



AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIAN
TEACHERS ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN
JAPAN

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Approval of the Thesis

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Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) in Education

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Abstract

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JAPAN

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The study examined perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers regarding the MEXT educational leadership training in Japan in order to determine areas of contributions as well as those of challenges. From a population of 31 participants, 16 individuals were sampled by means of purposive sampling: comprising 12 males and 04 females from the 2019, 2020 and 2021 MEXT cohorts, including one government official each from Nigeria and Japan. Data were collected using two different methods: through semi-structured interviews and research documents – theses and research reports submitted by participants as part of the requirements for their graduation. The primary data was analysed using inductive content analysis while the secondary data was analysed using thematic analysis, following the elements of Engestrom Activity Theory as the unit of analysis.

The findings of this study revealed that the participants had many positive experiences as a result of their interactions with the different components of the training programme, for instance, the transfer of theory to practice and the programme’s instructional applications as well as its contents. However, it failed to acknowledge the disparities in leadership experience and previous knowledge and also the diverse educational leadership contexts within which the participants operate and function.

This study recommended and proposed a framework for successful educational leadership learning contextualization established on a problem solving and case study approach to learning in combination with inverted classroom learning style for facilitating the kind of educational leadership learning that originates from previous experiences, knowledge and diverse contexts inside which the teachers lead and live within the distinct Nigerian contexts and schools.

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

AI Acknowledgment

This is to acknowledge that the researcher has not used any AI tools in creating, proofreading or producing any ideas or texts that are related to any draft or final versions of the thesis.

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Okonkwo, Stanley Osita.

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List of Abbreviations

| | |
|---------|---|
| ACE: SL | Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership |
| AI | Artificial Intelligence |
| COVID | Corona Virus Disease |
| ERIC | Education Resources Information Centre |
| HOD | Head of Department |
| ICT | Information and Communication Technology |
| ISPP | International Study of Principal Preparation |
| IT | Information Technology |
| JSTOR | Journal Storage |
| LEA | Local Education Authorities |
| MEXT | Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology |
| MoE | Ministry of Education |
| NC | National College for the Leadership of Schools and Children's Services |
| NCSL | National College for School Leadership |
| NIEPA | National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration |
| NPQ | National Professional Qualifications |
| NPQH | National Professional Qualifications for Headship |
| OECD | Organization for Economic Corporation and Development |
| PhD | Doctor of Philosophy |
| PTA | Parents' Teachers' Association |
| SGB | School Governing Bodies |

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| SNS | Social Networking Service |
| SQH | Scottish Qualification for Headship |
| SWB | Subjective Well-Being |
| TRCN | Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria |
| TSC | Teachers Service Commission |
| UCEA | University Council for Educational Administration |
| UK | United Kingdom |
| UNESCO | United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund |
| UBEC | Universal Basic Education Commission |
| UREC | Unicaf University Research Ethics Committee |
| USA | United States of America |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USSR | Union of Soviet Socialist Republics |
| UTME | Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination |

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Globally, educational leadership is in the limelight, particularly in Africa, where schools often face challenges such as inadequate infrastructure, limited resources, an unbalanced teacher-student ratio, and a lack of professional development opportunities (Bush & Guo, 2026; Dhakal & Panta, 2026). There is no gainsaying that the development and advancement of educational institutions are largely dependent on the teachers who work in these institutions (Gougas & Malinova, 2021; Stephan, 2021). The influence of educational leaders on the schools they lead has been reported by many studies, which is a pointer that students' capacity for learning, as well as the effectiveness and efficiency of those schools, are the outcomes of productive leadership (Osher et al., 2018; Darling-Hammond et al., 2020; Douglas, 2025). These suggest that instructors wield enormous power over not just their schools' progress but also the learning outcomes of their students (Sleeter, 2023).

The National Academy of Education (2024) reports that instructors enhance their performance in schools by improving their teaching. Kolajo (2025) corroborates this by stating that instructors have the most significant impact on learners. Harland et al. (2024) support the view that the growth of schools, as well as the learning progress of students, is greatly influenced by leadership, which is directly proportional to the educational quality in such schools. Also, Sleeter (2023) reports that teachers have huge expectations for students' learning irrespective of the current ability of such students, can academically engage students by building on their existing knowledge and interests, and can also relate to their communities and families and read students in culturally accurate ways. At this point, the rest of the chapter will follow the outline below: a brief background of global educational leadership, the statement of the problem, the purpose, research aims and objectives of the study, the nature and significance of the study, the conclusion, as well as the questions which the research hopes to address.

In recent times, global systems of education are striving to transform leadership in learning institutions by recruiting leaders who they anticipate could produce significant changes. In this respect, Robinson et al. (2008) prove to be crucial in the argument over what educational leaders can do to have the most influence. They submit that school leaders must determine goals and expectations, strategically plan and employ resources, develop, organize, and assess their schools' teaching and curriculum, encourage employee development, and finally generate and support friendly and safe learning environments. Huber and Muijs (2010) as well as Mombourquette (2017) note that principals' function as school leaders is critical to school success and quality, which has been supported by researchers not only in the United Kingdom, Australia and the United States but also in Sweden, Finland, and the Netherlands, among other European countries. A successful school, according to the former, is one that has professional and solid school leadership.

The import of educational leadership is acknowledged by Neeta (2018), who posits that issues surrounding educational leadership have given rise to considerable interest in programmes of educational leadership training amongst stakeholders. This rapid interest in developing school leaders has grown into a paramount matter to both educationally developing and developed countries (Cordeiro, Gluckman & Johnson, 2021). Orr (2011) highlights that developing and preparing school leaders on a global scale has become one of the most important methods for educational reform and improving learner success and performance. Leadership learning, according to Acton (2020), is essential to encourage and build strong leaders. Darling-Hammond (2023) states that there are tons of verifiable evidence that indicate that teachers who have undergone preparation are usually more successful with students and are also confident when compared to those who have had no or inadequate preparation. Furthermore, recent reports also indicate that teacher education reforms which involve

integrated programs with extended preparation interwoven with teaching and learning coursework produce teachers who are more effective (Darling-Hammond, 2023). This research study seeks to comprehend and describe how the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology of Japan (MEXT) scholarship recipients from Nigeria, who are active teachers in their respective schools as well as current and potential school leaders, view leadership in education and to relate their experiences during the training programme in Japan.

Amongst policy makers and researchers, international attention is being focused on the nature and features of leadership training which contribute most significantly to the betterment and improvement of school teachers and leaders (Orphanos & Orr, 2014; Kaya & Demir, 2022). This is due to the highly demanding, increased responsibilities and complicated nature of school leadership jobs in the 21st century (Organization for Economic Corporation and Development, 2008, p. 10; Huber, 2014, p. 670) which is worsened by the limited career opportunities, excessive work load (Bush, 2012, p. 32; Ngobeni, 2022), little support and compensation (Organization for Economic Corporation and Development, 2008, p. 9; Ngobeni, 2022). Darling-Hammond (2023) mentions that an essential contribution of leadership learning in education is its development of leaders and teachers' capabilities in examining teaching from the learners' perspective who bring diverse frames of reference and experiences to the classroom.

More so, nowadays, school leaders do not focus on improving student learning abilities and outcomes only but have taken on other responsibilities such as motivation of teachers, financial accountability, human resources and implementation of government policies (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 19). This is supported by Benoliel and Schechter (2017) who assert that the increased complexities of the leadership responsibilities are due to multiplied parental and government expectations, demand for higher academic results and

performance standards within the decentralized global education systems. School principals are recently receiving more public attention because the position which was once restricted and limited to duties such administration has now become bigger and more demanding to include responsibilities like solving different sorts of societal problems due to lack of societal cohesion and ethnic diversity (Shoho & Barnett, 2010, p. 561).

In Nigeria, just like in many other nations of the world, there exists a myriad of educational leadership challenges (Liguori & Winkler, 2020; Mcquillan, 2025). Most people in leadership positions in Nigerian schools do not usually undertake trainings in educational leadership (Umar, Kenayathulla & Hoque, 2021). This is not unconnected to school proprietors' belief that on-the-job learning is less expensive and better because based on La Velle (2023) submission, teachers have tremendous leadership capabilities. This entails that many school leaders in Nigeria may not be qualified to handle these positions with the constantly increasing demands associated with these roles.

Based on the National policy on education (2004, p. 58), local government through their Local Education Authorities (LEAs) is in charge of primary education management, as well as promotions, appointments, discipline and transfer of primary school teachers and non-teaching staff (the group to which school principals belong), overall management of their education plans, retraining of teachers and quality control of primary school staff within their locality. In the case of high schools and universities, these responsibilities are handled by the Ministry of Education at both federal and state levels.

However, in the studies conducted by Bush and Moorosi (2011), they state that there are no statutory requirements for appointment to a principal job in African countries of which Nigeria is included. Just like every other profession, a person is legally regarded as a teacher in Nigeria based on certification. This has been the usual case right from the past (Abdussalam,

2017). This certification is usually obtained after successfully completing a required course in a teachers' training institution or other higher educational institutions. Based on the National policy on education (2004, p. 40), faculties, colleges, schools and national institutes of education are the institutions charged with the responsibility of training teachers professionally. Presently, however, this certification is no longer enough as a teaching licence has become increasingly important (Abdussalam, 2017). This licensing has since become a requirement for Nigerian teachers under the Teachers Registration Council of Nigeria (TRCN) Act of 2004, yet its implementation is still encountering various hurdles and operational stumbling blocks that could possibly be overcome in the future. In the meantime, enforcement of the acquisition of licence for all prospective and practising teachers is currently being driven by the TRCN whose primary mandate is the compulsory registration of teachers in Nigeria (Adetoro, 2021).

In Nigeria and other countries where there are no statutory qualifications for school leadership nominations, the conventional practice involves the appointment of principals from the teaching staff by referencing their employment records as criterion (Bush & Moorosi, 2011) and this practice has proven ineffective and unsuccessful as teaching competence does not necessarily translate into leadership capability. In Ondo State of Nigeria, the federal (military) government in 1992 founded the National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration (NIEPA) whose aim is to train career educational administrators and planners professionally. This means that secondary school principals, tertiary institution heads, primary school heads, local education officers and inspectors are to receive their training from this institute. However, a critical scrutiny of the programme organized in 2008 revealed that for the purpose of training educational leaders and principals, it only offered a 3-day seminar and 2-day workshop respectively (National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, 2008) which is seemingly insufficient. Furthermore, a closer look at their "upcoming

trainings/conferences” menu (National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, 2021) showed that in the year, 2021, there were also a few 5-days conferences scheduled to hold that year which involved school principals, vice principals, head teachers and heads of departments. These conferences were scheduled to hold in just two states of the Nigerian federation namely, Ondo, a South-western state and Abuja, the Federal Capital Territory. However, these scheduled conferences were not included in the “recent executed programmes” menu (National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, 2021) on their website and thus could not be ascertained whether they actually took place.

The last NIEPA workshop as seen from their website (National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, 2021) dated back to April, 2019. Even a closer look revealed that only a handful of these workshops (most of which were organized on state level and not national level) had junior high school principals, elementary schools’ head teachers and senior high school principals as their target audience. With the current situation of the education sector in Nigeria, it is seemingly obvious that these workshops, seminars and conferences for school administrators are not sufficient for 21st century school leaders and are therefore no longer tenable.

Educational professionals have stressed that NIEPA needs to formulate modules as well as adopt the style of the United Kingdom, Singapore and Hong Kong where long term resident training courses and programs are offered to aspiring principals. They also suggest that certificates should be presented at the end of such training which should be the minimum standard for a principal job in Nigeria. It is important to note that for the institute to embark on these suggestions, the federal government of Nigeria not only needs to provide the necessary legal backing but also make the NIEPA training course a compulsory requirement for intending school administrators and principals.

In summary, due to the increasing demand and pressure as well as the changing responsibilities of school leaders, it has become imperative that such positions cannot be occupied by persons with relatively old and traditional skills any longer; but by persons with prepared leadership skills (Cliffe, Fuller & Moorosi, 2018; National Education Association, 2025). In the light of the above, school leadership learning “has become a priority in education policy agendas internationally” (Organization for Economic Corporation and Development, 2008, p. 9), which has resulted into the acknowledgement that developing and executing good educational leadership learning programs could be a major contribution to the advancement of leadership practices (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 19).

Statement of the Problem

It has been reported by various researchers that better educational leadership contributes significantly to improving quality of education (Daniëls, Hondeghem & Dochy, 2019; Egan & Thornton, 2022; Lee & Mao, 2023), hence it is pertinent to state that learning of educational leadership could be important for the overall improvement of education globally and not just in Nigeria. A report by Orr and Orphanos (2010) which is corroborated by Tugce, Brett and Kadir (2022) concludes that there exists a positive connection between the quality of educational leadership learning programmes and (i) creation of enabling and positive school environment (ii) school improvement and efficient leadership implementation (iii) leadership education and knowledge.

On the other hand, some other researchers have argued that leadership training does not necessarily impact practice positively in such a way that leads to education improvements (Crawford & Earley, 2011; p. 107; Orr, 2011, p. 115; Bush, 2018; Bush, 2019; Kemethofer, Helm & Warwas, 2022). Additionally, there is a lot of criticism regarding such leadership trainings, many of which raise doubts about the value of carrying out further research on the

concept as well as their usefulness (Eacott, 2022; Gurr, 2023) and one of such countries where these criticisms are very loud is the USA (Gurr, 2023). To add to the above, Crawford and Earley (2011; p. 107) postulate that exposure to and participation of school leaders in activities of professional development may or may not result to noticeable changes in their attitudes, behaviour, beliefs and values; and that even when these changes do eventually happen, they may or may not result to changes in their practice of leadership or in improving the learning outcomes of their students.

In the study by Bashar (2020), it reveals that most public school principals in Nigeria did not have additional graduate qualification before appointment to the job and are thus unprofessional, unqualified and untrained (Yusuf, 2022; Angwaomaodoko, 2023; UNESCO, 2023) and that the possession of such qualification did not add any advantage to potential principals (Akinola, 2016, p. 36). Although the National policy on education (2004, p. 40) mentions that every teacher in schools shall be trained professionally, it remained silent on the training itself. The situation became even more worrisome because no mention was made regarding the training of school principals. It was also gathered from this study (Akinola, 2016, p. 36) that in situations where there is a tie in both written and oral examinations, rather than using additional educational qualification to break the tie, the year of experience is used. In other cases, the candidate with the oldest bachelor's degree gets the job. The study concludes that despite the fact that there are laid down processes and procedures for appointments to principal position, it is not always adhered to and that anyone could easily land the job provided they have a political godfather.

According to Bush (2020), the training of school principals from all indications has not been accorded the utmost priority in Africa. This conclusion is drawn from the fact that experienced teachers quickly rise to the principal position without consideration for

professional or additional certifications and this trend has continued to linger on (Bush, 2022). The policy makers in Nigeria perhaps have failed to realize that teaching and administration are two different things. Succinctly put, practical experience does not constitute valid management training. Just like other arts, school administration, leadership and management are arts; with their own intricacies that need to be learnt and studied extensively.

It is obvious from the preceding that, while there are numerous points of view and significant disagreement amongst professionals in the field, there seems to be a connection between successful school leadership and students' performance. Also, there is a widespread consensus that educational leadership is critical. However, the type of leaders needed for the twenty-first (21st) century learning, what skills and characteristics they should possess, and how they should be trained and equipped for their roles and obligations (Fisher, 2021) are still debated. This, together with the notion that Nigeria does not have a sufficient national educational leadership training programme but only three 3-5 days' conferences, seminars and workshops (National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, 2021) and also the paucity of research on the evaluation of the MEXT programme with regard to its effectiveness on especially the Nigerian teachers are the gaps this research seeks to fill.

The absence of a national educational leadership training programme in Nigeria has resulted in the lack of formal training for many teachers in leadership positions within the Nigerian education system. As a result, Nigerian teachers and school leaders fall short of certain skills necessary for their positions such as the use of computers and other technological tools. According to the data released by the Executive Secretary of the Universal Basic Education Commission (UBEC, 2025), fifty percent of elementary schools in Nigeria lack digital technology. Also, based on the study by Ogegbo and Olujuwon (2025) as well as Ukpai, Ugwuoke and Adoga (2025), illiteracy in information technology (IT) amongst Nigerian public

high school and elementary school teachers are obstacles to the management of technology and implementation of curriculum within their schools. Another challenge tied to the lack of formal training for Nigerian school leaders is poor management of financial resources. Akomaye, Mba and Osaat (2025) state that poor financial management amongst public high school principals, such as embezzlement of school allocations hinder the effective operation of their schools while Azi (2022) reports “lack of requisite training in financial management” as the reason behind this attitude.

Other challenges include development of teachers and other human resources and instructional leadership. Regarding these, the Federal Ministry of Education states that about 60% of Nigerian teachers lack proper training and that only 10% of them are considered to be highly trained for their jobs (Lindner, 2025). In addition, the recently released Unified Tertiary Matriculation Examination (UTME) results show that only 36.3% of students seeking admission into higher institutions in 2025 obtained a pass score of 200 and above out of a total of 400, while 70.7% of them failed to reach this pass score (Akintaro, 2025). Yet, this result has been judged by the examination board as the best result since 2013. Furthermore, UNICEF (2025) asserts that more than 70% of Nigerian children lack “foundational and literacy skills due to weak teacher capacity aggravated by insufficient standardized teacher professional development.”

Furthermore, some knowledge gaps have been identified in the global literature. In spite of the enormous literature available on educational leadership, there is a paucity of research regarding some specific contexts (Kheang, O’Donoghue & Clarke, 2018). As the available literature on educational leadership is mostly concerned with Western and developed countries’ perspectives, a clear lack is observed in reporting on the realities of developing countries (Edoloverio et al., 2025). This imbalance has significant implications for the transferability of

leadership practices and theories, as models developed in Western contexts are often assumed to be universally applicable without sufficient consideration of contextual differences. Consequently, there is limited comprehension of how leadership practices are adapted, reinterpreted, or resisted within diverse socio-cultural, political, and institutional settings. Moreover, the literature provides insufficient attention to the processes of contextualisation through which global leadership ideas are locally negotiated and enacted. Lastly, the available literature mainly concentrates on principals (Lumby et al., 2008; Styf et al., 2026) and overlooks other tiers of leadership such as school heads/administrators, vice principals, HODs and teachers. This narrow focus further constrains insight into how leadership is distributed across different roles and how such distribution interacts with contextual dynamics in non-Western settings. This research seeks to address these gaps in the literature in order to improve schools and student learning outcomes across Nigeria.

In response to these challenges, MEXT (the Japanese Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology) has emerged as a strategic educational leadership training programme for teachers around the globe. It is an annual programme that invites the best teachers from all over the world to Japan for educational leadership training. It is noteworthy that this programme will serve specifically as the activity system for this research, which will be explained in detail later under the theoretical framework, and not for any form of comparison with other such programmes elsewhere.

Purpose of the Study, Research Aims, and Objectives

The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the Nigerian teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the contribution of the MEXT programme to their own leadership practices as well as the aspects of the programme that conceivably had the most impact on their leadership learning and the aspects of the programme that was a hindrance to their educational

leadership learning. This study will not only gather its data from the Nigerian teachers who trained under the MEXT programme in 2019, 2020 and 2021 but also from officials of the Nigerian and Japanese governments through a semi structured interview as well as from document analysis.

The study assessed the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers who underwent the MEXT educational leadership training in Japan. Specifically, the study sought to:

1. Explore the perceptions of Nigerian school teachers who underwent the MEXT training on educational leadership.
2. Examine the experiences of teachers from Nigeria who underwent the MEXT training on educational leadership.
3. Identify the challenges Nigerian school teachers faced during the MEXT training on educational leadership.
4. Assess the impact of the MEXT educational leadership training programme on Nigerian school teachers.

The rationale for the researcher's interest in this study stems from both professional and academic reasons. On a professional level, the researcher is a graduate of this programme and took the modules and contents focusing on educational administration. The researcher had some experience from the programme which became a turning point in his identity development and school leadership practice. His participation in the programme as well as the position of Martinez, Amick and McAbee (2021) to constantly inquire about school leaders' preparedness, what sort of leadership developmental training they undergo and the impact such has; inspired this study on the Nigerian teachers' perceptions and experiences of their own education leadership learning.

The academic rationale stems firstly from Bush (2020) who states that by investigating learning experiences as viewed in various situations, researchers can shed some light on the debate surrounding styles of education leadership learning, thereby boosting academics' and other researchers' confidence. Secondly, Neeta (2018) posits that with the recognition education leadership learning has received in this millennium, there is hope that such learning will favourably affect school leaders' work as well as their schools' attempts to enhance students' success. Furthermore, because leaders and leadership are important, researchers ought to be interested in how leaders learn to execute their jobs as well as the type of leadership learning that is beneficial (Egan & Thornton, 2022). In the researcher's opinion, if this research contributes to a better understanding of what successful education leadership learning entails, then it is worthwhile.

All in all, this study will aim to probe the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers on their educational leadership training in Japan. It would also examine the experiences of Nigerian teachers who underwent the training on educational leadership in Japan and also, to explore the extent to which the training made, or did not make a difference for the cohort studies.

Nature and Significance of the Study

Through qualitative methodology, the researcher aims to describe and comprehend (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020) the Nigerian teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding their training on educational leadership in Japan. Bredal, Stefansen and Bjørnholt (2022) state that qualitative research aims to delve into details in order to gain a deeper knowledge of how things are, why they are in such state, and how individuals in such context perceive them.

Case study would be employed to carry out the study's data collection. This form of design allows for an in-depth examination of a particular circumstance by condensing a very wide range of study into a manageable subject (Tight, 2017; Patnaik & Pandey, 2019). This design is useful since it establishes if a certain theory is applicable and workable in the real world thereby reducing the gaps between practice and theory (Seshan et al., 2021). This, together with the fact that case study fully explores a phenomenon and the contexts where it is being applied as well, were the considerations for it as being the most suitable for this research.

Regarding participants, all Nigerian teachers who participated in the MEXT programme from 2019 through 2021 were taken into consideration. The researcher purposefully selected the study's sample to satisfy the unique requirements of the research. Thirty-one (31) participants in total would be considered; thirteen (13) from 2019, seven (7) from 2020 and seven (7) from 2021 cohort as well as four (4) officials from the Nigerian and Japanese governments. These participants (the Nigerian teachers) are noteworthy for two major reasons: firstly, they scored the highest points on the MEXT aptitude test administered in Nigeria in the years 2019, 2020, and 2021, and secondly, they are both current and potential future leaders in their assigned schools. On the other hand, two (2) officials each from the Nigerian and Japanese government were included to give a different dimension to the project especially from a government angle.

The first point of communication was by phone call, and then a correspondence with sufficient details on the research was sent afterwards through email. These details, amongst other things, included information on the study's scope and objectives in addition to what the chosen participants should expect to contribute to the study. These participants (Nigerian teachers) would be in the age range of 25 years to 40 years. The lower limit of 25 years is chosen since the scholarship is usually offered to graduates who have at least 5 years'

experience but still below the age of 35 years as at the time of application while the upper limit of 40 years is chosen because even if a participant started the programme at 35 years and had graduated since, they would still be below 40 years. The fieldwork would be carried out through physical meetings that are convenient for most of the participants.

