School, Azire	154/11/MIN/SG/DESG/SDSEPEG
20	Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School, Ngaoundere	-
21	Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School, Maroua	-
22	Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School, Nfou	207/19/MIN/SG/DESG/SDGEPE/SSGPES
23	Presbyterian Comprehensive Secondary School, Bonamoussadi	-

Source: Presbyterian Education Secretariat, 2021.