Based on Newman, Guta and Black (2021) explanations, the considerations for ethics to be applied in this study would be voluntary participation, informed consent, anonymity and confidentiality. Every individual participant would be properly apprised of the research and given sufficient time to process the information and then have the willpower whether or not to be involved in the research. For the purpose of proper documentation and to avoid conflict at any point of the study, every participant who wishes to participate will have to send in a written consent. The participants' anonymity and confidentiality would be respected by non-disclosure of their identities in both the data reporting and analysis stages. During the interviews and phone conversations, the privacy and confidentiality of the places of interview would be managed meticulously.

Semi-structured interviews were used in the collection of data from the potential participants. A semi-structured interview is a qualitative means of data gathering in which questions are posed based on a pre-determined thematic framework but not set in any particular order. It is usually exploratory in nature and enables the researcher to investigate various facets of the research questions. Since the elements of structured and unstructured interviews are integrated into semi-structured interviews, it provides a more reliable data and the flexibility of follow-up questions for more clarification and better understanding (Taherdoost, 2022).

The protocol for the interview would be constructed based on the Magaldi and Berler (2020) framework and would include questions connected to the research aims as well as objectives such as those centered on the influence of rules, Information and Communication

Technology (ICT), the participants' learning experience and perception of the modules' delivery methods, the adequacy of the presented modules, the most relevant and least relevant modules to their leadership practice as well as the contributions of fellow students, supervisors, administrative staff and study groups, if any, to their learning (see Appendix A). The appropriateness of the semi-structured interview method as opposed to an interview that is open-ended is due to the fact that it permits the researcher to investigate, observe and explore the beliefs, thoughts and feeling of the research participants on the topic being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014; DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019).

In addition, the researcher would include other project documents produced by the Nigerian alumni of MEXT as part of the data for the research study. These documents include their MEXT research theses and graduation reports. On the one hand, project documents are pieces of printed, written or electronic matter that provide evidence or information about a project and serve as official records of the project which is usually created by a manager in order to adequately control, manage and deliver the project (Kutsyuruba, 2023) while reports are accounts given of a specific matter, especially in the form of an official document, after thorough consideration or investigation by an appointed body or person.

The inductive content analysis method is thought to be the best fit for analyzing data collected from interviews because it establishes links between the research study objectives and the categories that resulted from the examination of the raw data, and then offer a theory based on these emergent categories (Dufour & Marie-Claude, 2019; Vears & Gillam, 2022). In this approach, systematic procedures are employed to identify recurring, common, significant and dominant themes from the data. Put in another way, the primary goal of inductive content analysis is to create categories that encompass the research phenomenon of interest.

A solid framework for a credible and reliable data analysis process was proposed by Bingham and Witkowsky (2021) as well as Creswell and Guetterman (2019) which would be adopted by the researcher and it comprises the following:

- Preparation and organization of data.
- Coding of data.
- Categories and themes establishment.
- Restructuring or reorganization of the data.
- Data analysis and interpretation through application of theories and finally
- Data and findings presentation.

The data collected from the research documents would be analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic data analysis method is thought to be the best fit for analyzing secondary data because it works best when the phenomena under study is fragmented or when there have been few prior grounded theories and studies that describe the phenomena under investigation (Naeem et al., 2023). In this approach, meanings would be derived and themes created from the data without any preconceptions. Put in another way, the analysis would be done without any iota of idea about what themes would emerge thus allowing themes to be determined by the data and then connected back to the theoretical framework guiding the study. The aim of this approach is the generation of meanings from gathered data for the identification of patterns and relationships in order to build a theory. The combination of these data analysis methods would result in triangulation which is helpful in refuting, elucidating, expanding or corroborating results from different data sources.

It is posited by Creswell and Guetterman (2019) that in spite of the proliferation and prevalence of computer application software for qualitative data analysis in recent times, researchers still “have a choice about whether to hand analyse data or to use a computer”

(Creswell & Guetterman, 2019). They continued that analysis by hand is usually appropriate in situations where the researcher is involved in the process of data collection personally and aims to retain a close and strong relationship with the data to ensure a hands-on feel for the study. In view of the above, the researcher would analyse the data by hand because he aims to be close to the collected data as much as possible. However, all the data preparation and organization (transcribing, coding, categories and themes' reorganization) would be done by the use of computer.

The completion of this research could significantly aid in proposing a framework for a national educational leadership training programme in Nigeria which is currently not sufficient as seen from the website of the Nigerian National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration where only a handful of 3 to 5 days' seminars, workshops and conferences were held for Nigerian educational leaders (National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, 2021) with only a few of them focused on school principals, vice principals, head teachers and heads of departments. It is noteworthy that the main mission and operational mandate of this institute is to "develop a critical mass of education sector managers and planners for the efficient and effective management and planning of the educational system through capacity building by means of continuous training, research, consulting, resource center services and information dissemination" (National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, 2023). This mission seems not to have been managed to its optimum as seen from the insufficient training and capacity building of the teeming population of young teachers and educational leaders in Nigeria.

Also, this research will serve as a viable tool required to assist the Nigerian government through the Ministry of Education to achieve her national education goals, one of which is ensuring the delivery of quality education (National Policy on Education, 2004), and

broadly contribute to the field of educational leadership, since educational leadership is based on the idea of construction and application of knowledge in avenues that lead to positive difference. By collaborating and communicating, educational leadership professionals work with diverse groups to build partnerships and promote positive outcomes by creating and fulfilling transformative goals (Sølvik & Roland, 2022). Also, through comprehending the MEXT training programme's areas of contributions and those of challenges, the Ministry of Education can effectively improve training curriculum to equip Nigerian teachers and school leaders with the necessary skills for educational transformation. Hence, this study will propose a data-based training template that improves accountability, confidence and school performance which young Nigerian educational leaders could need for their leadership roles if it is adjudged by the study that such training is relevant to their responsibilities and duties. In turn, these strategies and practices would improve teaching and learning outcomes, ensuring students acquire better values, skills, and knowledge.

Furthermore, because professional development for teachers is a lifetime process as advanced by Körkkö and Kotilainen (2019), the MEXT programme will not only serve as personal development training for Nigerian teachers but would also be a data gathering tool to incorporate future changes that could happen in the educational leadership field. In addition, the qualitative data on effective leadership practices generated by this research will assist school proprietors in the planning and organization of in-house training for their teaching staff as well as in recruitment and promotion of teachers and school leaders. More so, regarding the educational quality provided to Nigerian students, parental expectations and trust would increase in the areas of transparency, openness and more responsive communication. All in all, a well-educated society promotes innovation, national stability as well as productivity and growth.

Research Questions

This research study is anticipated to address the following questions:

Q1. How do teachers from Nigeria who underwent MEXT training perceive their educational leadership?

Q2. How does the MEXT educational leadership training programme contribute to the experiences of Nigerian school teachers?

Q3. What challenges did teachers face during the MEXT educational leadership training programme?

Q4. What is the impact of the MEXT educational leadership training on Nigerian school teachers?

Ethical Considerations

The ethical considerations to be employed in this study are informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality and anonymity as explained by Ederio et al. (2023). The participants will be adequately informed about the research individually, allowed some time to comprehend the information and then given the authority to decide whether to decline or participate. All participants willing to participate will be required to provide written consent. The confidentiality and anonymity of the participants will be handled appropriately by not publishing their identity in the reporting of the findings and data collection analysis. The confidentiality and privacy of the interview setting will be carefully managed during interview sessions and telephone communication.

Trustworthiness of the Study

Towards the end of the study, the researcher will employ member checking which involves requesting feedback from the participants (three participants) to confirm the extent to which the interpretations, findings and conclusion of the study reflect the data collected

(McKim, 2023). This allows participants to clarify what their intentions were, correct errors, and provide additional information where necessary. Also, to curb the bias of mono method research approach and self-reporting, the researcher will measure the study against the factors of sensitivity and nature of the topic, the situational characteristics of the study and the disposition of the participants as suggested by Ojebode et al. (2018).

Strengths and Weaknesses of the Study

One significant strength of this research study is that it provides essential findings about educational leadership learning as it concerns Nigeria where there is paucity of relevant information on the subject. This is innovative in that this is the first study on the examination of Nigerian teachers' experiences and perceptions with specific regards to the Nigerian educational context. More so, this study provides a template/framework on the quality of educational leadership training required by Nigeria to improve her educational standards. However, because this study's findings are specific to MEXT training programme, they may not necessarily apply to other training programmes.

Assumptions, Limitations and Delimitations

A delimitation of this study is that it does not cover MEXT graduates outside the 2019, 2020 and 2021 cohort studies, which is based on the assumption that these cohort studies would provide quality and sufficient data for this research. The rationale for this assumption is that most of these recruited participants were the most recent graduates of the MEXT educational leadership training programme at the time of data collection and were considered very knowledgeable about recent developments on the topic under investigation.

As with many other research, this current study has its own limitations. Its primary limitation is that some potential participants who may have been interested in participating in this research study are currently residing in Nigeria and intentionally declined participation due

to distance and/or financial constraints. This study therefore proposes the necessity for future research to delve into the ethnographic and longitudinal study of MEXT graduates for greater insights into the participants' various contexts in their natural environments.

The next chapter of this research work which dwells on literature review will explore the definitions of educational leadership and educational leadership learning as well as their contexts globally and in Nigeria.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Because this study strove to describe and comprehend the perceptions of educational leadership training by Nigerian teachers as well as their experiences, it is essential that first, the subject of educational leadership be defined. This is significant since understanding the concept is critical to comprehending the context as well as the findings of the study (Greenhalgh & Manzano, 2021). Second, the growth of interest in learning educational leadership and the changing responsibilities of school leaders in recent years will also be explored here. Then, the contrast between the concepts of management and leadership will be explained as part of the discussion of educational leadership, in order to clarify why 'education leadership' is used to incorporate both of these crucial tasks. Ultimately, this section will present an overview of the context of educational leadership learning both globally and in Nigeria, as well as the MEXT training program, which served as the study's research subject.

However, before delving into the above-mentioned topics, it is essential that the theoretical framework (Engestrom, 2015) which would guide the study be presented first. This presentation is essential because this chapter is a literature review drawing on the theoretical framework that constitute the research on educational leadership. Furthermore, this chapter fits into the overall purpose, aims and objectives of the study as well as speaks to the problem statement discussed in the preceding chapter because it analyses the literature on educational leadership, draws out the theories that have shaped the field and identifies the gaps needed to be filled by the study. It is also important to state that this research is possible through the access of certain databases related to education literature (Samah et al., 2019). These include Education Resources Information Centre (ERIC), Google Scholar, Academic Search Ultimate, Education Research Complete, British Education Index, Education Administration Abstracts, Education Abstracts, Education Source, Education Full Text, SAGE, Taylor and Francis

Online, Wiley Online Library, ProQuest Education Journals as well as Journal Storage (JSTOR). To the best knowledge of the researcher, this literature review's scope is as exhaustive as possible as it spanned from the 1960s to the year 2025. The sources of this study's literature include peer-reviewed journal articles and seminal literature. These were accomplished using Yahoo, Bing and the Google Search engine.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

Theory as defined by Forsyth (2021, p. 155), is an organised and well thought out frame of concepts, principles and generalizations which can be examined and investigated. The theory idea suggested by Denscombe (2008, p. 301) indicates that it is a concept that must be handled with care in the education field as human beings respond unpredictably and individually to events and situations unlike other elements in natural sciences. This can be said to be true with respect to educational leadership learning as no two persons' perceptions and experiences exactly match each other. On the other hand, an individual's educational leadership learning cannot be disconnected or unrelated to other people's activities and therefore such learning cannot happen in a vacuum. From the foregoing, it is therefore of utmost importance that a theoretical framework which has stood the test of time in education activity research be selected.

Theoretical framework is the foundation that holds and supports a research study's theory (Chukwuere, 2021). It introduces and explains the theory that describes the reasons behind the research problem and usually show complete understanding of concepts and ideas that are related to a topic and that connect to the broader fields of knowledge under consideration (Hughes, Davis & Imenda, 2019). More often than not, theoretical frameworks are difficult to locate within literature and so the comprehensive review of analytical models and theories relating to the problem of a research is essential. This is to ensure that the most

appropriate framework is chosen based on its simplicity, applicability and explanatory strength. It is a very crucial aspect of a research study as it links the researcher to previous studies and thus provides a foundation for hypotheses and research methods' choices. Theoretical framework leads to the identification of factors and variables that are important to the study and that affect a specific phenomenon and stresses the importance of considering when and how these factors could change (Varpio et al., 2020). Through focusing on specific variables and viewpoint that will be adopted by the researcher in analyzing and interpreting the data to be collected, a theoretical framework is employed to limit and condense the relevant data's scope. More so, it aids to understand variables and concepts according to established definitions and also boosts the acquisition of knowledge through refuting or supporting theoretical assumptions (Kivunja, 2018).

Considering the purpose of this study, the researcher selected Engestrom Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2015) which is adapted from Vygotsky's original work. Vygotsky states that humans being social uses mediation tools or means like writing, gestures, speaking and machines to change and shape their world with humans themselves undergoing a form of transformation within the process (Hardman, 2008, p. 380). This theory is selected not just because of its perception and assumption about learning which aligns with that of the researcher but also because its components would help the researcher attempt to address the research problems. Rather than seeing learning as transfer of knowledge to the learner, Engestrom Activity Theory, which sees learning as a changing tool for the learner and the world around them, was developed "in order to formulate a strong alternative to the dominant Cartesian views of cognition and learning that depicted the human mind as if it were a computer, isolated from the cultural context" (Engestrom, 2015, p. xiii). In other words, Engestrom formulated this theory in an attempt to describe collaborative and intentional human practices within their

larger historical sociocultural framework. It reflects the connection between a person and their environment, social laws, outcome, division of labour, object, production processes and tools. Here, a person's meaning and understanding are formed by other people's practice in the community often characterized by reciprocated involvement in a collaborative activity using a common collection of tangible and symbolic tools. This activity is both constrained and enabled by social norms which the members interpret and follow differently but nonetheless serve as the community's cultural border markers (Barnard, 2010).

The framework enables the community's practice to be seen and understood as a cohesive system of activity which has the component parts connected with one another at every levels. Because of the peculiar dynamic nature of every single activity system, transformations that happen throughout a period would cause conflicts in both the functions of the community members and their views of the activity's goals, operations and undertakings. By attempting to make straightforward as many overlapping interactions within a community's practice as is desirable, Engestrom Activity Theory enables an understanding of both individual and communal changes that occur between and across the various tiers inside an activity system. This model is applied in an interactive manner between the researcher and the participants to study "the past, present and future of the activity" (Engestrom & Sannino, 2021).

Although Engestrom Activity Theory is utilized in the human-computer interaction field most often (Hardman, 2008, p. 368), it has also been effectively used to examine novice teachers' experiences with Mathematics intervention programs (Pather, 2012), the study of PhD students' perceptions and experiences as it relates to their studies (Beauchamp et al., 2009), the description of organizational behavioural changes in different educational programs (Peck & McDonald, 2014) and the perceptions of university lecturers regarding the accessibility, availability and value of recommended materials of study in South Africa

(Ndebele et al., 2022) amongst others. A critical analysis of these studies reveals that the fundamental principles and elements of this theory could be employed in many situations involving learning; where answers are needed to questions aimed at gaining a comprehension of the connections and complex roles involved in learning scenarios (Beauchamp et al., 2009, p. 267) as well as questions regarding learning context or activity (Hardman, 2008, p. 381).

Engestrom Activity Theory

Activity theory in the USSR had a 60-year history of creative research, innovative thoughts as well as brutal repression. Beginning in the 1960s, the work of Vygotsky was discovered and promoted in the West by notable scholars from North America such as Cole Michael and Bruner Jerome in rising steps (Engestrom, 2015, p. 14). Activity theory as a philosophical framework that cuts across many disciplines is normally employed in the investigation of not only the individual behavior of humans, but also the social aspects of it. Here, the activities of humans are the fundamental bases of analysis when researching human behavior. The comprehension of human practices on individual as well as communal levels from a historical and cultural viewpoint is the most essential feature of activity theory. In the 1970s and 1980s, according to Engestrom (2015, p. 14), the most significant addition to Vygotsky's work was done by European students such as Davydov and Leont'ev which had a profound impression on Engestrom and thus birthed his own theory. To make activity theory relevant to organisational development, education and other fields, it was updated by Yrjö Engeström from the individual to the collective activity level (Engeström, 2015). From then on, substantial contributions have been made to historical and cultural activity theory and also the knowledge of learning and development have increased in various work and life situations due to his research work.

Engestrom Activity theory is a very popular theory that has been applied to numerous studies which focused on students' learning perceptions similar to this study. The major component of analysing this theory is an activity system (Pather, 2012, p. 255; Engestrom, 2015; Cong-Lem, 2022). In a study by Pather (2012, p. 255), activity theory is characterized as a versatile lens which allows researchers to place their focus on various levels and parts of an activity system with the aim of examining the interrelationship and interaction amongst the different elements of that activity system. An activity system as defined by Hardman (2008, p. 85) is "a group of people or community who share a common objective and who use tools to act on that object, transforming it". According to Underwood, Mahmood and Vasquez (2021), an activity system is a system of coordinated tasks and activities that complement each other with the aim of achieving cumulative objectives. Within an activity system, there are (i) the 'subject' which is the focal point that achieves the central objective using different tools (ii) a community which is made up of people who have the same general goal and (iii) rules that govern and restrict the activities of the system. Every individual community member is also a subject in their own activity system (Pather, 2012, p. 255).

Subjects

Pather (2012, p. 255) and Cong-Lem (2022) refer to subjects as the main component of an activity system. With regard to the process of learning, subjects play a crucial role in Engestrom Activity Theory alongside artefacts and tools. In order to achieve the object, the subjects use mediated tools. Individual teachers from Nigeria who participated in the selected training program as members of 2019, 2020 and 2021 class are the subjects of this study. This study seeks to comprehend the subjects' educational leadership learnings' perceptions and experiences by their interaction with other elements in the system such as the rules, community, tools and artefacts.

Community

All humans with the aim of achieving the objective in an activity system comprise the community (Pather, 2012, p. 255; Cong-Lem, 2022). This particular study would make much effort to describe and understand the relationship and cooperation, if any, between the community and the subjects. Also, it would try to comprehend the contributions of the community towards the success or otherwise of educational leadership learning of the subjects. The community for this study include, not only the students who participated in this study, but also those who were part of the programme but did not participate in the study, supervisors, study groups, administrative staff and lecturers. This is because of their interaction and cooperation with the participants during their training. This study seeks to comprehend the relationship between the community and the subjects and its contribution to the perceptions and experiences of the subjects during their educational leadership learning.

Rules

The rules for this learning activity system cover all the customs, practices, traditions, culture and rules of the training programme (Scheckle, 2014; Cong-Lem, 2022). For instance, task participation and completion, assessment completion and submission, class attendance, tours and other events participation. This study seeks to comprehend the subjects' interdependence and connections with the rules of the system as well as the influence of this relationship on their own educational leadership learning perception and experiences.

Tools and Artefacts

Scheckle (2014, p. 611) posits that the modules used during educational leadership learning, slide presentations, assessment, study guides, lectures, their structure and content as well as any other learning/instructional material used constitute the tools and artefacts. The MEXT educational leadership training programme selected as the activity system comprises of

both research work which culminated in a thesis as well as education-taught courses. This study seeks to comprehend the subjects' inter-dependence and connection with the different available tools and artefacts of the system as well as the influence of this relationship on their own educational leadership learnings' perception and experiences.

Object and Outcome

The object of this activity system is educational leadership learning which is the formal policy goal, processes, programs and structures that are planned and executed to offer activities that are well articulated for the nurturing and continuous development of prospective and active school leaders. According to Hardman (2008, p. 380), the object of an activity system is inextricably related to the outcome that system seeks which is "to acquire knowledge, skills and values and a new identity" (Scheckle, 2014, p. 615). For this study, the outcome is the acquisition of skills, mastery and knowledge required to be an effective leader who can create a school's vision and direction, nurture and understand people, develop and redesign the school to stand out as an entity and lead the learning and teaching experience at such a school (Bush, 2012, p. 5). This study seeks to comprehend the subjects' perceptions and experiences of the object through the outcome (effective learning of education leadership) by analysing the subjects' relationship with the other elements of the activity system.

Division of Labour

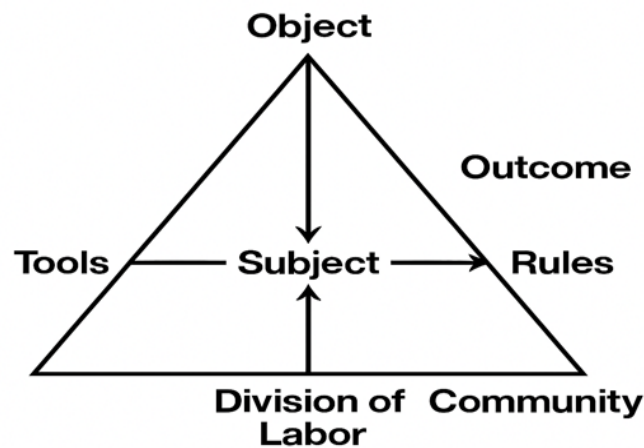
Pather (2012, p. 255) describes division of labour as "how the object of the activity relates to the community and refers to both the horizontal division of tasks between members and the vertical division of power and status". Based on the explanation by Scheckle (2014, p. 617), horizontal division of labour refers to the various functions of the students as subjects and as members of the community on the one hand and administrative staff, supervisors and lecturers on the other hand as vertical division of labour for this study. This study seeks to

comprehend the subjects' relationship with the vertical as well as the horizontal divisions of labour during their educational leadership learning.

Summarily, this study's activity system is the training programme offered by MEXT. An activity system is a system of coordinated tasks and activities that complement each other with the aim of achieving cumulative objectives (Underwood, Mahmood & Vasquez, 2021). The individual Nigerian teachers are the subject of this activity system as well as part of the community members of this activity system. These teachers used course modules, lectures, research, slide presentations, textbooks, ICT and other learning aids as tools and artefacts to achieve the object (educational leadership learning). To achieve the object, the subjects were constrained and governed by the rules (guiding principles) of the programme. The last component of Engestrom Activity Theory, 'division of labour' impacts not just the community but also the individual subjects. The 'division of labour' involves the duties and tasks of different players in the activity system. The players which include the lecturers, supervisors, the students, study groups and the administration personnel constitute the community. All of these elements contribute towards achieving the intended outcome of the training programme, which is, effective educational leadership learning. Diagrammatically, the interrelation of these elements can be seen in figure 1.

Figure 1

Interrelations of the Elements of Engestrom Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2015)



In conclusion, it is noteworthy that the framework for this study, which is Engestrom Activity Theory serves two peculiar purposes. First, in the aspect of data analysis, it would help the researcher to categorize the human and non-human input during the educational leadership learning. Second, it will also provide a guide for literature review on educational leadership learning as well as the development of a data collection instrument used for this study.

Concept and Definition of Educational Leadership

Several educational leadership meanings and definitions have been developed which involve a vast range of knowledge, skills and attributes. These published definitions have competing and conflicting perspectives with very slight agreement on what needs to be added (Bush, 2019). For instance, Fisher (2021) states that educational leadership is a term that can mean various things to various people. Yukl (2002, p. 4) notes that arbitrariness and subjectivity abound in its definitions while Stack et al. (2006) posit that there is no universally acknowledged definition and no agreement on the best form of its development.

More generally, a usual similarity amongst educators is that it entails the wielding of power upon other people. As defined by Yukl (2002, p. 3), educational leadership “involves

a process in which influence is intentionally exerted by one person (or group) over others (or groups) to structure the relationships and activities in an educational organization”. Leithwood, Sun and Schumacker (2020) define it as “the work of influencing and mobilizing others to achieve and articulate the shared goals and intentions of the school”. From another angle, Israa (2020) states that it is “the ability to develop by transforming visions, setting directions, and sharing it with the school being led with the target of accomplishing a mission”. Educational leadership is implementing an approach that promotes staff resources to collaborate in order to achieve goals in an educational setting (Merentek et al., 2023). An all-encompassing definition is given by OECD (2019, p. 137) which entails the building of a common vision and shared practices, as well as leading instructional improvement, organizational capacity development and change management within the education environment.

Over the years, the terms educational leadership and management have been used habitually as substitutes for each other (van Deventer & Kuger, 2011, p. 67), however, they are two distinct yet important concepts as educational leadership is associated to change while educational management is associated to maintenance (Bush, 2007, p. 392). In the school environment, Geleta (2015, p. 2) defines a leader's duty as a balance of leadership and management tasks where educational leadership includes duties like developing a mission and vision for the school and cultivating close ties with people (students and staff), and educational management includes duties like improving the school's instructional program (community) and overseeing the curriculum (OECD, 2008a, p. 19).

Mwangi (2016) asserts that educational leadership involves administrative responsibilities like distributing and managing resources or organizing and harmonizing activities and tasks such as fostering a common school vision and culture. van Deventer and

Kuger (2011, p. 68) liken both concepts to “two sides of the same coin” and differentiates them by associating the latter (education management) with development and implementation of plans for the purpose of achieving the elementary responsibilities of a school (teaching and learning) and the former (educational leadership) with the school's mission, vision, and direction, as well as the motivation of all players.

In the light of the above, it is evident that educational leadership can only function properly in a dynamic setting. As nations strive to modify their educational systems to the changing requirements of modern society, the expectations for school administrators have shifted dramatically (OECD, 2008a, p. 16). As a result of these developments, school leaders' duties and responsibilities have increased and deepened, shifting from the old-fashioned managerial approach to a more leadership-oriented style (OECD, 2008b, UNESCO, 2016). These changes have led to Huber (2014) referring to the combination of both management and leadership duties as “professional school leadership” while Afework (2015, p. 2196) brands it “integrated leadership”. This kind of leadership fosters a feeling of shared purpose, raises expectations for student success and school culture, organizes a diverse range of events among stakeholders, models the appropriate values and fosters a sense of ownership among staff (Hallinger, 2007). Huber (2014) states that it is in fact “instructional leadership” which entails leadership activities and actions in the school that are focused on students' learning growth and include both management and leadership-oriented enterprise aimed at such progress. Based on the above definitions and also attempting to achieve the purpose of this study, educational leadership will be defined as the formal policy goal, processes, programs and structures that are planned and executed to offer activities that are well articulated for the nurturing and continuous development of prospective and active school leaders.

The Concept of Educational Leadership Learning

At this point, it is essential to state that "school leaders" as used in this study refers not only to leaders at every tier of a school such as principals, head masters, administrators, heads of department, head teachers, middle managers, and vice principals but also educational leaders who operate outside of and in support of the traditional school setting (UNESCO, 2016, p. 14), such as education ministries.

Rosenhead et al. (2019) merge the conventional ideas of management and leadership; referring to their learning as complexity leadership development. Bush (2012) defines leadership development as the entire process of teaching leaders. In a study by Walker and Dimmock (2006, p. 125), leadership learning is the mechanisms, settings and processes within specific programs or courses that target how school leaders acquire knowledge most effectively. This, according to Bolam (2003, p. 75), can occur in work-based situations or externally. In his own definition, leadership development is the continuous process of increasing the capacity of groups, individuals, and institutions to perform more effectively in leadership processes and positions (Bolam, 2003, p. 75). To sum it up, Simkins (2012, p. 621) states that more often than not, there is the difficulty of language choice in the topic of educational leadership learning, with terms like development, preparation, training and education being used randomly to define the concept, but that the term leadership learning is typically employed in a larger context. Lumby et al. (2008, p. 3), on the other hand, argue that there is not a single universal definition for educational leadership development and educational leadership preparation. In spite of their assertion, most reported definitions have certain commonalities.

Based on the above assertions by some authorities in the relevant field, it is crucial to point out the nuance in both terms. While Mazurkiewicz (2021) sees educational leadership

development as long term situational processes that equip school leaders in learning how to tackle difficulties and solve problems, Martinez et al. (2021) view educational leadership preparation as the intentionally planned training and professional development of school leaders for unexpected changes that may arise while doing their duties. Bush (2012, p. 2) explains educational leadership preparation as learning that occurs prior to a school leader holding such appointment and education leadership development as the processes and activities that guide education of leaders. Walker and Dimmock (2006, p. 126), define educational leadership preparation as “the formal policy intent, structures, frameworks and programmes designed and implemented to provide an articulated set of activities for both the preparation and ongoing development of potential and serving school leaders”. This definition is in contrast to Bush (2012, p. 12) because here, educational leadership preparation is associated to both prospective and active school leaders while preparation and development are used to explain preparation. Ribbins (2008, p. 62) contends that the process of preparation goes beyond formal training and encompasses the entire informal learning processes leaders go through at the hands of many key players. In another study conducted by Lumby et al. (2008, p. 5), both concepts are valued differently in various nations of the world.

In the hope of achieving this study’s purpose, educational leadership learning or training will only include formal educational leadership development opportunities. The definition of educational leadership learning adopted for this study is one that includes the components of both concepts of preparation and development and does not make any distinction between academic and professional degrees. It also does not discriminate amongst levels of education such as bachelors, diploma, short courses, in service training and graduate courses. This non-distinction is predicated on Eacott (2013, p. 688) work who conducted a review of the programmes of Australian educational leadership learning that involved all taught

academic programs, including certificates, diplomas, and master's programs focused on both potential and active educational leaders. It is hereby defined as all the knowledge, skills as well as the contents and activities that form part of a formal programme or course of study aimed at expanding skills, knowledge and capacities which is intended to improve the effectiveness and understanding of education leaders. The programme which served as the case study for this research is an in-house training/research certificate course.

Reasons for the Multiplied Global Interests in Educational Leadership Learning

In recent times, the focus of school leaders have centered on not just the betterment of the learning capabilities of their students and results but have also included other duties like implementation of government policies, teachers' motivation, human resources and financial accountability (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 19; Yaqoob, Ali & Ullah, 2023). This is supported by Thody et al. (2007, p. 41) who assert that "the increased complexities of the school leadership responsibilities are a result of increased parental and government expectations and the demand for higher academic results and performance standards within the decentralized global education systems". More public attention is being focused on school leaders recently due to the changing notion that the role which was initially limited and restricted to administration has now grown to include obligations such as fixing all types of societal problems arising from ethnic diversity and a lack of community cohesion (Shoho & Barnett, 2010, p. 561; Bowers, Shoho & Barnett, 2015).

The Current Situation of Education Leadership in Nigeria

Nigeria has witnessed fair amount of educational issues since 1914 with leadership issues not being an exception. Since the effectiveness and quality of leaders contribute significantly to students' learning outcomes (Bush, 2007, p. 391), future educational leaders are expected to develop technical capacities for better educational development and growth

(Osokoya, 2008). Contrarily, “Nigeria is not delivering the quality of education desired by its citizens and the international community” (Usman, 2016). Dike (2015) notes that “everybody in Nigeria wants to be in a position of leadership whether they have the knowledge and skills to encourage a healthy competition or not”. Others observe that bad leadership exists in the Nigerian system as a result of most leaders being buried in a feeling of entitlement in their beliefs, attitudes and behaviours (Akor, 2013; Ani, 2014; Oluokun, 2014).

So far, Nigeria has already had numerous academics handle important cabinet posts such as education ministers, but they have done little to guarantee the sector receives the attention it deserves to reach international standards. In fact, most Nigerian schools have insufficient structural, human and material resources (Ikegbusi, Chigbo-Okeke & Modebelu, 2016). As reported by UNICEF (2021), basic education in Nigeria is officially mandatory and free of charge, however, roughly 10.5 million children in Nigeria within the age of five to fourteen years are currently not in school with an even worse scenario in Northern Nigeria which are fueled by religious and traditional customs that dampen formal education attendance.

IseOlorunkanmi et al. (2021) state that most public school leaders are faced with numerous challenges due to the influence and interference of state governments among other things. Ikegbusi, Chigbo-Okeke, and Modebelu (2016) opine that school leaders are appointed based on political interest rather than on the basis of qualification or training; as such, ineffective leadership is the outcome. Religious consideration is also on the front burner in these school leadership appointments. On this basis again, school leaders who are of the same faith get appointed to be education ministers, directors or permanent secretaries in the education ministry with little or no consideration of qualifications (Ushe, 2015; Umeanolue, 2020). Bush and Oduro (2006, p. 364) as well as Evans and Acosta (2020) conclude that school

leaders' lack of training/learning is responsible for the various degrees of educational issues in Africa. By inference, Nigerian educational institutions are also facing leadership difficulties.

The Nigerian and Global Educational Leadership Learning in Context

This section basically deals with the current issues associated with educational leadership learning both internationally and in Nigeria as well as its history from the educational system of Britain.

The Global Sample of Educational Leadership Learning Provision

Education leadership learning around the world are strongly influenced by two factors: the geographical location of the country and the purpose of such learning as perceived by the country's education system. While leaders in the education sector of developed countries are on steady decline due to retirement, education leaders in the developing countries are under qualified or at worst unqualified due to lack of training (OECD, 2022a). This, therefore has led educational leadership learning in developed countries to be focused on leadership succession and replacement (leadership preparation) while the focus of developing countries has been leadership development for current school leaders with little or no training or preparation.

In many nations, formal educational leadership training and national educational leadership certification are available (Mestry & Singh, 2007, p. 478; Chen et al., 2022). For instance, in France, educational leadership learning is indeed of significant importance. School leaders in France are legally required to undertake a compulsory two years' programme that includes both practical and theoretical training while those who want to advance their education can enroll in one of many institutions and earn a master's degree equivalent in school administration (UNESCO, 2019). In Sweden, school leaders undertake a three-year university based national principals' training course after two years of service (Norberg, 2019) while

school leaders in Cyprus must attend the mandatory weekly in-service training for one year (OECD, 2019).

Education leadership course in Hong Kong focuses on six principal areas which include (i) quality assurance and management (ii) community connections and external communications (iii) teachers'/leaders' growth and development (iv) reading policy environment and determining strategic direction (v) resource/staff management (vi) curriculum development, learning and implementation as well as leading teaching (Walker & Dimmock, 2005; Szeto, 2020). Most states in the United States of America (USA) demand the licensing of all school administrators. This means that they must complete a required number of credit in an accredited programme of leadership learning which is a master's degree in a university (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2022).

In England, although school leaders are often specialized university graduates with master's degree in education administration (which became popular in 1970), it is no longer a major pursuit among English school leaders yet still very significant (Thody et al., 2007, p. 45). The National College for School Leadership, which was established in 2000 but renamed National College for the Leadership of Schools and Children's Services (NC) is the sole organisation that recruits, trains, supplies and sustains school leaders in England. In 2012, the compulsory National Professional Qualification for Headship which was formed in 1997 became optional (Bush, 2012, p. 13). Support and training for school administrators and teachers at every levels are given by the National Professional Qualifications (NPQs). This is not limited to people in charge of several schools across trusts but also includes those who seek to gain proficiency in effective teaching techniques like behavioural management. The duration of the NPQs study ranges from twelve (12) weeks to eighteen (18) weeks depending on the chosen NPQ. Backed by the most current research, the NPQs' mode of instruction, contents

and organization are decided by the providers and can be done flexibly around any existing obligations (National Professional Qualifications Guidance, 2023).

“There is no separate document for standardized framework for leadership competencies and defined roles for school principals in Sweden” (UNESCO, 2024o). However, the Swedish national act of 2010 buttressed the development of a national programme for teachers and school leaders. This comprehensive programme has been developed to cover two main aspects which are a formal system for qualifying accredited educators and a framework for structured development of competencies. The formal system for qualifying accredited educators mandates its qualification to be bachelor’s degree and this is the main yardstick for assessment and certification. The framework for structured development of competencies also comprise two areas which are foundational initiatives for qualification attainment and further development initiatives designed for principals and educators that are tailored to professional advancements and needs.

The Swedish national act of 2010 stipulates that candidates vying for the position of a principal must have both experiential and formal astute pedagogical knowledge (Aas & Törnsén, 2016; Haglund & Glaes-coutts, 2022). This implies that an aspiring principal must have both extensive experience and the necessary educational qualifications to be eligible for the position. Based on Marie-Pascale and Snejina (2023) report, heads of schools at every education level must have completed the “Swedish National School Training Programme (also known as the Rector’s training programme, as mentioned in subsection 2.3)” while deputy school heads can choose whether to undertake the programme or not. School heads for both elementary and high schools are expected to complete this training within a period of four years after appointment while for preschool heads, it may be extended an extra year. It is worthy of note that school leaders who have completed the necessary vocational training or have both

experiential and relevant formal academic degrees are exempted from this training. Other exemptions include preschool heads who assumed their duties on or before 1st July, 2019 and school heads who assumed their duties on or before 15th March, 2010. The goal of this training is to equip educational leaders with educational institution (preschool, afterschool care and school) regulatory requirements and to ensure the quality execution of operations and standard (Leo, Vennebo & Aas, 2025). This training centres on leadership, organization, governance and school law. Also, there are other continuous development programmes for school leaders such as those aimed at improvement of mathematical and ICT skills (UNESCO, 2024o). The decision on school heads' appointment, which is a permanent contract, is in the purview of municipalities for public schools while independent schools handle their own recruitment (Johansson, 2001).

The criterion in Germany for appointing school heads differ from state to state. Generally, the same qualifications required for teachers are the basic requirements for school principal appointments. In addition to this, they must also have a certification in teaching plus substantial background in management and teaching, with various other requirements as determined by each individual state (UNESCO, 2024i). For instance, principals in Bavaria are also school teachers whose major responsibility is the coordination of teaching and learning activities in collaboration with other teachers. They are also tasked with monitoring, cooperation, assessing, advising and leading results (Huber, 2016). In Berlin, however, the position of a principal goes beyond teaching capabilities and qualifications. Rather, it entails proficiency in school organization and management, in-depth pedagogical knowledge, conflict resolution and school improvement capabilities. In Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, school principals must possess professional and educational qualifications in either the field of education or a closely-related field of study of very high standards. In addition, they must have

a qualifying certification in educational administration alongside relevant years of experience in teaching.

All German states have specific hiring procedures for school heads. In some states, such as Bavaria, teachers are promoted to principals by selecting the best performing teacher and must have completed their curriculum on training in areas such as development of staff, leadership, teaching proficiency and quality, collaboration as well as school profile, in order to qualify for appointment (UNESCO, 2024l). In Bremen, they are appointed by the local community while in Hamburg, principals are appointed after several steps that begin with the advertisement of a public tender. There, the appointment committee consists of the incumbent school head, the governing board/authority of the state, student council as well as the school governing board (teachers, parents and pupils). The first consideration is done by the student council and the school governing body, which may involve an interview as they deem fit. Their feedback and proposals on the suitable candidates are then sent to the authority in charge which makes the final decision. The authority in charge then selects the most suitable candidate and they are given the appointment on a probationary period of one year. If they are considered worthy after this period, they are now confirmed for a permanent appointment (Tenberg & Warwas, 2013).

In Myanmar, “there are no standardized framework for leadership competencies for school leaders (head teachers and education administrators)” (UNESCO, 2024n). The Government of the Republic of the Union of Myanmar Ministry of Education (2015), however, has constituted “the national school quality standards assurance framework in an attempt to improve the quality of schools nationwide” and this framework ensures that school leaders in Myanmar meet the compulsory education minimum standards. Although this framework does not specify the roles of school heads, it alludes to their importance in accountability, pursuing

and meeting school objectives as well as assessment of staff working within the school. The education ministry (basic education department) is responsible for the recruitment, appointment, promotion and transfer of school leaders. This department is also in charge of not only upholding the accountability and responsibility of school heads to ensure performance enhancement, but also the training of these school leaders on instructional leadership (UNESCO, 2024n).

The job of a principal in Thailand requires that educational administrators must legally possess licenses in this field as well as a license from the Thailand council of teachers (National Education Act of B. E. 2542, 1999). By law, in addition to holding a professional license for educational administration and teaching, they must have served in any institution of education as a deputy director for a minimum of twenty-four months and also have a status level of senior professional or its equivalent according to the Thailand council of teachers' basis. More so, school leaders must obtain a bachelor's degree in educational administration or its equivalent. They are also required to have a vast knowledge in the following aspects: educational planning and policy, procedures and principles for administering education, quality assurance in education, administration of students' academics and other activities, proficiency in the management of buildings, finance, administration and procurement, management of ICT, community and public relations as well as ethics and morality for school administration (UNESCO, 2024m).

In Thailand, teachers can follow any of the four distinct career progression path which are school direction, education supervision, teaching and education management. However, those who are interested in furthering their career as principals must choose the school direction path. A teacher who has a minimum of level 2 professional status may apply and sit the test for the school direction path. This test is conducted and evaluated by "the local Office of the

Teacher Civil Service and Educational Personnel Commission” (UNESCO, 2024m). School leaders are appointed by the education ministry of Thailand and may be recruited by local authorities depending on situations and contexts. Regardless of the appointment or recruitment authority, the process for school heads’ selection is expected to adhere to good governance principles of transparency, equality, accountability and morality. Even after appointment, these school heads are expected to continue their professional development as enshrined in the 14th clause of the third chapter, part 1 of Thailand teachers’ council regulation which states that “educational professional practitioners shall have self-discipline and improve their professional practice, personality and vision to keep up with the academic, economic, social and political development” (The Government Gazette volume 122, Special Part 76D, September, 2005).

The Malaysia education ministry manages the training of future principals in Malaysia. The standard for school leaders as well as the model for this training is contained in the “2020 National Competency Standards for Malaysian School Leaders and the training domains are visionary, instructional, operational resources, personal leadership qualities and relationships” (UNESCO, 2024p). The training competencies include but not limited to finance, risk, data and physical resources management, educational policies and regulations compliance, management and delivery of curriculum, monitoring, research, teaching and non-teaching staff development, self and social skills management as well as connections and network building (Don et al., 2015; Ng, 2017). The Malaysian qualification programme for educational leaders which is modelled after the framework of the National Professional Qualification for Headship in England takes 3 years to complete and is split into 6 phases (UNESCO, 2024p). These include 10 weeks of physical sessions, 8 weeks online learning and 18 weeks of field learning consisting of apprenticeship and practicum. The combination of these phases enable aspiring principals to apply their learnt knowledge in their individual school contexts and environments.

The position of a principal in Malaysia is tenure-based and all principals are regarded as civil servants (Bush et al., 2018). All educators aspiring to be principals in Malaysia must be registered as a school leader. The prerequisite for this registration is appropriate duration of service and attainment of a certain grade level in the civil service. After these initial requirements are met, these aspirants must then undertake the compulsory national qualification programme for educational leaders (Singh, 2019). For teacher who aspire to be principals, they must be in the senior or middle leadership/management teams and must have had their yearly report on performance evaluation at above 85%. Also, in order to be eligible to apply for this qualification programme, teachers' applications must be supported by both their school principals and districts as well. The eligible applicants are then interviewed and approved by the education offices of the state. The education ministry of Malaysia also established "the Excellent Principals and Headmasters Scheme track to create progression opportunities for high-performing school leaders, rewarding them with faster career advancement and incentives for working in challenging schools" (UNESCO, 2024p). There are also mentoring programmes across all states to support recently appointed principals (Rahman, Lokman & Mohammed, 2015). Other special requirements for application to the compulsory national qualification programme for educational leaders include:

- Specialization in a related education field such as general education, Islamic education or technical education.
- A minimum of three years at a senior assistant position or senior subject teacher position.
- Having a minimum of five service years before retirement.

In order to attain the position of a principal in China, certain requirements must be met and these include education and teaching qualifications as well as a principal certificate. Furthermore, principals must possess a minimum of five years' experience, two of which could

be in a deputy principal position or three of which could be in middle management in schools (UNESCO, 2024k). Also, aspirants to the principal position must obtain an eligibility certificate or in some special circumstances, they could be appointed without such but must ensure they obtain the eligibility certificate within a year. However, in the countryside and hinterlands, more relaxed qualification requirements are needed based on the true specific contexts and conditions of such areas. In fact, in some more remote areas, best performing teachers could be appointed directly to a principal position even without any other formal requirements for principals (The State Council, The People's Republic of China, 2021; Zou, 2022).

The appointment of principals in China is done centrally by the department of educational administration. This centralized system is a peculiar characteristic of the Chinese educational system which differs from many other countries whose usual practice is appointment by experience and/or qualifications (Zheng, 2014). This was not the usual way of appointment in that before 2017, principals were appointed through public recommendations, followed by a written test and interviews as well as background checks by the relevant education authorities in their locality (UNESCO, 2024k). There was also a system of principal rotation in 2014 in which principals are sent to schools different from theirs after a period of time in their own schools and in some cases may involve the promotion of deputy principals to principal position (Zheng et al., 2024). The principal's role in China is that of an administrator, leader as well as an educator and include functions such as implementation of policies on education, teaching practices professionalization, academic efficiency and stability management as well as innovative management of the entire school (UNESCO, 2024k).

Canada is "one of the few countries in the world that does not have a national department of education but several provincial departments of education which are responsible

for educational governance” (Morgan, 2011). As a result, there is no national definition attached to the title, school head or principal. Their definitions, functions, responsibilities and duties are as defined by the various provinces in the country. Also, “many provinces and territories have developed their educational leadership standards, frameworks and guidelines and so have their requirements for principalship” (UNESCO, 2024j). In general, the requirements to become a principal in many territories and provinces are formal initial training at a recognized university, previous experience in teaching as well as further qualifications for principals as defined by each distinct province. For example, in Alberta, a further qualification for principals is a certificate of leadership while in British Columbia, this means a certificate of qualification. In the territories of the Northwest, a further qualification for principals means an eligibility certificate. In exceptional cases, principals who have been employed without these additional qualifications are given a maximum of two years to acquire them failing which they must relinquish their position and another qualified candidate relieves them.

There are distinct requirements for principal positions in other provinces such as Manitoba, Nunavut, Ontario, Quebec and Prince Edward Island. For Manitoba, in addition to the permanent certificate in professional teaching of the locality, an aspiring principal must possess school leadership certificate, an educational administration master’s degree or post baccalaureate degree in the same field plus a teaching experience of at least three years (UNESCO, 2024j; Government of Canada Job Bank, 2025). For Prince Edward Island, a principal must possess a valid level 6 certificate in teaching, teaching experience of at least seven years and a minister’s approved programme of administrator’s leadership (UNESCO, 2024j; Government of Canada Job Bank, 2025). For Quebec, the requirements are an education bachelor’s degree, years of HOD or teaching experience, teaching authorization as well as school principals’ permanent certificate in teaching (UNESCO, 2024j; Government of Canada

Job Bank, 2025). For Nunavut, principals are required to possess a bachelor's degree, a certificate in teaching and a principal eligibility certificate as well (UNESCO, 2024j; Government of Canada Job Bank, 2025). In several territories and provinces, principals are appointed by the districts' superintendents or school boards and very many universities in these provinces offer qualification certifications as a preservice training. Even after assumption of duty, these principals continue to engage in in-house trainings by means of short courses and sessions.

In the case of Africa, a lot of complexity exists owing to a number of reasons which include but not limited to the geographical, political and social circumstances prevalent in the continent as well as the fact most of African countries are yet to be developed. In fact, of the 54 countries existing in Africa, only 2 were not colonized in the past. More so, many nations in Africa have been involved in some kind of war, bloody civil disputes, humungous demolition of social amenities and other infrastructures as well as consistent health crises such as yellow fever, ebola, lassa fever and most recently corona virus. As a result, limited resources have been further depleted which have continuously affected the educational leadership landscape and training of her school leaders. In the words of Eacott and Asuga (2014), "school leadership preparation is practically non-existent on the African continent." Similarly, Bush and Oduro (2006) posit that "few adequate educational leadership trainings are available for school leaders in Africa." Oduro, Dachi and Fertig (2008) assert that in Africa, the lack of adequate programmes of educational leadership training and other programmes of school leaders' professional development are serious problems for the various educational systems. In private educational institutions in Africa, the real situation is not clearly known because only a handful of research has been done to ascertain whether school leaders undertake educational leadership trainings (Cordeiro & Brion, 2018).

In Ghana, there is “no formal pre-leadership training requirement for head teachers” (Dare, Babaeff & Henderson, 2024). As a result, heads of schools are not mandated to take part in any standardized programme of professional training for educational leadership or educational administration (Abonyi, 2024) leading to de-emphasis of functions of leadership necessary for effectiveness of schools. The expectations for school leaders in Ghana are spelt out in “two sections of the Ghana Education Service (2010) Head Teachers’ Handbook” (Cordeiro, 2021). These are “Managing your School” and “Improving the Quality of Learning” (Cordeiro, 2021). The former highlights competences necessary for effectively managing the school and people who have job responsibilities there. It also outlines proficiencies for the management of resources for learning, co- and extra-curricular activities, teaching and learning time as well as financial and budgetary matters. The latter highlights competences necessary for effectively managing attendance and school population. It also outlines proficiencies for critically examining the output of teachers, the academic performance of students, the professional development of other staff members as well as proficiencies for managing the relationship between schools and their neighbouring communities. In addition, Ghanaian school principals are required to possess at least a total of fifteen years teaching experience before they can attain the principal position (Dampson, 2019). This means that principals and head teachers are chosen from teachers’ ranks (Abonyi, 2024). Even a study by Zame, Hope and Repress (2008) discovered that only a few sampled school leaders (29%) had “some kind of training before taking their positions.” This is connected to the logistical and economic issues common in Ghana as well as other African countries (Brion & Cordeiro, 2018).

In Tanzania, the policy on training and education stipulates that every educational leader irrespective of the level such as elementary, post-elementary, regional, national and district, must possess a minimum of a diploma or degree from a higher institution in addition

to a professional educational management training and requisite experience (Ministry of Education and Culture, 1995). This policy focuses on the following areas: school planning, management and leadership, education registration and policy, management of finance and accounting as well as office procedures (Sabimbona, 2010). However, according to United Republic of Tanzania (1995), a Tanzanian educational task force found that many school leaders have not being trained professionally and rely on “trial and error administrative experience” (Sabimbona, 2010). Even in recent times, a lot of school principals are yet to receive this formal training required for their jobs (Kuluchumila, 2014; Godda, 2018; Kafanabo, 2025).

In Burkina Faso, in as much as the Act No. 013-2007/AN (2007) that constitutes the framework for education prescribes requirements for teachers’ jobs – diploma and five years of work experience at senior administrative level, out of which three of those years must be as a certified teacher (for principal teachers), it remained silent on that of school leadership positions (UNESCO, 2024a). Rather, principals are appointed from the rank of “principal teacher students, holder of the Higher Certificate of Teaching Aptitude from the Ecole Normale Superieure or any other recognized equivalent diploma” (UNESCO, 2024a). Although not compulsory, the new appointees are then offered some training at the Ecole Normale Superieure. With specific regard to navigating the non-distinctive world of principals in Burkina Faso, the Ministry of Secondary and Higher Education’s Guide for New School Principals (2011) outlines the following three key areas for attention: organization of school life, comprehension of the school and its surroundings as well as the responsibilities of school leaders.

The Liberian Education Reform Act (2011) stipulates that the possession of a degree or certificate in teaching is a must for all administrators and teachers, with various other additional

requirements for specific positions. For senior high school administrators and teachers, the requirements are an education bachelor's degree as well as an A certificate. For junior high school and upper elementary school administrators and teachers, they must possess a teacher training institute's associate degree as well as a B certificate. For lower elementary school administrators and teachers, they must possess grades I to 3 associate degree as well as a minimum of C certificate. However, there is no mention of the minimum requirements for school principals in the Liberian Education Reform Act (2011) but rather principals are appointed from the rank of teachers as stated in the National Teacher Training Management Policy (2022). This policy states that "a teacher shall be eligible to apply for the position of a principal for a school from senior teacher 1 level (Bachelors of Education degree or its equivalent)." In other words, the policy's aim is to appoint principals from current qualified teachers who have the requisite experience and qualifications.

The recruitment for public school principals in Liberia is done by the resident school board based on merit and then appointed by the Education ministry (UNESCO, 2024b). The appointees are then trained specifically for their new job position through in-house training as well as a prerequisite short course for their license renewal every three years. The manual for school leadership training encompasses various areas of principal roles such as learning, leadership and communities. Some topics taught during these trainings include educational/school management and leadership, record keeping, principles of budgeting and accounting, external and internal strategies for fostering community and school relationships, education on rights, girls and women, observation of teachers, classroom and school management, developmental psychology, instructional planning as well as counselling and guidance (UNESCO, 2024b). The Liberia Education Administrative Regulations (2011)

outlines the duties of a school principal which include maintenance, management, discipline as well as overseeing the programmes of teaching, school reform and other school-related matters.

A committee made up of district and national experts recruit head teachers and their deputies in Rwanda (Official Gazette No. 10, March 16, 2020). This selection is done by examining the submitted files of teachers who indicated interest in the available vacancies and meet the set requirements of the education ministry (UNESCO, 2024c). The set requirements for head teachers include a teaching license and a certificate or diploma qualification in education, but a degree qualification in education for high school principals or any degree from other fields of study in addition to postgraduate diploma in education. The selected head teachers and their deputies then participate in programmes of knowledge and expertise development as well as other courses on continuous development throughout their active service years (Education Sector Strategic Plan (2018/19 - 2023/24). Currently, these courses on continuous development are not obligatory but there are plans to make them compulsory for head teachers (UNESCO, 2024c). The Education Board of Rwanda in collaboration with its unit on management and leadership of schools developed the responsibilities of school leaders. These are school management, leading instructional and learning activities, directing the school as well as partnership with parents and their surrounding communities (Rwanda Education Board, 2020).

The Teachers Service Commission (TSC) Kenya (2017) specifies the qualification requirements for appointment of elementary school heads. These include a certificate in teaching of primary education, an education bachelor's degree, successful completion of modules on professional teachers' development, a minimum of three years as deputy head teacher as well as other constitutional requirements. With respect to high school principals, they not only have to possess the same requirements as head teachers but must also complete

a master's degree in any related education field as well as three years of job experience as a deputy principal. The topics offered in the management and leadership diploma include but not limited to education reforms, policy and law, leadership and management of resources, financial literacy, instructional leadership as well as school counselling and guidance (UNESCO, 2024d). This diploma has been tailored for both aspiring and current school heads and lasts for a period of one year. The selection of school heads both at elementary and high school levels is the sole responsibility of the TSC which is usually merit-based and this is done after shortlisting and interviewing qualified candidates. The Kenyan Ministry of Education (2024) outline the responsibilities and roles of school heads which include planning and executing school initiatives, allocation of human, material and financial resources, communicating and partnering with stakeholders, management of the institution as well as capacity building for staff members.

With reference to the yearly abstract of the Ethiopian Ministry of Education (2023), elementary school and junior high school principals must possess a bachelor's degree while senior high school principals must have a master's degree. In addition to the requirements of a senior high school principal, they must have acquired another degree in any education field such as school leadership, educational management, educational leadership, teaching or educational planning plus a minimum teaching experience of five years. In Ethiopia, a seven-man committee conducts the selection and appointment of school heads whose members are from teachers' association, the department of human resources as well as the education ministry. The selected candidates are then approved by the chief justice of the country before confirmation of appointment (UNESCO, 2024e). All school heads must possess a two-year valid initial professional license and are encouraged to acquire advanced licenses (full and permanent licenses). They are also supported in the implementation of the updated curriculum

through optional pre-service and in-house training programmes on educational leadership. However, the Ethiopian Federal Ministry of Education (2021) is currently working out plans to make these training obligatory.

In Malawi, the appointment requirements for head teachers are quite different and less demanding in that they only need a good teaching record and/or previous leadership experience either within or outside the school setting. In some cases, just a degree from a reputable national university is enough to land the job (UNESCO, 2024f). Based on the previous advertisements of school leadership positions from the website of the Malawi Ministry of Education (2021), it can be seen that the only requirements for a high school head teacher is at least four years of teaching experience. With particular regard to this recent appointment, head teachers were appointed after consideration of their teaching records, with specific focus on their students' performance in tests at national level over the years. In fact, the Malawi Education Act (2014) stipulates the necessary qualifications for teachers' registration but is silent on the qualification requirements for head teachers. In some situations, where the applications received by the commission responsible for teachers' service far exceed the advertised vacancies from qualified candidates, the commission appoints the head teachers based on an "open competition" (UNESCO, 2024f).

Over the years, some attempts were made to formally develop a certificate for school headship in Malawi. A notable one is that of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in collaboration with the Malawian education ministry in 2011. However, all these efforts have not been successful till date. In order to meet the minimum standard of practice set by the Malawi National Education Standards (2015), these school leaders are given some training relevant to their roles and responsibilities prior to assumption of their duties. Also, numerous national strategies and policies have added head teachers' in-

house training as a part of its goals. Furthermore, the Malawi National Education Policy (2016) supports the development of all teachers, of which head teachers are part of, through continuous training. In the same vein, the Malawi Ministry of Education (2020), through the National Education Sector Investment Plan for 2020 –2030 trains and develops the management and leadership skills needed to effectively improve the lot of all the education levels in Malawi. The roles, goals, responsibilities, values and visions of Malawian school leaders are set by the National Education Standards (2015) and are mostly concerned with improving the standard of teaching and learning in schools, effectiveness of teachers through professional development trainings, inclusion, equity and access.

The qualification for a principal or a head teacher appointment in the Gambia is to be a fully qualified teacher with the necessary teaching experience. This means that for elementary school head teachers, they must possess at least 6 years' experience in teaching while for the junior and senior high school principals, they must have a minimum of 10 years' experience in teaching, in addition to an education master's degree. In certain cases, they are invited for interviews and may undertake a written test as part of the process for their selection (Bdawda, 2023). These appointments are handled by the commission on public service (Public Service Act, The Gambia, 1991; The General Orders of the Public Service of the Gambia, 2013). It is worthy of note that “there are no pre-service training provision for aspiring head teachers and principals” (UNESCO, 2024g). In as much as the framework for competency pertaining to school heads have been developed, its implementation and publication are yet to be seen either online or on paper (UNESCO, 2024g). However, the Gambian revised service scheme strives to professionally empower school leaders in leading and managing their schools through proper and meritorious recruitment as well as training. Also, the Gambia department of state for education through a combination of the Gambia Education Policy (2004-15) as well as the

Gambia Education Sector Strategic Plan (2016-30) support school leaders by means of workshops and other activities of professional development. Several documents outline the duties of school leaders and some of these duties include developing plans, mission and visions for the school, collaborating with stakeholders, improving the quality of instructional activities as well as capacity development for staff, amongst other responsibilities.

Although South Africa follow the trend of other African nations in promoting teachers to the position of principals, it is one of the few countries in Africa that have proper formal requirements and compulsory programme of educational leadership training for her school leaders (Bush & Glover, 2021). Teachers are required by law to be graduates of education with a four-year bachelor's degree. Alternatively, they could possess a bachelor's degree of three years or four years' duration in any field, accompanied by a post graduate certificate in education. In addition to these, aspirants to the position of school headship must be registered with the educators' council of South Africa, plus a teaching experience of seven years. In fact, "the principal is expected to be an all-rounder in terms of knowledge and skills" (UNESCO, 2024h) in that they are expected to possess leadership skills, management skills, excellent communication skills, proficient administrative skills as well as excellent co-curricular skills (Department of Education, Republic of South Africa, 2008; Kruger, 2025).

The South African Government Gazette Staatskoerant No. 38487, February 19, 2015 prescribes the pathways as well as the minimum requirements for teachers to ascend to the position of principals one of which is the completion of an advanced diploma in leadership and management of schools taught at various higher institutions within the country. Also, a professional body, the National Professional Qualification for Principalship, has been constituted with the task of mandatorily implementing the certification of school heads, "without which no educator will be eligible for appointment to the post of first-time principal"

(UNESCO, 2024h). After the completion of this diploma, the new principals then participate in an induction programme with the aim of linking the theory learnt during the course of their studies with actual practical works.

With respect to appointments, the circuit manager selects, processes and finalizes decisions on school principals' appointment. However, the vacancy advertisement, shortlisting of qualified applicants, organization and conduction of interviews as well as recommendations are done by the governing body of schools. The candidates who are finally appointed to the position are expected to fulfil the following roles: school management, spearheading of instructional activities, development of empowerment programmes for staff members, developing and directing their schools, partnering with the school community, staff management as well as organization and management of extracurricular activities (South African School Act No. 84, 1996; Department of Basic Education, Republic of South Africa, 2018; Mthanti & Msiza, 2023).

Deputy heads and senior teachers in Zambia are promoted to the position of head teachers just like most African nations do. The usual minimum requirements are an education bachelor's degree or a degree in any discipline within the social sciences, alongside administrative and teaching experience (UNESCO, 2024i). The appointment of school heads is done by the designated boards of education in every district based on experience, capability and qualifications. The Zambia ministry of education recognizes the importance of educational management training and has made efforts to achieve this by making the completion of this training a precondition for appointment (Ministry of Education, Zambia, 1996). Also, The National Institute of Education run by the education ministry provides both in-house and preservice trainings to newly appointed principals in order to develop their social and technical skills as well (Teaching Profession Act, Zambia, 2013). Continuous professional development

is also encouraged by the relevant ministry and agencies in Zambia and so head teachers are expected but not mandated to participate in workshops, conferences and seminars on career development (Ministry of Education, The Republic of Zambia, 2019). These school leaders are charged with the responsibility of designing, reviewing and delivery of programmes that promote teaching and learning, management of their schools' financial resources as well as be actively involved in the recruitment of qualified teaching and non-teaching staff (Kalabo, 2017; Mwansa, 2019). However, the final decision on staff recruitment lies with the school board.

In Nigeria, although there are no statutory qualification requirements for school leadership positions (Bush & Moorosi, 2011), principals are usually appointed or selected from the ranks of teaching staff using service records as yardstick after a successful test and interview which are then followed by an induction (Federal Ministry of Education, 2023). Also, there are no compulsory school leadership qualification requirements in the Netherlands but there are some provisions for leadership learning at various schools and levels. At the university of Amsterdam, for instance, there is the Netherlands School of Educational Management founded by five universities which offers a two-year distance learning qualification in school management (Stevenson, Honingh & Neeleman, 2021). For commonwealth nations, although there exists leadership development and preparation programmes as shown by the study of Bush & Moorosi (2011) as well as Osman & Miller (2022), only India and Papua New Guinea have made them mandatory for school leaders. With the exception of Trinidad and Tobago, these programmes are offered by academic institutions in other commonwealth nations which indicates the degree of significance these programs portray. The table 1 below shows the above information.

Table 1

Provision of Educational Leadership Learning in Commonwealth Countries (Bush & Moorosi, 2011; Osman & Miller, 2022)

| Countries | Education Leadership Development | Education Leadership Preparation | Programme Providers |
|---------------------|---|---|---------------------------------------|
| Nigeria | Recommended | Recommended | Academic institution |
| Australia | Optional | Optional | Academic institution, State, Province |
| India | Mandatory | Mandatory | Academic institution, State, Province |
| Namibia | Optional | Not available | Academic institution |
| New Zealand | Optional | Optional | Academic institution, State, Province |
| Papua New Guinea | Mandatory | Mandatory | Academic institution |
| Seychelles | Recommended | Not available | Academic institution, State |
| Trinidad and Tobago | Recommended | Recommended | State |
| Uganda | Recommended | Not available | Academic institution, State |

History of Educational Leadership Learning

There has been an overwhelming interest and tons of literature on learning of educational leadership (Bush & Moorosi, 2011, p. 61; Osman & Miller, 2022). This growing interest is as a result of the perceived influence of educational leadership on learner and school growth and also in recognition of the need for growth and improvement of education systems in the world (UNESCO, 2016, p. 12). Dating back to history, Simkins (2012) identifies three eras of educational leadership learning development in Britain: administration (p. 623), management (p. 624) and leadership (p. 625). The era of administration which spanned from 1944 to mid-1980s saw school leaders as mere administrators who performed roles similar to

administrators in other fields of endeavour. This continued to be the norm until towards the middle of 1980 when many education systems around the world began developing interest in professional and academic training for school leaders. At that time, while schools in Britain appointed school leaders from within the teaching ranks based on experience and years of service, other countries recruited school leaders based on completion of postgraduate certification in education administration. This distinction brought a lot of concern to the British style regarding the role and scope of her school leaders.

The era of management spanned from mid-1980s to mid-1990s and questioned the administration era for its education quality and inconsistency. As a result, managerial duties were added to the school leaders' responsibilities. This brought about introducing standards for managers with greater emphasis on oversight and appraisal. Within this era, there was a much more coordinated effort towards providing educational leadership learning as well as the establishment of special institutes (other than universities) for this purpose. The era of leadership has continued from mid-1990 till date. In this era, just the mere addition of management roles to school leaders could not suffice any more. This era saw the increase in concern for quality of education which brought about the introduction of the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in the United Kingdom in 2000. This was referred to as "the most comprehensive and sophisticated leadership development model in the world" (Simkins, 2012, p. 626).

The Selected Educational Leadership Programme as Research Focus

The programme chosen for this study was established by MEXT in a bid to respond to the clarion call for a global educational leadership improvement. It is a scholarship program for international teachers who intend to carry out research on education at specific universities in Japan. MEXT has been inviting international students to study in Japan at the expense of the

state since 1954. This training programme has young experienced international school teachers as the target audience (MEXT, 2021a). The training consists mainly of educational administration (school management and educational finance and administration), educational methods (curriculum, learning system theory, educational assessment and classroom teaching), specialized subject research (physics, mathematics, chemistry and gymnastics) and observational practice and tours (educational research facilities tours, special education activities participation and class observations). The applicants must be university or teacher training school graduates who are working as teachers in elementary or secondary schools (MEXT, 2021a). All the Nigerian students who participated in this programme in 2019, 2020 and 2021 were full time teachers in Nigeria but were granted leave from their jobs by their employers. Modules were presented over a period of twelve months in the form of blended learning (a combination of online and traditional class-based method).

Conclusively, it is crucial to state that this programme was selected for two main reasons: First, Nigeria has no national leadership training programme for its teeming school leaders and second, this programme was the closest to a school leadership training which has been accessible to active teachers some of whom are school leaders or aspiring leaders. Therefore, in line with the purpose of the study - which is to examine the perceptions and experiences of the Nigerian teachers with respect to their own leadership learning experiences – this programme served as the research site only without any effort to assess, evaluate or compare with other leadership learning programmes.

The Significance of Educational Leadership Training

Bush (2007; 2019) refers to educational leadership learning as becoming the most critical educational topic of the new century. A review of literature in the educational leadership learning field indicates a wide range of reasons for the increased emphasis on this topic.

Political, educational, social, and economic developments, as well as schools', parents', guardians' and educators' shifting expectations of school leaders, have all had considerable influence on the functions, scope, practices and directions of school leadership. Education leadership training has become very significant due to the following:

Changing Responsibilities and Roles of School Leaders

Decentralization trends combined with global economic, technological and scientific breakthroughs as well as mass human migration and globalization impact has multiplied unpredictability and complexity in the modern world thus influencing education (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 12; Pont, 2020). The duties of school leaders have been expanded and stretched to embrace a staggering array of competencies and professional tasks that demands them to become educational visionary, curriculum and instructional leader, disciplinarian, assessment expert, budget analyst, facilities manager, community builder, communications expert and public relations (Davis et al., 2005, p. 3; Pont, 2020). This is because of their specific services to numerous stakeholders such as guardians, students, parents, unions and national education departments. This multiplied unpredictability and complexity in education field has brought about multiple changes to the responsibilities and tasks of school leaders, for instance, a shift from the traditional administrative duties and tasks to a greater emphasis not only on improving and developing teaching and learning but also school development (Huber & Muijs, 2010, p. x; Fisher, 2021; Male, 2025).

International Decentralization of Education

Globally, devolution of the accountability and responsibility of education control and regulation to different levels has given education leadership learning a prominent place in education research in recent times (Bush, 2012, p. 32). This can be seen in the introduction of the Education Reform Act in England (1998) as well as the Reform in Education

Administration Act in New Zealand (1999) which loudly and boldly demanded schools to be fiscally efficient and effective (Fitzgerald & Gunter, 2008, p. 333) and more recently, the Swedish Education Act in 2011 (Norberg, 2019). Although this trend is relatively slow in Africa, there exists some African countries that have started this journey towards decentralization. One of such countries is South Africa where education management was highly centralized before 1994 (Christie, 2010, p. 699). However, this trend took a different turn in 1996 with the introduction of South African School Act 84 which increased the duties of leaders of schools in the areas of learner and schools' performance, management of staff, collaboration with school governing body, guidance, budget management and policy execution.

In Nigeria also, there was the introduction of Education Reform Act, 2007 which detailed the duties of unity schools' management (principals, vice principals both academic and administrative, Heads of Departments) to include administrative and academic matters management, finance management, development of staff, assets and infrastructure management. This decentralization trend led Huber and Muijs (2010, p. 225) to assert that there seems to be a worldwide consensus on the necessity of leaders of schools to possess such power needed to enhance teaching as well as learning and the development of students.

The Burden of Working as a 21st Century Leader

Another cause for the keen interest in educational leadership training is that 21st century school leaders are faced with much more pressure and function on a larger scale than school leaders in previous generations (Davis et al., 2005, p. 3; Popov & Pironkova, 2020). The pressures of being a school leader are unrelenting, and from the last two decades, the expectations on such leaders have multiplied as their positions have become more all-encompassing and complex (Crawford & Earley, 2011, p. 106). This has resulted in a higher

emphasis and focus on the need for educational leadership training for both aspiring and present leaders of schools.

The resultant effect of the complexity of school leadership and the rising pressure is that educational leadership training has become a major concern for global education policymakers (Crawford & Earley, 2011, p. 107). Added to this is the reality that schools are growing more culturally and ethnically diverse, with more heterogeneous parents, students, and educators which increases school leaders' burdens (Huber & Muijs, 2010, p. viii; Sleeter, 2023). In the Nigerian context, there are schools for girls only, boys only, both genders in the same school, boarding schools, boarding and day sections in same school as well as all levels in the same school namely senior high, elementary, junior high schools and kindergarten with just a school leader (principal) to oversee all of them which adds undue pressure to such a leader.

Effective Leadership for Quality and Effective Education in Schools

The effectiveness of schools as well as the education quality in such schools are directly connected to the effectiveness of its leadership. This is supported by Bush (1998, p. 323) when he posits that "it has become received wisdom that the quality of the head is the single most important variable in school effectiveness". School leaders contribute significantly in the schools they head because they exercise a quantifiable, though indirect impact on students' achievement in particular and school effectiveness in general (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 12; Wolhuter, 2020). To support this quantifiable but indirect impact is the idea that improving a school strongly depends on the learning and teaching quality in the classrooms. This, in turn is reliant on the leadership quality prevalent in such schools (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2009, p. 362). This is because according to Brundrett, Fitzgerald and Sommefeldt (2006, p. 90) and Fisher (2021), school leaders not only serve as the pivot for the delivery of high quality

teaching but also in the development of schools that are innovative, goal-oriented, problem-solving and self-renewing (Huber & Muijs, 2010, p. 59). This indirect impact is also explained appropriately by Earley and Evans (2004, p. 335) as “the mediated influence school leaders have on the culture” and atmosphere of the school as well as the staff members’ performance.

Of the seven focus of successful school leadership by Leithwood et al. (2019), two of them point to the effectiveness of a school being dependent on efficient leadership. First, they state that leaders of schools impact students’ accomplishment through influencing teachers’ work ethics, motivation and working conditions. Second, they mention that effective leadership in a school is “second only to classroom teaching” (Leithwood et al., 2019). This means that while teaching within the classroom is regarded as the most important factor in a school, the second most essential element within a school is effective leadership. Zhang and Brundrett (2010, p. 154) state that global interest in the development of school leadership has surged drastically due to the difference leadership makes to effectiveness with regards to value contribution and increased productivity. Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 60) and Osman and Miller (2022) reiterate that the import of school leadership to students’ accomplishment and school effectiveness has become the starting point for world-wide discussion on the kind of leadership to be provided by school leadership programmes. Providing educational leadership training opportunities to leaders of schools is seen as one of the indispensable building blocks of efficient school systems which delivers well-planned and implemented teaching and learning (Bush & Jackson, 2002, p. 418; Osman & Miller, 2022) as well as preserving the viability of such education systems (Zhang & Brundrett, 2010, p. 154; Crawford & Earley, 2011, p. 117).

The Peculiarity of School Leadership Career

In reference to Huber (2010, p. 230), the significant interest in international discussion regarding training of educational leaders has been attributed to “school leadership as a

profession in its own right” which is currently developing a trend towards more thorough educational leadership training programs that investigate many of the responsibilities and challenges of the career (Huber, 2010, p. 233; Osman & Miller, 2022). The characteristics of leaders in education enumerated by Glatter (2009, p. 226) demonstrate the rising professionalism in leadership of schools. It also includes “the ability to live with uncertainty and to learn from mistakes, agility, adaptability and a preparedness to distribute leadership”, develop trusted relationships and collaborate across borders (Glatter, 2009, p. 226). These characteristics are most likely to become paramount for education leaders in the coming years which speaks volume to both the *how* and the *what* of future education training. Huber (2010, p. 233) emphasizes the significance of these professional attributes, believing that there is a rising global awareness that becoming an efficient school leader necessitates "a demanding set of attitudes, attributes, skills, knowledge, and understanding for which school leaders must be developed and prepared." The perception of leadership of schools as a unique career is thus a key component in the rising interest in education leadership training and learning provided to school leaders.

Differences and Changes in Global Education Contexts

As a result of the effects and pressures of globalization, education leaders in particular, and schools in general confront ever-increasing expectations (Bush and Moorosi, 2011, p. 63; Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012; Pont, 2020). Political, economic and social development have influenced education systems in most European nations, increasing the demand for educational leadership training for leaders in all education system. For instance, in most European and developed countries, learning of leadership focuses on the planning of leadership continuity amid the impending retirement of active school leaders whereas in Africa and other developing countries, there are a lot of inexperienced school principals (Bush & Moorosi, 2011, p. 62;

Bush, 2019) who are overwhelmed by the complexity of and changes to the responsibilities of the office they occupy and these determine the educational leadership training focus in such places. This is in consonance with the opinion of Crow et al. (2008, p. 143) when they opine that educational leadership training ought to concentrate on and speak to the particular demands and difficulties of a given education setting while also allowing for “international perspective in learning with and from others” (Lumby et al., 2008, p. xxx).

Due to globalization effects and the changes it has brought to education leadership, Bush and Jackson (2002, p. 427) report that all the fifteen (15) global school leadership training programmes studied had the similarity of developing distinct models that meet their common demands for improved school leadership quality. These distinctions, they conclude, were due to significantly diverse social, political and career contexts which resulted to their provisions being adjusted to the specific needs of each studied society. It is hence critical to recognize and remember that what operates in one nation and her specific context and situation may or may not be workable in another.

The Rationale for Investigating Educational Leadership Training Programmes

Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 59) make a statement which, in the opinion of the researcher, is an ideal opening for the rationale for examining the content, influence and methodology of educational leadership learning.

The discourse on effective leadership for school improvement brings under the spotlight the significance of leadership preparation and development and whether training programmes equip leaders with the necessary skills they need to address current and emerging school challenges. If school leadership does make a difference in the outcomes of schooling, it follows then that researchers should therefore continually be asking critical questions about how school leaders are

prepared for the role, what type of leadership development they receive and what impact training has (Bush & Moorosi, 2011, p. 59).

Understanding the aspects that hinder or contribute to educational leadership learning as contended by Smylie et al. (2005, p. 141) as well as Osman and Miller (2022) is vital because it is only with such comprehension that the most efficient and effective educational leadership learning methodology and content can be pinpointed and expanded. They concur that for the purpose of improving the content, methodology and focus of educational leadership learning programmes and thus the outcomes and impacts of such learning on education leaders' practice, there is need for global scholars to continuously study the various facets of educational leadership learning.

The conceptualization of "blind spots" and "blank spots" which are taken from Heck and Hallinger (1999, p. 141) are used by Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 60) in the explanation of the rationale for the sustained investigation into the learning of educational leadership. Based on Heck and Hallinger (1999, p. 141) definition, blind spots are areas in which pre-existing information obstructs researchers from noticing alternative aspects of the topic under examination while "blank spots are areas where minute or no research has been done on a specific phenomenon".

According to the Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 61), three blank spots have been pointed out in this research field. They include first the fact that in spite of the extensive studies already carried out in a vast number of nations by various researchers in this field, a significant number of individual nations from around the globe were left out (Kheang, O'Donoghue & Clarke, 2018). This has resulted in a literature gap that necessitates more thorough and comprehensive nation by nation comparative assessment and analyses that would contribute to cross-cultural learning. Second, they argue that the present and available research on educational leadership

learning is mostly concerned with the developed and western nations' view points of the topic and is weak on realities from developing nations (Edoloverio et al., 2025). This, yet further emphasizes the significance of such studies in developing nations. The third blank spot is the wide range of difficulties and challenges that developing nations face in comparison to those encountered by nations in the developed and advanced world. Their contention is that while leadership learning in developed nations seem to be focused on leadership succession in light of the impending retirement of its education leaders, there exists a huge number of untrained school leaders in Africa (Zaki, 2020). These school leaders are inundated by the responsibilities they are expected to take on and these factors are the main determinants of the educational leadership learning there.

Furthermore, more studies are required to broaden and include all components of educational leadership learning for leaders at different tiers of leadership inside the school. This is because referring to Lumby et al. (2008) as well as Styf et al. (2026), a bulk of existing material on this topic concentrates on the principal, with little on the development of other tiers or levels of educational leadership. In the Nigerian situation, it translates to a paucity of research on the educational leadership learning of key players in schools, for instance, vice principals (academic and administrative), heads of school, educators and school coordinators. This lack of research is described by Smylie et al. (2005, p. 139) and Vos et al. (2020) as serious deficiency which the researcher hopes would be addressed to a reasonable extent by this study.

Lastly, Lumby et al. (2008) as well as Mittelmeier and Yang (2022) opine that another reason for the continued research into educational leadership learning is the necessity for such learning to be internationalized. Lumby et al. (2008, p. xxx) promote the notion that while focusing on particular needs, contexts and challenges, educational leadership training should

be done with the aim of promoting its global outlook in what they refer to as “learning with and from each other”.

Summarily, as an addition to the above presented rationale, this research will make an attempt to fill the blank spots pointed out by Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 59). This will be accomplished by contributing significantly to the available literature on educational leadership learning from the perspective of developing countries with specific focus on Nigeria.

The Value of Leadership Learning to Global Leaders in Education

An appropriate opening statement to this section which would serve as an introduction to literature review on how much value education leaders place on educational leadership learning, as well as their perceptions and experiences with such learning would be those offered by Crawford and Earley (2011, p. 107) and Bush (2012, p. 4). As was earlier stated, individual leaders' values, behaviour, and attitudes may or may not change as a result of exposure to and involvement in leadership development programs. Even in the eventuality of any changes, they may or may not result in positive differences in their leadership practice. These positive differences to leadership practices when they do occur, in turn, may or may not result in improved students' outcomes (Crawford & Earley, 2011, p. 107). Bush (2012, 2019), on the other hand, states that despite widespread belief, proof of the impact and value of such programs remain equivocal.

In the heavily stratified and centrally governed system of education within the socialist development in China, contemporary educational leadership learning (both preparation and development) was said to have begun in the early 1990s. This was after the 1989 “On strengthening the training of principals of Elementary and Secondary Schools Nationwide” publication by the Education Commission of the State (now renamed Education Ministry) (Feng, 2005, p. 13). Despite this, principals' training in China still faces some problems

(Ribbins and Zhang, 2004, p. 142; Gruijters, 2022). With this flaw in mind, it is not unexpected that the majority of the twenty-five (25) headmasters in the rural areas in Zhang's research on ambition hinted that their experience had been frustrating, difficult, demanding and tough (Ribbins & Zhang, 2004, p. 142). It appears, Zhang suggests, as if the Chinese education system have paid less attention to principals when compared to educators. The refinement of the Chinese educational leadership learning programmes, he further suggests, could be attained with fresh and inventive policies that are founded on solid research, an idea supported by several others (Davis et al., 2005, p. 8; Huber, 2010, p. 230; Guo, Huang & Zhang, 2019; Mukaram et al., 2025).

Hale and Moorman (2003, p. 2) report that leaders of schools in the USA perceived that administrative training (used in America to describe leadership learning) does not deserve a pass mark grade and that twenty years of hard work and efforts to alter the way school leaders are trained and groomed for their roles had yielded insignificant results. In 2005, two years after this report, the federal department of education criticized the leadership preparation programs for a lack of purpose, direction, and consistency (Orr, 2011, p. 115). The overall consensus seems to be that the programmes were overly theoretical and completely unrealistic as well as unconnected to the daily activities and roles of leaders in American schools (Hale & Moorman, 2003, p. 4). This is validated by Hess and Kelly (2005, p. 3) when they produced a detailed report on the results of research done by the head of Columbia University's Teachers College that discovered that a large part of educational administrative programmes ranges from insufficient to shocking; even at some of the nation's top universities.

A latter study conducted by Ballenger, Alford, McCune and McCune (2009, p. 533) investigates the experiences and perceptions of graduates of a substantially redesigned university level education learning and leadership programmes at the Austen State University.

This study was conducted bearing in mind the features of an ideal education leadership learning. These features include a contemporary and consistent curriculum, an emphasis on instructional leadership, significant and high-quality school-based experiences provided by way of real-world internship activities, as well as enthusiastic and highly qualified presenters and academic staff. The findings of this study unveil a substantial favourable relationship between the redesigned program's elements and the graduates' perspectives and experiences regarding their own learning outcomes as it relates to the leadership aspect of the programme (Ballenger et al., 2008, p. 533). This result does not just validate the improvements made to the institution's educational leadership learning programme but likewise, to a significant measure, the recommended elements of exemplary educational leadership learning by Davis et al. (2005) as well as Orr (2011).

The four-year-old educational leadership learning programme for newly recruited school leaders (principals) in Hong Kong is evaluated by The Education and Manpower Bureau of the country in 2004. To gather data for their research, they conducted interviews (focus group) with individuals who had finished the program between 2000 and 2003 (Walker & Dimmock, 2006, p. 126). The significance of the study according to Walker and Dimmock (2006, p. 125) stems from the idea that it investigated the principals' impressions of the programme's impacts after its completion. These researchers summarize the findings based on the principals' major opinions of what they appreciated about the program. They include:

- i. The learning was centered on real-life and real time challenges and issues.
- ii. The learning was linked to distinct leadership and school context.
- iii. The flexibility of the materials, methodologies, and learning strategies to fit the expectations and requirements of the participating school leaders in their distinct environment and at their individual level.

- iv. The collaboration, mentorship, and contact with both students and experienced school leaders.
- v. The accorded respect to the relevant and existing values, knowledge and abilities of persons who took part in the programme.
- vi. The chance to develop interpersonal relationships, form networks and bond together with other students and
- vii. The provision of various opportunities for sharing and reflection (Walker & Dimmock (2006, p. 1236).

In general, Walker and Dimmock (2006, p. 131) conclude that the participants tended to prefer dynamic and active engagement in activities of learning that have a real-world feel and focus to those given in organized learning situations.

The findings of an assessment of the New Visions program given by the National College for School Leadership (NCSL) in England is reported by Bush, Briggs, and Middlewood (2006, p. 185). The graduates' perceptions regarding this non-university based programme is relevant to this study as the participants' report show that three areas were valuable to them particularly in their responsibilities as leaders of schools. These areas are namely:

- i. The opportunity to communicate and share problems with leaders from other schools.
- ii. The assistance provided by mentors and the faculty of NCSL and
- iii. The opportunities to learn from and collaborate with leaders from other schools.

The participants also report considerable improvements in their professional growth and confidence, their capacity to influence other people as well as an increase to their comprehension of educational leadership practice and theory. With specific reference to their style of leadership, the participants indicate that there was a shift of trend from a centralized

leadership style toward a more shared style of leadership and a focused interest on leadership for learning (Bush et al., 2006, p. 193). Although England's National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) has faced criticism for lacking college experience as well as its disconcerting nature, participants in this program expressed particular satisfaction with the program's individualized nature and the use of coaching and peer networking as learning tools.

The evaluation of a programme with strongly professional emphasis, the Scottish Qualification for headship (SQH), is reported by Menter, Holligan and Mthenjwa (2006, p. 13).

The following are detailed by the graduates who took part:

- i. An augmentation of their professional leadership skills.
- ii. Improved leadership effectiveness.
- iii. Improved capacity to assist others.
- iv. The enhancement of their professional worth.

The graduates also indicate a rise in the worth they place on theory, reading and research as well as an improvement in their understanding of the social and collaborative aspects of effective leadership.

The experiences and perceptions of graduates of an educational leadership learning programme which was established by a school/university district partnership in California state of the USA is reported by Donmoyer, Donmoyer and Galloway (2012, p. 36). The programme which is designated as excellent because it incorporates many of the characteristics of an ideal educational leadership learning programme had interesting outcomes. Some of the program's elements were particularly regarded and appreciated by the graduates. These elements include:

- i. The program's emphasis on the necessity for leaders to be instructional leaders, as well as its focus on distributed and cooperative leadership.
- ii. The employment of case studies and group projects.

iii. The employment of class/year groups and the opportunity for leadership socialization that this provided.

In summary, this review highlights the participants' appreciation for the focus of educational leadership learning on instructional and distributed leadership as well as the growth in their professional lives and self-confidence as school leaders. It also portrays the sense that participants on a general note experienced and valued the opportunity to collaborate with leaders from other schools and to discuss learning activities and difficulties related to their leadership identity and practice.

The Relationship Between Leadership and Various Aspects of School Improvement

The significance of leadership in influencing the outcome of learners cannot be overemphasized. The functions of leadership involve various principal areas such as creation of expectations and goals, promotion of teachers' professional development and learning, management of teaching and learning activities, effective planning and ensuring the completion of school curriculum, fostering a supportive and conducive environment for instructional activities as well as educational resource allocation. Irrespective of a school leader's style of leadership, Sunaengsih et al. (2019) posit that efficient leadership is essential in the planning and implementation of school improvement plans, of which the improvement of students' learning outcome is of paramount importance. Depending on the needs and contexts of a particular school, leaders can adopt a style or combination of them to drive the improvement of their schools. Tariq (2024) states that it is a globally recognised fact that leadership is essential in promoting school improvements and reform through primarily improving the performance of learners. In a bid to achieve the aim mentioned above, school leaders focus on enhancing the quality of teaching for attainment of learners' outcome as well as the promotion

of their schools' overall capabilities and development, which is one of their fundamental responsibilities in achieving school improvement.

In as much as there are other aspects involved in school improvement, it is important to state that these other aspects may not be possible to participate and engage effectively in activities within the school without the presence of a functional leadership within these schools. This means that the functionality of these various other aspects involved in school improvement is directly proportional to the effectiveness of leadership within the schools in question. These other aspects include:

Community Participation

A critical aspect involved in school improvement is the participation of the community in achieving a school's vision. Here, community refers to "the immediate host environment of the school and the parents of the students, their families, organizations, businesses and every individual who holds a stake in the school" (Obasi, 2022). Usually, a community is bound by an interest common to all; encompassing a group (language or ethnic) and a culture which holds unique values to be inherited by future generations. Therefore, community involvement in school is, according to Preston (2013), "any student-focused or school-community connection that directly or indirectly supports the students' physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs." In Nigeria, the significance of school-community interaction, involvement and partnership have been outlined in the National Policy on Education (2004), with the school being the focal point of community life. This is buttressed by the Federal Ministry of Education (2016) when it states that "community involvement in education is an essential component of pupils'/students' academic success that boosts students' attendance and aspirations and decreases issues of indiscipline among students." This basically implies the encouragement of the members of a community in the evaluation of a school and its activities as well as the

planned programmes for its improvement, of which the school leadership (principals, vice principals, deputy vice principals and others in positions of leadership) are the main drivers.

Community participation in schools “extends beyond parental involvement to encompass broader societal participation in educational endeavour” (Eden, Onyebuchi & Adeniyi, 2024). The partnership between schools and their surrounding communities play an essential function in enhancing learning not just in schools but at home as well (Stefanski, Valli & Johnson, 2016). In addition to this, it optimizes allocation and utilization of resources, helps in the identification and resolution of barriers to school progress, tailored curriculum design to suit the workplace demands and needs of the community, promotion of a feeling of ownership between the two parties, expansion of opportunities for learning, enhanced education access, encourages decision making that is based on adequate information as well as the promotion of children’s wellbeing amongst others. All in all, this partnership enhances the capabilities of schools.

In contrast to the above assertion, Fitriah et al. (2013) as well as Spier, González and Osher (2018) argue that a good number of educational institutions operate in isolation based on the belief of the community that the education of students is the sole responsibility of the school thus further polarizing the relationship schools and its leadership on the one hand and their neighbouring communities on the other hand. It is therefore important that school leaders acknowledge the existence of this opposite point of view in order to increase efforts at fostering a collective consciousness. Deventer (2009) suggests that an important component of encouraging the transmission of values is the community’s active involvement in school-related issues, including “the governance of educational institutions for the betterment of the students.” This is connected to the assertion by Hands (2023) that “education is a collaborative

endeavour involving both the school and the community and that mutual support is provided by individuals in order to collectively attain desired objectives.”

Essentially, the community and the school leadership have a symbiotic relationship that is defined by mutually beneficial assistance in that the schools and their leaders help the community achieve its development goals while the community assists the school leaders in accomplishing their vision as well as the mission of the school. Also, while the community supports schools physically through provision of security, labour for constructions/development and financially in the payment of teachers’ salaries as well as other school necessities, school leaders avail the school buildings for community meetings and evacuation shelters in case of disasters and also provides lessons for adults seeking a chance at education (Myende, 2019; Cleveland et al., 2023). These show that inside a community, school leaders assume a focal role just as much as the community itself. Furthermore, school-community partnership “enrich the educational experience by bridging the gap between classroom learning and real-world application, thereby nurturing well-rounded individuals equipped with the skills necessary for societal contribution” (Eden, Onyebuchi & Adeniyi, 2024). Therefore, for effective operation and implementation of improvement programmes, school leaders must develop a structured approach that promotes a firm and lasting relationship with its neighbouring community.

Parenting and Parental Involvement

Brooks (2012) defines parenting as “the intricacies of raising a child which promotes and supports the physical, cognitive, social, emotional, and educational development from infancy to adulthood.” According to Kretchmar-Hendricks (2025), it is “the process of raising children and providing them with protection and care in order to ensure their healthy development into childhood.” When students struggle with learning, their parents would most

likely participate actively in school events and maintain open lines of communication with the teachers of their children as well as the school leadership (Kirkhaug et al., 2013). Contrarily, parents, more often than not, become less involved when their children perform well academically. Thus, it could be inferred from the foregoing that there is some correlation between parental involvement and school improvement. This assertion by Kirkhaug et al. (2013) indicates that the involvement of parents in schools tend to be more reactive than proactive. However, various researchers have opined that parents should be involved proactively in their children's affairs at school (Baker et al., 2016, p. 179; Grolnick & Pomerantz, 2022; Kantova, 2024; Sivabalan et al., 2024; Zhou et al., 2025).

More so, for a school and its leadership to reap the benefits of community and parental involvement, the instructional leader, that is the principal, ought to be acquainted with the various community units such as the family and communicate clearly to each community member and the whole community as well on how their participation benefits the school (Kladifko, 2013, p. 55; Myende, 2019). According to Day, Gu and Sammons (2016), the advantages of this style of leadership include strict home study compliance, better academic performance of students, personalization and timely curriculum completion as well as greater interest and involvement of parents in the activities/events of the school. On the part of the learners, more parental involvement in the educational activities of their children brings about increased attendance at school and lessons, consistent assignment and homework completion, improvement of self-discipline and self-esteem as well as greater motivation for academics leading to improvement of academic performance, which is the ultimate goal of school leadership (Kimaro & Machumu, 2015; Yaseen, Zaman & Rasheed, 2017; Flores & Perez, 2022).

It is factual that parenting in recent times are “characterized by numerous challenges and stressors” (Lei et al., 2025). However, Olsen and Fullen (2012) insist that the most essential determinant of academic excellence is families’ ability to create a supportive learning environment at home and not “income or social status”. They continue that setting the academics and expectations bar high as well as the active participation of parents in the education of their children both at home and school are crucial factors for educational success. However, the degree to which parents should be involved in their children’s academics is still a subject of global debate. While the expectation of parents is that the school as well as its leadership provide guidance towards how and when to be involved as well as what activities to be involved in, the reality is that some school leaders expect parents to use their discretion (Dačevová & Němec, 2023). Some researchers have argued that in as much as every community member has equal rights and chance to become a leader within the community and be involved in school affairs, it is incumbent upon the leaders piloting the affairs of these schools to determine the extent of the involvement of parents due to differences in education level and experience. As a result, school leaders ought to carefully plan on the modalities for parental involvement under these situations.

Communication

Effective communication is an essential aspect of school improvement. This is not limited to within the schools and amongst staff members but also extends to homes as it positively impacts students, parents, teachers and the school leadership at large equally. Various schools frequently use a variety of methods in sharing information about their programmes and students' academic progress. It is important that the leaders of these institutions critically assess the effectiveness of their communication strategies, especially regarding the accommodation of parents who have weak English language skills in order to

maintain openness and clarity in either direction. Furthermore, school leaders must actively involve parents, community members and other school staff in decisions involving the curriculum of their children and students. This calls for a thorough analysis of the many avenues of communication such as report cards, phone conversation, newsletters, parents' teachers' association (PTA) meeting, progress reports, communication book and other written correspondences with the purposeful intention of promoting inclusivity and productive interaction with parents who speak different languages (Kelty & Wakabayashi, 2020; Lawal, 2021). In recent times, more sophisticated communication channels are being used by schools such as emails, websites and social networking service (SNS) like WhatsApp, Facebook, Telegram, Twitter and Instagram amongst others (Williams, 2022). As Hands (2023) puts it, effective communication between school leadership and community is a panacea for successful relationship and thus excellent for school improvement.

Decision-making

Decision making plays an indispensable and crucial role in school improvement programmes (Schildkamp, 2019). This is because no matter the loftiness of a school improvement plan, decisions on how and when such plans would be implemented must be made by the school governing bodies (SGB). Various members of a community who are elected democratically constitute the SGB. According to Nwosu and Joshua (2017), its members are in three categories namely appointed members (the school principal), elected members (parents and other school community members) and co-opted members (invited by elected members but do not vote on decisions). Usually, the SGB communicate important information and decisions regarding any improvement plans to parents and the wider community (Amakyi, 2017). The SGB are responsible for assessment and appraisal of school improvement programmes and other school programmes, welfare advocacy, perusal of school budget,

recruitment of personnel and also serve as advisors for the school leaders, students and families (Kapelela, Mislav & Manyengo, 2024). In essence, a school leader's decision-making process involves collaboration between them and the broader community wherein perspectives and thoughts regarding any plans for improvement or other issues affecting the school in general are shared for deliberation (Gerrard & Savage, 2023). However, the processes of decision making vary from school to school and is dependent on the guiding philosophy of the schools involved as well as the strategies of their leaders.

Collaboration

Cowan, Swearer and Sheridan (2004), view collaboration between the school leaders and home as:

A reciprocal dynamic process that occurs between at least one parent (or guardian) and at least one individual within the school system (educators, administrators, psychologists) who share in decision making regarding mutually determined goals and solutions related to a student for whom all parties share interest and responsibility.

On their own part, Olsen and Fuller (2012) define collaboration in schools as “a range of initiatives implemented and encouraged by schools with the objective of enabling parents to actively participate in the educational progress of their children.” Knapp (2008) asserts that an institution/organization as a whole is affected by the culture of collaboration. At school, children not only grow, learn and develop, but also benefit immensely when school leaders, teachers, their parents and other community members collaborate in positive ways that encourage development and learning (Garbacz et al., 2023; Kaplan, 2025; Vorlíček et al., 2025). This is because learners originate from families and communities which necessitates the need for collaboration amongst these above-mentioned parties. Researchers have argued that

the question of which is more important between the school and the family has become invalid in today's educational landscape but that rather the collaborative relationships between the two parties have become an ongoing agenda for research (Epstein & Sheldon, 2016). They have also argued that the main determinants of individual students' development are education, family and community. Combining these three elements and contexts play a significant function in the educational experiences of children. Therefore, the provision of pertinent information by school leaders to families and the community on school strategies and programmes focused on the improvement of students' learning such as tutorials, as well as equal opportunities for engaging in community activities are crucial. "Effective collaboration is associated with positive outcomes for students and is a key component of equitable educational opportunities" (Griffiths et al., 2021).

The level of involvement of families and communities has a direct relationship on the quality and success of school improvement. Active collaboration between school leaders and families have been known to produce positive results in students such as acquisition of social skills and language learning as well as a reduction in behavioural issues, improvement of retention and development of abilities. However, the principal/school leader is the one who bears the main responsibility in ensuring that the community and every family commits to collaboration and thus in the realization of the mission and vision of schools.

Instructional Activities

One of the fundamental aspects of school improvement involves instructors planning and initiating the teaching and learning activities through first establishing the contents to be delivered and then the instructional methods and strategies. In other words, the contents of the curriculum must first be determined by the instructional leader, who is the school leader/principal, before considerations for instructional strategies, methods and applications. It

is significant to note that in planning the content of the curriculum, the instructional leader in collaboration with teachers should consider some factors such as the number of subjects taught in their schools, special needs and unique characteristics of the individual learners, behavioural changes desired as well as the set standard of education in the local education authority, district and the country in general. In support of the need for consideration of these factors, Islam et al. (2025) assert that the methodology and contents of instructions presented to students play a pivotal role in improving their chances for educational success. Therefore, it is dependent on instructional leaders and their team members (teachers) that all teaching and learning activities promote an effective and constructive environment of learning for their learners.

To ensure that instructional activities are effective and worthwhile, teachers ought to have a good mastery of their subject areas as well as a comprehensive understanding of the curriculum (Ndlovu, 2025). In addition, they are encouraged to not only develop instructional aids and extra tools that can facilitate students' learning, they should devote their time to planning lessons meticulously. This lesson planning process should consider the learners' needs, the objectives of the lesson, teaching methods, classroom situations and contexts as well as the available teaching aids. Lesson planning process is essential as it not only helps the teacher in managing, strategizing and organizing their lessons effectively, but also provides substitute teachers with a protocol to follow in the case of an emergency or absence of the main teacher and gives insight to the supervisors/instructional leader into the strategies being employed by the main teacher.

The next step after the planning of lesson is its implementation according to the planned design. In achieving this step, the teacher needs certain skills such as the capability to present information clearly, active listening skills, ability to monitor progress and to assess students' conduct/performance, capacity to enforce rules and respect as well as good questioning skills.

The assessment of students' conduct/performance is crucial because it helps in ascertaining the degree of attainment of the stated desired objectives. According to Zou et al. (2024), "assessment include a range of methods and tools used to evaluate student learning outcomes, progress, and performance and plays a vital role in enhancing effective learning and teaching practices in educational settings." Amua-Sekyi (2016) views assessment as "all activities that teachers and students undertake to get information that can be used to alter teaching and learning." It assists instructors in evaluating learners' progress as well as in identifying areas of attention and focus through useful feedback from learners. Furthermore, it helps in identifying learners who are ready to be promoted to the next learning stage, in diagnosing any identified problems of learners, in communicating with parents regarding students' performance as well as in identifying the most suitable instructional activities for learners (Ambon et al., 2024; Röhl, Bijlsma & Schwichow, 2025). Zou et al. (2024) stress that assessment and evaluation detect any inconsistencies between the learners' past knowledge and the intended instructional objectives and allow learners and their instructors to cooperate actively in bridging any identified learning gaps.

Sundberg (2017) states that the process of assessment begins with vividly defining the instructional objectives which in turn aids the selection of the most suitable method of assessment out of the two widely known methods – formative and summative assessment. Formative assessment refers to "frequent, interactive assessments of students' development and understanding to recognize their needs and adjust teaching appropriately" (Ismail et al., 2022). On the other hand, summative assessment refers to "an overall judgement of student achievement against established standards or learning objectives at the end of a learning period" (Chand & Pillay, 2024). Formative assessment is employed for immediate interaction and informed judgement inside the classroom in order to assist learners attain the set objectives

of learning through feedback and questions while summative assessment is employed in assessing students' general learning outcomes towards the end of a course, unit or module (Brown, 2022; Tobiason & Lavine, 2025). While formative assessment supports learning progress of each individual learner within a particular time period, summative assessment provides requisite information to stakeholders such as parents, educators and education bodies/authorities, on learners' academic accomplishment and progress.

In addition to the above discussions on instructional activities as an aspect of school improvement, it should be noted that instructional leaders as well as their team members (teachers) are expected to engage the students in active learning in order to obtain the maximum expected results from them. According to the Federal Ministry of Education (2016) of Nigeria, learning strategies considered to be active in nature promote positive learning outcomes as an element of the wider school improvement process. Active learning, according to Martinez and Gomez (2025, p. 43), can be defined as a "largely new paradigm of education that transforms the focus of education from teaching students, where they are passive recipients of the information relayed by the tutors, to a setting where students are engaged in the learning process as participants." Put differently, it includes teaching strategies that demands learners to perform an action and reflect on it. Active learning includes activities such as case study, group collaboration, discussion, problem-solving tasks as well as writing tasks that go beyond simple memorization to those that include synthesis, analysis and evaluation. The emphasis on active learning as opposed to other forms of learning is due to the belief that learners are more likely to acquire skills and new knowledge inside the classroom during these active activities (Bonache, Lorenzo & Rosales, 2025). Various research has also shown that traditional pedagogical strategies are inefficient as learners' progress rapidly deteriorate if they are unable to gain knowledge quickly using this method. Furthermore, the inefficiency of traditional

pedagogy has been attributed to its delivery of information simultaneously to every learner, being teacher-focused and its singular approach to teaching (Wang, 2022; Hu, 2024).

In recent years, pedagogical approaches that are learner-focused have gained popularity because of their priority on the learner. Here, the teacher's role is not that of control but more of a facilitator who encourages learners to be the drivers of their individual learning. According to Kuok (2023) and Kumari (2024), learning approaches that are student-centred enable educational experiences that foster meaningful and profound learning and help students connect with one another. These approaches are also becoming the priority in some African countries such as Ethiopia where her Ministry of Education (MoE) promotes the use of various active learning strategies amongst teachers. Of particular reference is the second standard of teaching and learning stipulated in the guidelines on school improvement programme in Ethiopia, that is, "the use of active learning methods in the classroom to realize improved learning results which are defined as group work, individual assignments, reciting, games and question and answer among others" (Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2010). Within this second standard, school instructors at various level of education are encouraged to employ a range of active learning strategies inside classrooms in Ethiopia because of their capability to improve students' learning. The following active learning methodologies have been advocated for application within schools in Ethiopia (Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2010):

- The use of strategies suitable for large class sizes but still efficient for smaller classes. One approach of specific importance in this regard is class discussion because of its capability to engage learners in thinking critically and reasoning logically while at the same time assessing their individual perspectives and that of their classmates.
- Think-pair-share which basically involves learners devoting their time to thinking about or reasoning out the teacher's presentation first and then discussing such presentation in pairs

(or a small group of more than two students) before it is then shared to the whole group/class by means of discussion.

- “Learning cell” (Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2010, p. 13) which involves two students having a discussion by means of a question and answer session on a common material they have read. The first step in this approach is to read a particular section of a learning material and then jot down questions based on what has been read. Next, the students are paired randomly and then one of the pairs brings up a topic for discussion by asking one of their questions. The students take turn in asking questions after answering the question of others. In this approach, the teacher acts as a supervisor who goes around the various groups and supervises them by answering the difficult questions and giving constructive feedback to students.
- The use of games is another zestful approach to learning as it not only encourages learning and understanding of the learning contents but also creates an enjoyable environment of learning during this process as well.
- Collaborative learning in groups: Here, students are divided into groups of not less than three and not more than six per group. The teacher then gives a project/assignment to each group to work on as a team. This approach is particularly ideal for active learning as it encourages active learning in small groups (Ethiopian Ministry of Education, 2010).

It is worth noting that the above mentioned strategies are not the only available active learning approaches as there are others such as “problem-based learning and flipped classrooms amongst others” (Martinez & Gomez, 2025). Therefore, the choice of the ideal active learning strategies should be determined by teachers depending on class size, learning requirements of students, learning contents as well as the particular subject area to be learnt. These various aspects can potentially guide the development of comprehensive and effective programmes of

school improvement with opportunities for partnership between families and the school leadership that could result in the positive academic performance of students.

The Ideal Level of Educational Leadership Training

The discussion about what level of educational leadership learning should ideally be provided, whether professional or academic, is essential for this study. Just as there seems to be considerable dissent on the kinds of current as well as future school leaders required, and what knowledge, qualities and skills they should have and what their training requirements should be (Crawford & Earley, 2011, p. 108), there also seems to be considerable difference of opinion on whether a professional or an academic level of qualification is more suitable for educational leadership learning. Fundamentally, the difference in both is that an academic certification emphasizes hugely the theoretical study of a certain field (New York State Education, 2007; Ashwin & Rosewell, 2018) while a professional certification emphasizes the proficiency in the practices as well as contents of a particular discipline (University of California, Berkeley, 2015).

One of the difficulties in developing educational leadership learning programmes, as posited by Crawford and Earley (2011, p. 108) as well as Osman and Miller (2022), has been the inability to achieve an equilibrium between the practical and the academic. If the academic proficiency is taken to be a reflection of the content and theoretical aspects of such programme and the practical proficiency is taken to be a reflection of the way in which the content and theory are put into practice, then the difficulties described by these researchers are how to give leaders of schools both the theoretical understanding of leadership that are necessary and the chance to apply their newly acquired understanding practically.

The arguments involving academic versus professional levels of programmes and certifications are not modern. Brundrett, Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt (2006, p. 91) for instance,

report that in the 1980s, taught or module-based postgraduate degrees in educational management were becoming increasingly relevant in the United Kingdom. They state that the intended recipients of these degrees and programmes appeared to view their needs, which is development and learning in education management, as practical activities which is totally separate from theory. This was in spite of the fact that these degrees and programmes were considered as being academically-focused by the tertiary institutions who offered them. However, towards the beginning of the 1990s, there was growing recognition that the expertise and skills both developed and needed in the school environment ought to be viewed as a combined component of academic studies. These recognitions later bred support for the continuance of masters' degree programmes that have a wider emphasis on chances for reflection as well as for professional and personal development of students. These programmes were still able to maintain rigour academically while still meeting the needs and demands of educators professionally (Brundrett, Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt, 2006, p. 92). To buttress this debate, the National Professional Qualification for Headship (NPQH) in the United Kingdom, as another example, has been critiqued for lacking applicability (Waters, 2023, p. 13). It is noteworthy that the NPQH was implemented as a professional qualification and as such differs from the specialist academic masters' degrees offered at universities (National Professional Qualifications Guidance, 2023).

The issue remains, what is the appropriate and ideal education degree and learning of leadership required? Bush and Jackson (2002, p. 425) contend that school leaders and prospective education leaders ought to obtain their certifications at or close to masters' level since teaching as a profession is a graduate-level career in developed nations. Based on this premise, they state that it is hence reasonable that further learning should take place at postgraduate level. Brundrett, Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt (2006, p. 100) opine that school

leaders should have practical, research and theoretical knowledge in order to broaden the scope of their leadership. The position of a principal involves complex dynamic and practical processes that necessitates a greater knowledge of school culture and contexts (Department of Education, United States of America, 2025), higher order capabilities and a solid understanding of relevant research and theories. This collection of skills would enable leaders of schools in developing the practical and theoretical framework they need to guide their decision making and conduct (Bush, 1998, p. 328; 2019). Bush (1998; 2019) further argues that while most of the contents of academic and professional degrees are comparable, academic masters' degrees offered by specialized universities pay more attention to theory, research as well as comprehension and application of literature whereas professional degrees really do not.

In his 1998 recommendations regarding ways of boosting the NPQH, Bush (1998, p. 331) recommends that this necessary professional certification should be linked together to a suitable master's degree in order to allow school leaders flexibly choose between academic and professional development as much as necessary. Regarding this, Bush and Jackson (2006, p. 424) posit that although management and leadership are practical in nature, an understanding of pertinent research and theory is necessary for the development of such frameworks in addition to, and often more than, the principals' personal experience. This connection to theory, they mention, has been acknowledged in school leadership programmes in Singapore, Australia, the USA and Sweden (Bush & Jackson, 2006, p. 424).

In a similar vein, Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 63) contend that schools globally are subjected to ever-increasing expectations as a result of increased accountability and globalization. These expectations, they continue, need well trained and highly proficient leadership and that the complexity of the profession of school leadership may necessitate outstanding cognitive abilities like the ones developed and offered at post graduate level. To

buttress this point, a master's degree in school administration is a prerequisite for principal positions in the USA (Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). Also, the education leadership courses presented in Singapore and principal's leadership programme in Sweden both of which are provided in collaboration with institutions of higher learning are planned and offered at master's level (Bush & Moorosi, 2011, p. 424).

The kind of educational leadership learning programmes that have the prospects of lowering leadership conformity and the suitable-in-all-circumstances leadership style and such that trains school leaders for their own special social, national and school context and situation, according to Brundrett, Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt (2006, p. 100), are those that are consistent with "theory-research-practice". They also put forward that "if school leadership programmes are to be successful, they must integrate the best of academic programmes and take full account of emerging research evidence" (Brundrett, Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt, 2006, p. 100) without neglecting each school leader's distinct characteristics and context.

In Nigeria, as well as in some African nations, there are no specific images of what leadership of schools entails which in some ways point to the situated complexities of running schools in Africa (Christie, 2010, p. 708). This acknowledges and accounts for both the schools' and leaders' context, which is indispensable when providing opportunities for educational leadership training that will equip and suit a diverse group of school leaders for the complexities of their job. In the African setting, an ideal level of education leadership differs depending on context and the prevailing circumstances in such countries. For example, in the Northern part of Nigeria characterized by banditry, kidnapping and insurgency, requiring a post graduate diploma for principal position may be far-fetched.

Based on the above discussions, it is obvious that there is greater acknowledgement that educational leadership learning should be geared for postgraduate level regardless of its

purpose: development of active school leaders or as preparation for school leadership duties. However, not everyone agrees that educational leadership learning should be delivered at that level of education. The educational leadership learning programmes at post graduate level in the USA is criticised by Orr (2011, p. 116) for their out-of-date contents, ineffective teaching strategies and methodologies' lack of vision, purpose, concentration and academic rigour (Tatto, 2021). In their report, concerns were raised about whether the universities' education faculties are capable of overcoming the pressures within these institutions that dictate the utilization of traditional pedagogies contents and formats for delivering such leadership learning. Thus, they state that most universities, more often than not, use such programmes for more revenue generation (Orr, 2011, p. 116). It is this use of traditional contents, instructional strategies and formats that are pointed as the most pronounced impediment to postgraduate-level educational leadership learning. Indeed, if this is the reality, then the innovative strategies, for instance, action learning, problem-solving learning, participant-driven curriculum and learning communities which are the contents of contemporary literature on educational leadership learning could be significantly a herculean task for committed developers of leadership programmes to adopt than it initially looked (Orr, 2011, p. 117).

A diligent review of literature shows that although Bush is a strong supporter of post graduate educational leadership learning (Bush, 1998; Bush & Jackson, 2002; Bush & Moorosi, 2011), he himself has expressed strong concerns and reservations too. One of such concerns is that the alignment of the provisions of educational leadership learning with master's degree qualification engenders some basic questions regarding what exactly make up developmental and meaningful postgraduate work for practicing and prospective school leaders (Bush & Jackson, 2002, p. 425). Another concern is raised by Eacott (2013, p. 44) in what was referred to as the "highly problematic proliferation of professional standards and leadership capability

frameworks” and “an inherently anti-intellectualism” which undermine the usefulness and benefits of providing educational leadership learning at the university level to some extent.

Although concurring with Bush (1998; 2002; 2011) regarding the offering of postgraduate educational leadership learning, the researcher also considers and shares his worry as well as that of others that postgraduate qualifications seem to place a huge focus on theory at the expense of learning that is practical oriented. More so, it is the researcher’s belief that considering the distinct situation of Nigeria described above, all potential and current school leaders should have access to high-quality educational leadership learning programs across a range of qualifications or degree. Conclusively, it must be stated that the debate on the appropriate degree and ideal level of education for school leaders seem to support the decision of the researcher to focus his investigation on the perceptions of Nigerian teachers regarding the MEXT educational leadership learning which is offered at post graduate level. This is done with the expectation that the results would immensely contribute to the existing literature and the debate discussed above.

Summary of the First Section of the Literature Review

The chapter began with the study’s theoretical framework which is Engestrom Activity Theory. The discourse on selecting and applying Engestrom Activity Theory here started with a description of the theory as a versatile lens that allows researchers to focus on the different elements of an activity, which in this case is educational leadership training, with a view to defining and comprehending interdependence and interplay amongst these elements. Then, this chapter went on to provide a critical literature review in the educational leadership learning field. First, it discussed the significance of leadership learning to leaders in education. Six major reasons were identified as to why it is significant to education leaders. They include the changing responsibilities and roles of school leaders as the first coupled with the international

decentralization in education. The huge burden of being a 21st century school leader was pointed at as well as effective leadership for quality education and school effectiveness. The fact that school leadership is one-of-a-kind career was discussed as part of the reasons with differences in and changes to global education contexts as the final part.

Next, the discussion on the rationale for studying educational leadership learning was reported. “Blind spots” and “blank spots” as defined by Heck and Hallinger (1999) were utilized to call attention on why it is still necessary to research educational leadership learning. One of such blank spots they recognize which is relevant here is that in spite of the numerous extensive study on the phenomenon, only a handful of individual countries have been studied. This means that there is a literature gap with respect to developing countries (Edoloverio et al., 2025), including Nigeria. This literature gap is one that the researcher hopes to fill, hence the relevance of this study. Furthermore, this section focused on the value of leadership learning to leaders in education with specific reference to education leaders in China, the United States of America, Hong Kong, England and Scotland.

Finally, this chapter discussed the level at which an ideal educational leadership training should be provided and the discourse on whether such training ought to be provided at professional or academic level. The issue of maintaining a balance between both was highlighted by Crawford and Earley (2011, p. 108) while Bush and Jackson (2002, p. 425) contend that because teaching in most countries is a graduate level profession, leaders of schools and potential education leaders should obtain their education qualifications at master’s level. This is authenticated by Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 63) when they argue that due to the increasing pressure on schools, leaders of schools should acquire adequately prepared and highly skilled leadership as well as higher order cognitive abilities such as those offered at postgraduate level. From the review of available literature, it appears that since the dissenting

voices such as Orr (2011) are few, it is therefore reasonable to state that there is substantial acknowledgement that educational leadership level qualifications be pegged at postgraduate level.

The preceding sections reviewed available literature on the topic with the aim of answering the question of *who* and *what* are involved in educational leadership learning. This second section focuses on the *how* involved in educational leadership learning, namely the activity system's *tools* and *artefacts*, *division of labour* and *rules* by delving into the best and recent practices in educational leadership learning as well as the connection between practices and different learning theories.

Learning Theories and Educational Leadership Learning

The research on educational leadership learning has been relatively silent on the cognitive, psychological, and social mechanisms that school leaders use in development and learning (Firestone & Riehl, 2005, p. 144; Lingam, Dayal & Lingam, 2020). Put differently, many articles have not been published on the relationship between learning theories and educational leadership learning as well as the significance of such theories in the discussions on leadership learning in education. In view of the above, a discussion on educational leadership learning calls for both the *clarification of the concepts of learning and theories of learning* as well as *the connection between learning theories and educational leadership learning*. Primarily, the focus is on learning as the educational leadership training activity system's *object*. This is achieved by giving a review of learning theories as well as the significance of such learning theories on the research about leadership learning perceptions of the Nigerian teachers well as their experiences during the programme.

Learning and Learning Theories Concepts' Clarification

Much research posit that learning involves skills, knowledge, attitude, strategies as well as behaviour acquisition and modification and can be said to have taken place when someone is able to do activities in a different way (Schunk, 2012; Waters, 2023). Theory, on the other hand, is a valid scientific collection of principles proposed to describe a phenomenon. It also serves as bases for understanding observations and acts as a link between education and research (Babchuk & Boswell, 2023). With the above definitions in mind, and also considering the definition by McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 7) that theory is “a prediction and explanation of natural phenomenon”, then theory of learning could be described as a set of generalizations, concepts and principles that are determined scientifically which explain the means in which individuals acquire skills, knowledge, attitude and strategies that result to a lasting behavioural change or the capacity to carry out functions or tasks. An outline of the origins of knowledge and theories of learning will be provided in the following paragraphs.

Origins of Knowledge and Theories of Learning

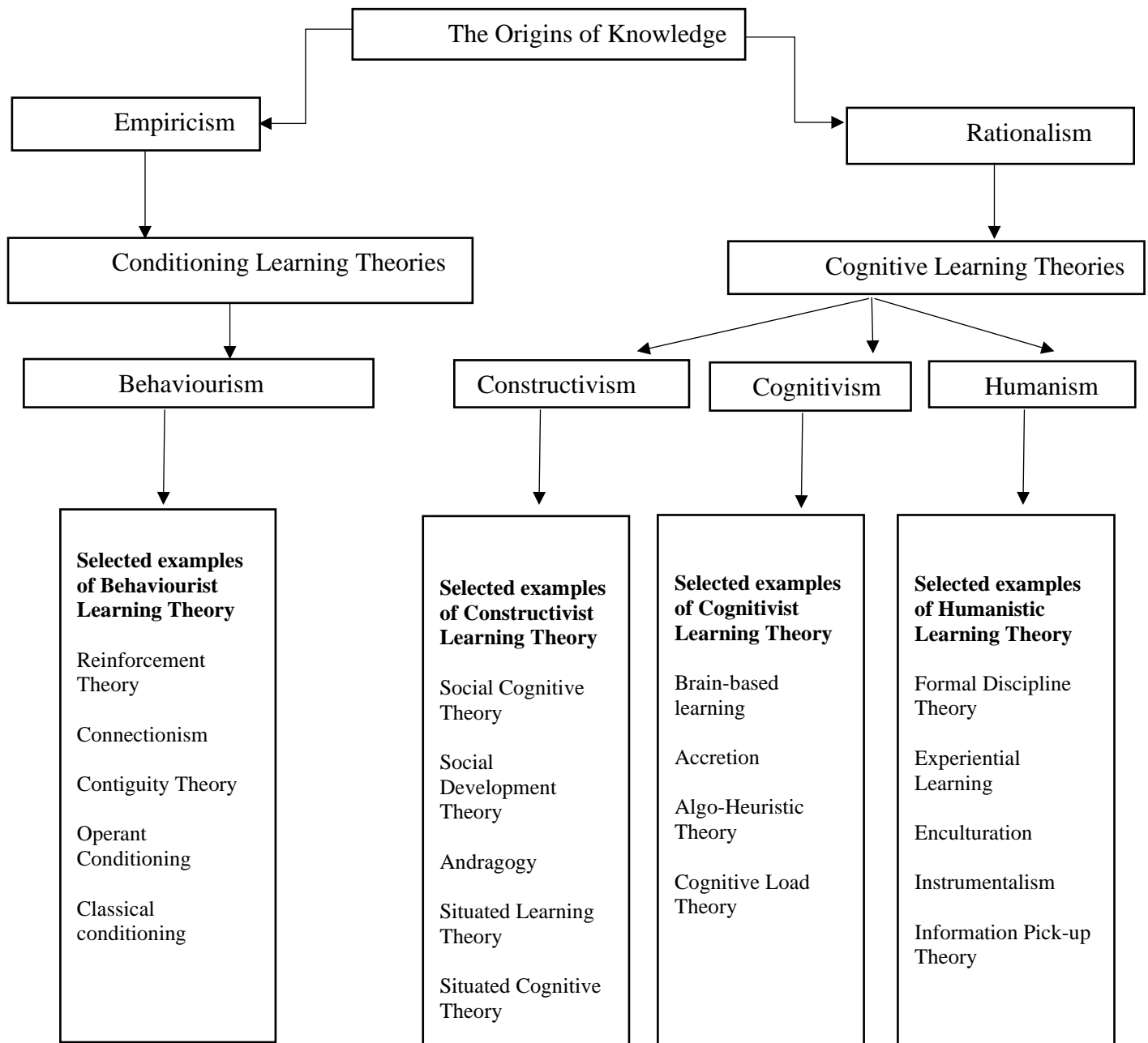
The origin of learning theory can be traced by beginning with an examination of the phenomenon from an epistemological standpoint. According to Kivunja and Kuyini (2017, p. 27), epistemology is a term used to explain how humans learn something; how they come to know the reality/truth or what constitutes knowledge (Cooksey & McDonald, 2011). The two primary points of view on the nature of learning and knowledge with respect to epistemology are empiricism and rationalism (Bryman, 2012, p. 30; Ylönen & Aven, 2023). As proposed by Aristotle, Hulme and Locke, empiricism often referred to as cognitivism simply means experience. Put in another way, it is the use of one's senses (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2011, p. 6) as the sole source of learning and knowledge (Schunk, 2012, p. 6; Ylönen & Aven, 2023). Contrastingly, rationalism asserts that knowledge is acquired through reason and that no

knowledge can be attained by the use of the senses – a view strongly supported by Descartes, Kant and Plato (Schunk, 2012, p. 5). It is therefore critical to note that the two epistemological viewpoints produced the two main schools of learning theories namely cognitive theory and conditioning theory (Leonard, 2002, p. 115; Waseem & Aslam, 2021). It is also noteworthy that the match between the schools of learning theories and the epistemological viewpoints is not perfect with overlap between the conditioning and cognitive schools of theory usually common (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2001, p. 47; Schunk, 2012, p. 7). Due to this overlap, learning theories are frequently classified according to their most prominent characteristics (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2001, p. 48; Leonard, 2002, p. 115).

There are four paradigms within the two schools of learning theories namely constructivism, cognitivism, humanism and behavioural learning paradigm. In clarifying both the role of learning theories in educational leadership learning theory and practice, as well as its function within the framework of this study, a discourse on the four paradigms of learning theory will be useful and is shown in figure 2. In general terms, most theories of learning posit that knowledge is not created from an inner vacuum, rather it is a product of social processes, which an individual then processes into hypotheses and understanding. Although these theories of learning also acknowledge the significance of teachers in the promotion of learning, their roles vary in different ways and capacities.

Figure 2

The Origins of Knowledge and Theories of Learning Adapted from Leonard (2002) and Schunk (2012)



Cognitive Learning Theories

Cognitive theories place a high premium on skill and knowledge acquisition, information processing and the construction of mental structures (Schunk, 2012, p. 22; Waseem & Aslam, 2021). Based on the viewpoint of the theories on cognitive learning, learning is an intellectual process that internally deals with “the construction, acquisition, organization, coding, rehearsal, storage and retrieval of information” (Hergenhahn & Olson, 2001, p. 47; Schunk, 2012, p. 23; Waseem & Aslam, 2021). Cognitive learning theories include:

Constructivism

Constructivism, which is based on Piaget’s work and reinforced by Vygotskian theory holds that learners build their own knowledge by interacting with their own experiences and ideas in both their social and physical environments (Chaille, 2008; Almulla, 2023). In some words of Schunk (2012, p. 229), much of what people learn and comprehend is built or formed by them. This learning theory views knowledge as a working hypothesis rather than as fact, with knowledge created inside individuals rather than imposed from without. Duffy and Jonassen (1992, p. 3) on their own part posit that the world derives its meaning from people rather than independently of human beings. Constructivism posits that since humans learn actively, teachers should not teach in the conventional sense of imparting knowledge but rather ought to develop conditions where students may become involved in their own learning actively (Leonard, 2002, p. 37; Schunk, 2012, 231; Almulla, 2023). In other words, teachers should foster dynamic learning situations in which students participate and develop knowledge. According to Duffy and Jonassen (1992, p. 4), such conditions and situations must take into account the reality that learners' cognitive processes exist in both social and physical contexts and must be contextualized accordingly. This *situated cognition* “involves relations between a person and a situation” (Schunk, 2012, p. 233) and also prescribes that instead of learning about

situations and concepts, learners ought to learn within situations and concepts (Leonard, 2002, p. 37; Schunk, 2012, p. 234).

Cognitivism

Hergenhahn and Olson (2001, p. 49) mention that cognitivism is credited to Piaget, Tolman and Bandura among others and seem to be more teacher-focused (Leonard, 2002, p. 97; Lockhart & Lockhart, 2022). Leonard (2002, p. 29) continues that the focal point of cognitivist learning theories is on “the learning inputs and outputs” that human mind processes in the same way as a computer system does to information. Furthermore, although success is determined by the extent to which the learners’ constructs and pictures of reality resemble those of the teacher, Kolesnik (1976, p. 16) points that different learners receiving the same stimuli in the same environment might respond differently based on what has been learned already. The teacher’s role here is to develop learning environments that are optimized and reduce cognitive loads. On the part of Bandura (1977, p. 12), this theory of learning holds that humans are neither buffeted by external stimuli nor pushed by inner forces rather that learning occurs as a result of the ongoing reciprocal interplay of environmental and personal variables, with self-regulatory, symbolic, and vicarious processes playing major roles. In this theory, it is believed that learning is said to have taken place when a person collects information from the outside world and then creates a mental picture or construct of such within themselves which depends on the precise transmission of the objective knowledge of reality from the teacher to the learner.

Humanism

Humanistic theory of learning, according to Kolesnik (1976, p. 17), centres on the unique human qualities of personality, for instance a person's potential for self-determination and distinctiveness. Put succinctly by Leonard (2002, p. 86), humans not only have the

autonomy and freedom to make decisions that benefit others but also the capability to progress morally, mentally, physically and spiritually. Humanistic learning theories have their roots in the teachings of Aristotle, Confucius, and Erasmus, and are backed by the works of Maslow and Rogers among others in the contemporary era. Here, personal learning experiences provide knowledge and the teacher's role is to encourage autonomy, self-concept, and the learners' capability to make personal decisions with the goal of becoming self-learned and self-directed (Leonard, 2002, p. 87; Renger & Macaskill, 2021). Just as empiricism and rationalism overlap in some ways, so also do humanism and constructivism in that both focus on helping learners construct content.

Conditioning Learning Theories

Behaviourism

Most of the conditioning learning theories fall under the behaviourism paradigm. Behavioural learning theories also known as association learning theories (Kolesnik, 1976, p. 14) which is developed at first by Watson and popularised by Pavlov explains learning as “a change in the rate, frequency of occurrence or form of behaviour” (Schunk, 2012, p. 21) and responses caused mostly by environmental variables (Kwon & Silva, 2020). It also believes that learning occurs due to association between stimuli and responses (Schunk, 2012, p. 21) propelled by “motivational factors in the form of needs, drives and impulses frequently operating below the level of consciousness” (Bandura, 1977, p. 2). Here, the role of the teacher is to develop stimulus and response scenarios that help in the acquisition of learning.

To sum up this examination of the four main paradigms of theories of learning, it is crucial to point out that despite educational practice and theories of learning sometimes considered as being distinct, they should be complementary. This is because effective instruction targeted at effective learning necessitates the identification of the optimum

theoretical perspectives for the types of learning being addressed (Schunk, 2012, p. 25). This reflects Davis et al. (2005, p. 9) demand for a thorough evaluation of learning theories when establishing educational leadership learning programs or opportunities. In an attempt at providing an answer to their own question, “Which paradigm is correct?”, Hergenhahn and Olson (2001, p. 50) contritely answered “probably all of them.”

The Relationship Between Theories of Educational Leadership Learning and Ideal Practice

A solid starting point for a deliberate and critical assessment of the link between learning theories and what the literature in the educational leadership learning field suggests as the characteristics and features of exemplary educational leadership learning is that given by Smylie et al. (2005, p. 139) when they stated that “the conventional assumptions and practices of school leadership development are being contested not only in the policy arena but also in the real world of schools”. Researchers have acknowledged that there is a vast range of approaches and models for the tools and artefacts of educational leadership learning. That is, “the instructional applications of teaching and learning methodologies, the content and practices of educational leadership learning as a learning activity” (Bolam, 2003, p. 79). This is substantiated by a survey of research on educational leadership training that reveals the availability of a large amount of materials on what the basis of an exemplary educational leadership training ought to be as well as what effective educational leadership learning looks like.

The Basis for Effective Educational Leadership Learning

Educational leadership learning is considered to be effective when those in charge of developing and implementing such programs or opportunities recognize and take into account three critical criteria that constitute the basis for effective educational leadership training

(Smylie et al., 2005, p. 139; Carrington et al., 2022). These bases include (i) the capacities which school leaders must possess to perform their duties successfully. These capacities which as was stated in the previous sections is one of the outcomes of an activity system as it relates to educational leadership learning (ii) “the cognitive, social and psychological processes” (Smylie et al., 2005, p. 139) by which educators learn to lead (iii) the relative efficacy and functions of various instructional applications, resources, and sources that enable and encourage educational leadership learning. These were also stated in the previous sections as the activity system’s tools and artefacts.

The Capacities Which School Leaders Must Possess to Perform Their Duties Successfully

The first of these bases – the capacities which school leaders must possess to perform their duties – elicits the specific interest on what successful education leaders ought to be capable of. The “object” of education according to Engestrom Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2015, p.78) is learning and the outcome is learners who possess values, expertise and knowledge essential for consequential engagement in the society as well as for self-fulfillment (UNESCO, 2021, p. 22) acquired through school-based effective teaching and learning. The answers to the question and interest on what successful leaders of education ought to be capable of is then rationally to be present in the research review on the influence of efficient educational leadership on learners’ outcomes. A thorough exploration of the influence of learning educational leadership on learners’ outcomes recommends that efficient leaders of education should possess leadership skills and knowledge for (i) understanding and developing people (ii) directing and building a vision for schools (iii) leading the programme of teaching and learning and (iv) developing and remodeling the school as an organisation (Bush, 2019). Based on the foregoing, it is reasonable to assert that educational leadership learning activity systems

should place emphasis on assisting leaders in acquiring these skills, understanding and knowledge as the outcome of that system. It is worth noting, however, the caution of Smylie et al. (2005, p. 141). They advised that in spite of academics examining enormous research on leadership practices connected with school development and student accomplishment and inferring the skills, understanding and knowledge “required to enact those practices”, just having the knowledge of what constitutes good practice is not necessarily identical to having the knowledge of what capacities are necessary to be an efficient leader, especially regarding the development of schools as well as learners’ accomplishment.

The Cognitive, Social and Psychological Processes Through Which Educators Learn to Lead

Effective educational leadership training requires attention not only to programme structures but also to the processes through which educators interpret and apply learning. Davis et al. (2005, p. 9) further underscore Smylie et al. (2005, p. 139) second basis that must be factored into developing and implementing educational leadership training opportunities which is the cognitive, social and psychological processes through which educators learn to lead. This, they did when they posit that appropriate learning theory must be used to structure educational leadership learning. The researcher deemed the andragogy theory of learning to be of special importance to this study’s tool and artefacts. This is based on the evaluation of the four paradigms of learning theories previously discussed. This theory developed by John Knowles (Knowles, 1984, p. 6; Leonard, 2002, p. 7; Renger & Macaskill, 2021) in the 1960s falls under the constructivist learning theory paradigm. Andragogy believes that adults continue to acquire knowledge throughout their lives and that they learn in ways different from young ones (Knowles, 1984, p. 6). It is of relevance to the current study due to the fact that not only is it learner-centered but it also focuses particularly on how adults obtain knowledge. Tight (2002,

p. 103) later describes it as “the art and science of helping adults learn” because of its learner-centric approach.

Basically, it is dependent on six (6) presumptions on adult learning and adults in general. These presumptions as well as their significance on the activity system of educational leadership learning under study include:

(i) The learners’ self-concept (as the members of the *community* and as *subjects* (individuals) of the activity system): It is believed that these learners developed and adopted an identity which allows them to regard themselves as accountable for their own decisions, activities, and lives. This implies that they dislike being told what to do, and when they are told, emotions such annoyance and resentment might arise in such learning circumstances (Knowles, 1984, p. 9; Leonard, 2002, p. 8; Renger & Macaskill, 2021). To some extent, this assumption prescribed the *tools* and *artefacts* or instructional applications available to the instructor which is the assignment of a specific function to the instructor in the *division of labour* element of the activity system of educational leadership learning. This responsibility is that of a facilitator or coach which appears to suit adult learning style better and not that of an authoritarian instructor.

(ii) Adults possess experience: They have responsibilities and roles that youngsters are not privileged to possess. As a result, adults can boast of more diverse experiences which are also brought to any situations of learning they find themselves in (Knowles, 1984, p. 11; Tight, 2002, p. 104; Renger & Macaskill, 2021). This implies that every individual learner represents a rich learning resource. In the classes that constitute the *community* of this activity system, this wealth of experience is exponentially increased and has far-reaching implications for the selection of instructional applications as well as for the design and execution of learning situations. According to Schunk (2002, p. 245), andragogy in some ways echoes the core elements of social development theory by Vygotsky. This theory states that the experiences

brought to new learning contexts or situations by learners influence the learning that they do in that new context or situation. This greatly emphasizes again the significance of proper consideration and application of suitable paradigms and schools of learning theories during the development of opportunities of educational leadership training.

(iii) The need to know: In general, individuals particularly adults display more zeal to acquire learning when they recognise the need to know something especially for the purpose of carrying out a certain function and activity or to do them better. However, this must not necessarily emanate from their personal experience but could be generated or induced by the facilitator also when they present a context or circumstance in which knowledge or a new skill is introduced or exposed (Knowles, 1984, p. 11; Leonard, 2002, p. 7; Renger & Macaskill, 2021). This above-mentioned need to know or readiness to learn relates to this particular educational leadership learning activity in two dimensions. First, it offers a feasible explanation to the decision and motives for the enrolment of the *subjects* (participants) and indeed the entire *community* in each of the 2019, 2020 and 2021 classes of the MEXT training programme. This explanation could be in terms of the realization that they have something to learn and must be accomplished in order to carry out their responsibilities effectively as education leaders. Second, it prescribes the *tools and artefacts* or instructional applications' alternatives that are available to such programme's instructors in designing learning situations for learners. These situations build the motivation and desire to learn or the need to know and acquire knowledge and new skills by utilizing specific situations such as role play, case studies and other similar instructional applications.

(iv) The willingness to learn: The willingness to learn becomes more intense when adults recognise that what is offered to them will improve their jobs or lives (Knowles, 1984, p. 10; Leonard, 2002, p. 9; Renger & Macaskill, 2021). Practically, this implies that both the adults'

readiness to learn and the experience they bring to a learning activity system, should impact the selection of the instructional applications and content being used in the activity system of educational leadership learning.

(v) The motivation to acquire learning: Though susceptible to extrinsic sources of motivation, for instance increased salary, bonuses and promotions, adults in general are often self-motivated by internal factors like recognition, self-respect and dignity (Knowles, 1984, p. 12). This particular assumption is strongly connected to the presumption that people become eager to learn when there is a need to acquire knowledge or to do something in order to carry out a given function and activity or for the purpose of executing it better. This has a bearing on the *tools and artefacts* and on the learners as *subjects* of the educational leadership learning activity system. With reference to the activity system under study, selecting and applying relevant *tools and artefacts* in the form of suitable content and instructional applications may possibly bring about the satisfaction of the need of educational leadership learners and readiness to acquire knowledge (Knowles, 1984, p. 11). These would help them perform their duties more effectively which will in turn function as a motivator for more learning.

(vi) Orientation towards learning: In contrast to children, adults approach learning from a more practical standpoint. As a result, they anticipate that learning should be more practical in application which makes relevance and contextualization essential to their real life (Knowles, 1984, p. 12; Tight, 2002, p. 105). This orientation of adults towards learning yet has some significance in selecting *tools and artefacts* that would serve the activity system of educational leadership learning best and for the *division of labour* within the activity system. That is, what the responsibilities and duties of the *subjects*, the *community* (individual students together) and the instructors will be.

Moreover, activity theory and andragogy have shared philosophical ground in that while the former explains the structure of educational leadership learning activity systems (Burner & Svendsen, 2025), andragogy explains the internal conditions under which adults engage meaningfully in the activity system (Bouchrika, 2026). In other words, while activity theory conceptualizes leadership preparation as a dynamic system composed of subjects, tools and artefacts, community, rules, division of labour, object and outcome, andragogy deepens understanding of how adult subjects engage within this system. More so, the subject in the educational leadership learning activity system is not just a participant but also an adult professional whose previous knowledge and experience, self-concept and intrinsic motivations actively mediate interactions with the community, division of labour, rules as well as tools and artefacts. This means that school leaders undertake educational leadership preparation programmes as self-directed professionals whose previous experience and knowledge, intrinsic motivations and identity formation shape how they engage with mediating artefacts and social structures.

Furthermore, mediating tools and artefacts such as mentoring, networking, workshops and shadowing amongst others act as structured experiential platforms through which adults critically reflect on practice (Nicolini & Korica, 2025), thereby enabling transformative learning. This signifies that systemic contradictions within the activity system function as disorienting dilemmas that stimulate critical reflection and perspective transformation; which align with andragogic learning theory. Summarily, activity theory explains the structural conditions of educational leadership learning, whereas andragogy explains the internal developmental processes through which learning becomes transformative.

In spite of discussing andragogy as being suitable for the learning involving adults and hence, to a learning activity for adults in education leadership learning, it is essential to

emphasize that it is not the sole theory of learning suitable for educational leadership training. With reference to the works of Leonard (2002, p. 177) and Schunk (2012, p. 242), the theory of social development by Vygotsky state that “social interaction plays a fundamental role in the development of all cognitive abilities, including thinking, learning and communication”. Also, it emphasizes that development and learning cannot be separated from the learners’ context. The reason is that according to the theory of social development by Lev Vygotsky, it is the learners’ interaction with the objects such as speech, organisations and people in their environment that modify their thinking and contribute to their learning (Vygotsky, 1987; Saracho, 2023). As such, the focus of this theory on learning as a contextualized and social action makes its application to educational leadership learning also appropriate.

In a similar vein to the discussion above, the theory of situated cognition by Brown, Collins and Duguid assert that cognition and learning are “situated” and intertwined inextricably (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Leonard, 2002, p. 173). This theory also states that working or practical knowledge must be entirely tied or connected to conceptual knowledge (Brown, Collins & Duguid, 1989; Vogel et al., 2020). It is also suitable for application to the field of educational leadership learning since it asserts that “many processes interact to produce learning” (Schunk, 2012, p. 233). Just as in andragogy, it prescribes therefore that “learning situations must produce knowledge through work activity” (Leonard, 2002, p. 173).

Closely related the above discussed theory of situated cognition is the theory of Situated Learning by Lave and Wenger which originated from the combined works of Dewey and Vygotsky. It states that knowledge transfer is connected firmly to the social context by which such knowledge is acquired (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Tyler et al., 2020). According to Lave, the most effective and successful teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications are

those involving cohorts, groups and teams (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leonard, 2002, p. 175). These work together on a common learning project (collaboration) with the assistance of experienced practitioners to provide cognitive apprenticeship (Afzal, 2022) and coaching to novices (communities of practice) and mentoring (Leonard, 2002, p. 32; Liljenberg & Wrethander, 2023). It also worthy of note that this theory is based on three major presuppositions namely (a) the act of learning is highly interactive and social that it necessitates a significant degree of cooperation and mentorship. (b) skills and knowledge acquired and presented within a contextualized setting for instance, the place of work is more effective and relevant (c) classroom learning is decontextualized by nature and therefore irrelevant (Lave & Wenger, 1991; Leonard, 2002, p. 174).

These three theories emphasize the social component of learning as well as the notion that it is context-dependent and context-bound which therefore supports their applicability and usefulness in the milieu of educational leadership learning. As was stated earlier, though andragogy is not the sole theory of learning applicable to educational leadership learning activity system or adult learning settings, it however is the only learning theory that focuses specifically both on adult learners and how they learn on the one hand as well as being learner-centric instead of teacher-centric on the other hand (Leonard, 2002, p. 112). These, in the researcher's opinion, make it the most suitable to the activity system under study here when compared to the other learning theories.

In view of the above, the researcher concurs with the opinion of Smylie et al. (2005, p. 139) that it is important for the developers and implementers of educational leadership programmes or opportunities to select an appropriate learning theory and also heed to several common principles that are thought to exert useful influence on teaching as well as learning. It is important to stress that these principles are distributed across the different paradigms of

learning theories. The summary of these principles as well as their significance on the activity system of educational leadership training is presented thus:

(i) The learning material, information or content to be delivered to the participants ought to be organised, arranged into and presented in small steps or sections (Tight, 2002, p. 133). This principle seems to promote the modularization of educational leadership training experiences and materials.

(ii) Learners must be given the opportunity to apply the newly acquired knowledge or practice the newly learnt skills and also provide feedbacks regarding their learning based on the outcomes of that application or practice (Schunk, 2012, p. 21). In addition, this principle speaks to both the activity system's *division of labour* and *tools and artefacts* elements. Furthermore, it supports the tenet of andragogy which posits that adults learn more practically when compared to youngsters and so anticipate that learning should be much more practical, applicable to real-life situations and contextualized (Knowles, 1984, p. 12).

(iii) Every learner, including adult learners pass through phases or stages and these phases or stages can be connected to either the learners academic or practical experience as well as both or either the learners' developmental stage and or age (Schunk, 2012, p. 19). This principle also serves the purpose of validating Davis et al. (2005, p. 9) argument and Smylie et al. (2005, p. 139) who argue that the learning of educational leadership should be supported by suitable learning theories, designed and executed with the target learners in mind; these being the *community* and *subjects* of an activity system of educational leadership training.

(iv) Contextualized learning which according to Tight (2002, p. 24) and Schunk (2012, p. 22) is the most effective learning, can be defined as the learning that happens in the real world of the learners and their fields of learning. This principle, which is supported by andragogy learning theory among others is related closely to the principle of suitable social environment

(to be discussed next) in that it posits that learning should both take place and be centred on the learners' context as much as possible. In this regard, the learners' context is both the real-life world of every learner in the activity system (that is the context where the learners work and live) and the activity system itself (their community and context during their learning). In turn, these two contexts both have ramifications for the choice of methodologies or instructional applications. These contexts necessitate instructional applications, for instance role-playing, case studies and other such activities which encourage contextualization within formal settings like workshops, internships, lectures (Crawford and Earley, 2011, p. 116; Coker, 2020) and peer monitoring (Day & Harrison, 2011, p. 588; Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 23; Hayman et al., 2022) which contextualize the learners' learning within their real-life environment.

(v) A suitable social setting encourages productive learning: It has been established so far within this study that learning is a collaborative and social activity that is best done amongst a group of people (Tight, 2002, p. 21). Supported by andragogy, the theory of Situated Learning by Lave, the theory of Situated Cognition and the Social Development Theory by Vygotsky, this principle addresses several elements of educational leadership learning activity system. First, the collaborative and social aspect of learning relates to the *community* of such activity system. Second, the significance of the *community* in the activity system has some consequences for both the *tools and artefacts* selected to be used and the *division of labour* within that system.

It is evident therefore that these principles have an impact on the choice of teaching methodologies selected for efficient and effective educational leadership training and hence on the *tools and artefacts* of an activity system of educational leadership leaning. This impact should however not be limited to andragogy theory only but ought to be deployed to any other

theory of learning that best fits the development and implementation of educational leadership training programmes. This would guarantee the selection of the best, effective and relevant teaching and learning methodologies or instructional applications.

The Relative Efficacy and Functions of Various Instructional Applications, Resources, And Sources

The third basis is the relative efficacy and functions of various instructional applications, resources, and sources that enable and encourage educational leadership learning. While Smylie et al. (2005, p. 139) describe *instructional applications* as the experiences and practices employed in the promotion of learning, *resources*, on the other hand is said to be the time, instructional materials, curriculum, money and other tangible resources and *sources* as the settings or locations of – as well as providers of educational leadership learning. The *instructional applications*, *resources* and *sources* are described as having an influence on (and also) part of the *tools* and *artefacts* of the activity system of educational leadership learning described previously.

The meticulous selection of instructional applications described by Smylie et al. (2005, p. 139) is bolstered by the recognition of one of the characteristics of an ideal educational leadership learning by Orr (2011, p. 120) as the implementation of active teaching as well as learning strategies or instructional applications. Also, it is directly related to the selection of an educational leadership learning framework compatible with a suitable theory of learning in the sense that every theory of learning prescribes defined and precise instructional applications. A myriad of such effective and appropriate teaching and learning or instructional applications are accessible to authorities responsible for developing and implementing educational leadership learning opportunities or programmes which will be discussed in details hereafter.

The Characteristics of an Exemplary Educational Leadership Learning

In the description of the characteristics shared by exemplary educational leadership learning, Orr (2011, p. 120) identifies seven characteristics which include a logical and consistent curriculum, a well-defined leadership theory, the utilization of active teaching and learning methodologies or instructional applications that combine practice and theory. Others include support systems during such programme, for instance the utilization of cohorts, excellent internships that allow educational leadership students to put their newly-acquired skills to practice, skilled presenters and lastly, the utilization of programme as well as students' feedback and assessment to aid the programme's improvement continuously. These characteristics will form the outline for the discourse on the practice of exemplary educational leadership learning. However, due to the overlap between some of these characteristics resulting from their related closeness, some of them will be discussed in combinations for logical sequencing and clarity purposes. These characteristics will also serve as further illustrations of one of the elements of Engestrom Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2015, p. 78) (the *tools and artefacts*) represented by the educational leadership learning activity system for this study.

A well-defined leadership theory

The first characteristic shared by educational leadership programmes that are exemplary in nature is that such programmes are underpinned by a clear and well-defined leadership theory which focuses on improvement of schools (Orr, 2011, p. 120). Such theory helps to combine all of the other aspects of the programme with the development of content values and beliefs that form the foundation of the programme (Orr, 2011, p. 120; Gouthro, 2019). Earley and Jones (2010) similarly, mention a comprehensive and communicated mission statement or objective within which every programme of educational leadership

learning should be mapped out. Crawford and Earley (2011, p. 108) in this regard mention a strong “guiding vision” while Davis et al. (2005, p. 8) allude to a particular “philosophy” that should underpin exemplary programmes of educational leadership learning. These assertions are consistent with Huber's (2010, p.238) opinion that, with respect to educational leadership learning, “an important paradigm shift has occurred: from focusing on managing schools with an emphasis on maintenance, to a focus on leading and improving schools”.

According to Gandhi and Mukherji (2022) as well as McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 7), just as theories would usually do, many theories of education attempted explaining and predicting the concept of education leadership. Worthy of note are the “professional school leadership” and “integrated school leadership” by Huber (2010, p. 673) and Imants and de Jong (Huber, 2010, p.673) respectively. These concepts are described as the complex combination of management and leadership responsibilities which in reality are *instructional leadership*. Here, school leadership activities and actions not only centre on the learners’ learning progress but also on management and leadership-oriented functions, tasks and activities aimed at such progress (Munna, 2022; Southworth, 2002, p. 77). As described by Jacobson (2011, p. 34), instructional leadership is the “linchpin” between learners’ accomplishment and the practices of school leaders. The most commonly acknowledged instructional leadership model is presented by Hallinger (2010, p. 332) in 2000 which has three dimensions for this kind of leadership namely (i) directing and managing the instructional programme (ii) promoting the mission of schools (iii) encouraging an enabling and positive school atmosphere. These three dimensions lend support to the belief of Bush (2007, p. 400) that the growing focus on teaching and learning within the education sector as the fundamental duty of schools has resulted to the emergence and growth of the significance of the instructional leadership theory. They also support the statement of Steyn (2008, p. 895) that despite the difference in international

viewpoints on educational leadership, there seems to be a shift from the conventional viewpoint that sees the principal as largely a manager to that of instructional leader with a significant emphasis on guiding and leading schools' learning and teaching.

A broad image of instructional leadership and an instructional leader is portrayed by Hallinger and Heck (2010, p. 22) with their seven focus areas which include (i) directing, planning and advocating the consistent growth of the school (ii) establishing a unified sense of purpose and defined teaching and learning objectives (iii) coordinating the curriculum's development and execution (iv) encouraging a pleasant school atmosphere and custom of creative and high-quality teaching and learning (v) having a visible presence and modelling the desired attitudes and principles of the school's cultures to every stakeholders (parents, students, and staff) (vi) managing, organising, controlling and planning a wide variety of staff development activities and (vii) creating a rewarding system for the school which is consistent with the school's goals and culture. On Botha (2004, p. 24) part, the responsibilities of an instructional leader include (i) fostering an institutional climate favourable for effective teaching and learning (ii) curriculum management (iii) monitoring and assessing the results of the learners as well as the learning programme (iv) supervision of teaching and (v) developing and communicating the schools' goals, objectives and aims.

With the extensive discussion on instructional leadership theory, attention will now be shifted to the most important and basic aspect of this theory which according to Hoadley et al. (2009, p. 337) and Munna (2022) is distributed leadership. In their opinion, distributed leadership and instructional leadership constitute the ideal basis for effective educational leadership. This is corroborated by Hallinger and Heck (2010, p. 22) when they opine that the resulting findings of both empirical research and practical experience indicate that instructional leadership is a task the principal, who is the central school leader, ought to distribute to or share

with leaders at all tiers within the school. They further explain that the connection between distributed leadership and instructional leadership has grown stronger due to the increase in the complexity and sheer size of schools. It has thus become impossible for principals to supervise as well as implement every instructional leadership duty and task on their own which has then led to sharing such duties with other key players or leaders within the school. This connection is further strengthened by Coleman (2003, p. 162) who state that there exist two dimensions of activity with regard to leadership – the first dimension involving leadership activity which is focused on relationships and people while the second is focused on the results and products. In the context of educational leadership, the singular theory which deals with the dimension of results and products (learning and teaching) which is education’s fundamental obligation is instructional leadership. Applying similar analogy, the dimension of people and relationships is addressed by the distributed leadership theory.

Spillane, who is regarded as one of the main proponents of distributed leadership has the belief that distributed leadership is more concerned with “leadership practice” than with leaders and their responsibilities, routines, “functions” and compositions (Spillane, 2005, p. 143). He argues that this practice includes how school leaders communicate with the education stakeholders and any given circumstances they are faced with (Spillane, 2005, p. 143). He continues that this leadership practice recognizes the need of allowing the important key players to take on leadership responsibility for a variety of school-related tasks and activities. Distributive leadership, on the part of Davis et (2005, p. 165), is the several sources of direction and advice which trail the contours of expertise in an organization. They contend further that “many people in leadership activity are at the core of distributed leadership in action” (Davis et al., 2005, p. 165). This debate about distributive leadership is well summarised by Jacobson (2011, p. 35) when he asserts that leadership of school no longer simply refers to the leadership

duty of the headmaster or principal as the individual appointed or chosen for the purpose of leading such school. As Fitzgerald and Gunter (2008, p. 336) put it, the principal is not just an official with authority and influence based on a hierarchical system rather that school leadership is a collaborative concept that should be shared amongst support workers and teachers. In their seven (7) claims regarding leadership of school, Leithwood et al. (2019, p. 27) claim that the greatest influence on learners in particular and the school at large is exerted when school leadership is widely distributed which accounted for 27% variation in the performance of learners in 2007 research by Mascal and Leithwood (Leithwood et al., 2019, p. 34).

The reference by Spillane for this leadership practice to happen within and also be based on specific circumstances relates to situational or contingent leadership (Leithwood et al., 2019, p. 15). Situational leadership, which is often called contingent leadership, presumes that what is of utmost importance is that educational leaders react and respond effectively and differently to diverse contexts and circumstances or organizational scenarios. This kind of leadership therefore requires leaders to tailor their response to the specific needs, characteristics and demands of any given context or circumstance (Bush, 2007, p. 402). Coleman (2013, p. 161), in this regard, states that there should be a “relationship between the appropriate leadership style and the context in which that leadership style is being exercised”. Steyn (2008, p. 895) corroborates the views of both authors when she submits that there is a distinct movement of management and leadership literature away from a restricted emphasis on the managerial responsibilities and tasks of educational leaders towards a wider emphasis on leaders of school as not only instructional leaders but also as those who apply management as well as collaborative and participative practices. This expansion of leadership responsibilities as well as the requirement for leaders of schools to be adaptive, work within and act based on their

various circumstances, contexts and situations is reaffirmed by Brauckmann and Pashiardis (2012, p. 16). This, they did when they outlined the five (5) most vital leadership activities across the leadership divide which include structuring activities, instructional activities, entrepreneurial activities, personnel development and participative activities. Every one of the aforementioned activities of leadership recognize that leaders of schools do not work “in a vacuum” which implies that circumstance and context is an essential driver of school leaders’ leadership practices and actions (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 13).

Summarily, the theories of distributed and instructional leadership advocate leaders of schools who are and focused on and involved deeply in the main business of school – teaching and learning. The word ‘leaders’ is intentionally used in plurality here in order to draw attention to the idea that for the success and effectiveness of schools, leadership functions must be shared amongst competent personnel so as to prevent the headmaster or principal from behaving as a heroic leader (Spillane, 2005, p. 142) or running the school affairs as a one-man show (Jacobson, 2011, p. 35; Steyn, 2008, p. 895). The theory of instructional leadership has been reliably established by research from the definition of the connections between the responsibilities and duties of instructional leaders by Botha (2004, p. 240) and Bush (2007, p. 400), the fundamental dimensions of school leaders explained by Leithwood et al. (2019, p. 29) to the activities identified as having the greatest impact on schools as well as learners’ success by Robinson et al. (2008, p. 28). It is therefore worth highlighting the relationship between Brauckmann and Pashiardis’ five most vital set of leadership activities (2012, p. 16) and Robinson et al. (2008, p. 28) activities identified as having the greatest impact on schools as well as on learners’ success which is shown in table 2.

Table 2*Most Vital Sets of Activities for Instructional Leadership*

| Brauckmann and Pashiardis (2012) | Robinson et al. (2008) |
|--|---|
| Provision of teaching and intellectual development and support for personnel (personnel development activities) (p. 16) | Participation and promotion of programs for developing the competencies and skills of school leaders and teachers (p. 29) |
| Evaluation and monitoring of learning and teaching (instructional activities) (p. 15) | Evaluation, coordination and planning of the curriculum and teaching (p. 28) |
| Implementation of standard policies and procedures for the assurance of an orderly and safe school climate (p. 15). | Maintenance and creation of supportive and safe school climate (p. 30) |
| Maintenance of school facilities (p. 16). | |
| Setting standards for learners and teachers (p. 15) (structuring activities) | |
| Implementation and development of a mission for learning and the alignment of teaching and learning with particular goals (instructional activities) (p. 15) | Establishment of goals and also setting clear expectations for all stakeholders (p. 27) |
| Maintenance and building of networks both outside and inside the school environment (entrepreneurial activities) (p. 16) | The strategic use and planning of material and human resources (p. 28) |

This relationship is supported further by the research findings of Jacobson (2011) and Sammons et al. (2011). On the part of Jacobson (2011, p. 34), the results of the research on effective and efficient schools show that the leaders of schools who lead these schools establish clear and explicit instructional objectives, work tirelessly to establish orderly and safe learning environments, develop excellent school-home ties and demand great performance from students and staff. On the part of Simmons et al. (2011, p. 93), in consonance with the results of Leithwood (2019) and Robinson et al. (2008, p. 2008), their findings on the influence of school leadership on learner's outcome identify (i) enhancing instructional components such

as curriculum and assessment practices (ii) encouraging teachers' professional development on a constant basis (iii) supervising teachers and teaching and (iv) strategically supplying and allocating resources as having the greatest influence on the performance of learners.

Also, from the above discussions, it is obvious that the practices of instructional leadership have the most influence when leaders of schools delegate or share responsibilities and duties to and with other school key players (Davis et al., 2005, p. 166; Spillane, 2005, p. 143; Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 16; Liu, Bellibaş & Gümüş, 2021; Mifsud, 2023) with every key player responding and functioning as co-leaders to each particular circumstances inside the school in a situation-specific manner and in a suitable context (Munna, 2022). This leadership functions and tasks' distribution across situations or context and key players occur best within the instructional leadership framework and the general context and situation of successfully and efficiently managing schools' primary function - teaching and learning.

The above discussions on the functions of the theories of distributed as well as instructional leadership in successful schools illustrate the responsibilities and roles of efficient and effective leadership learning. It also adds volume to the requirements of educational leadership learning for its effectiveness in producing such leaders. However, it is worth mentioning that distributed and instructional leadership theories are not the only theories which describe the educational leadership phenomenon. According to Hallinger (2010, p. 330), there are two main educational leadership approaches that have been prevalent for the past twenty-five (25) years. These are instructional leadership (already discussed) and transformational leadership.

Northouse (2004, p. 170) distinguishes transformational leadership as well as other leadership theories based on the nature of interaction between the leaders and the led. Transformational leadership, he continues, emphasizes the promotion of relationships between

leaders and those who are led with the aim of boosting morale and motivation levels in the led as well as the leader (Okoli et al., 2021).

Just as with the instructional leadership which has seven focus areas, transformational leadership also has seven components which include building culture, vision, high expectations, rewards, shared goals, modelling and individualized support (Hallinger, 2010, p. 335; Deng et al., 2022). These components also point to the transactional leadership concept by Northouse (2004, p. 170), another leadership theory that could be applied to educational leadership learning, that emphasizes interactions and exchanges between the leaders and the led in such a way that the led are always anticipating obtaining something from their leaders in exchange for their cooperation (Ali, 2023). In another way, it could also be seen as the interaction of leaders and the led with the incorporation of culture building and objectives shared by the leader as well as the led. This suggest relationship or if in the case of reward, could be in the form of teachers giving grades to learners or school leaders giving bonuses or promotion to teachers for instance (Northouse, 2004, p. 170). Hallinger (2010, p. 339) mentions that the commonality between instructional leadership and transformational leadership is that both styles of leadership are distributive in nature. This commonality emphasizes Leithwood et al. (2019, p. 27) opinions regarding their seven claims about school leadership that in spite of the availability of different leadership theories that could describe, prescribe and explain leadership practice and behaviour in the field of education, the most effective and powerful of them all is distributed leadership.

A logical and consistent curriculum

A programme with a logical and consistent curriculum is defined by Davis et al. (2005, p. 8) as one in which there is a conspicuous connection between the objectives and aims of such programme, the instructional applications or learning activities and contents as well as the

common beliefs and values embodied in the underlying theory or philosophy of leadership. In other words, such programmes usually present a consistent sequence of learning activities and course work that integrate theory and practice within the adult learning theory framework. This is substantiated by Orr (2011, p. 120) as well as Robey and Bauer (2013, p. 264) when they posit that coherent curriculum which is one of the most valuable currencies in exemplary educational leadership learning programme and based on the instructional leadership theory supports growth and development of schools and the effective leadership of teaching and learning.

Huber (2010, p. 230) notes the enhanced level of coherence in programmes seen in different nations as the outcome of enhanced and improved collaboration amongst education leaders, universities and educationalists in professional organizations and schools as a global educational leadership learning trend. Furthermore, they state that this collaboration has aided in developing strategies for teaching and learning, content and methods of learning of these programmes, thereby fostering enhanced curriculum coherence.

Any discourse on the best curriculum for learning educational leadership would inevitably spring up a discourse on such programme's content. The shifting responsibilities and nature of the job of a school leader, as well as the ever-increasing complexity of the function, have rendered training of leaders for a set role outdated (Huber, 2010, p. 236). To address this issue, the content and curriculum of programmes of educational leadership learning ought to reflect and be based on modern research regarding educational leadership and should also conform to the underlying theory of leadership of such programme (Davis et al., 2005, p. 8; Mansfield & Carpenter, 2008, p. 4). This is corroborated by Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 70) when they posit that learning of educational leadership that can satisfy the demands of the future should involve "emergent and context-responsive learning" and by Pounder (2010, p.

263) who posit that the content of such programmes should be demanding, with a strong emphasis on instructional leadership.

Bush and Jackson (2002, p. 412) argue and subsequently reflected by Patterson and West-Burnham (2005, p. 110) that “the content of educational leadership programmes has considerable similarities in different countries, leading to the hypothesis that there is an international curriculum for school leadership preparation”. The former continues that majority of educational leadership learning programmes at the international stage are leadership-focused including transformational leadership, mission and vision thus lending credence to concerns of instructional leadership. It also integrates cogitation of the major task of management or administration such as finance, professional development, curriculum and external relationships as well as management of human resources. This backs up a worldwide trend in which many educational leadership learning programmes increasingly include components such as the developing essential values and the development of a personal educational vision as well as components targeted at improving leaders' time management and self-management skills and to mirror their own practice (Huber, 2010, p. 237; Bush 2023). As a consequence of international shift of school leaders' perceptions from administration specialists to experts in collaboration and communication, topics like cooperation, motivation, collegiality, collaboration and communication have all become vital elements in current programmes of educational leadership learning with a rising global recognition that mastering these job components associated to school leadership is critical to the success of school leaders (Huber, 2010, p. 237; Erkan, 2022).

These commonalities in topics were discovered across the various Commonwealth nations by Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 68). They include (i) effective management and leadership (ii) management and leadership theory (iii) leadership of and for learning (iv) school

effectiveness and improvement (v) team leadership (vi) education policy (vii) financial management and (viii) human resource management. These are, to a great extent, in accordance to the study of Bush (2012, p. 6) that examines the contents of educational leadership learning programmes in nine (9) nations. He discovers that more than fifty percent of these programmes offer courses or topics on (i) school administration as a leadership role (ii) education law (iii) finances in education (iv) people management and (v) instructional leadership. These topics' overlaps indicated above justify the springing up of a more modular approach to educational leadership learning as a worldwide trend to such learning (Huber, 2010, p. 235). This is because modular contents are often organised and developed in response to the demands that emerge during the various stages of "a school leader's career", the needs of schools that they lead as well as any novel and modern research in the education leadership field (Huber, 2010, p. 234). This global trend and the above findings validate the previously discussed principle that have a positive influence on teaching as well as learning, which is that the learning materials or content for learning ought to be organized and presented in small steps or sections to learners (Tight, 2002, p. 133).

In summary, if exemplary leadership learning programmes have need of a logical and consistent curriculum (Orr, 2011, p. 120), content informed by and derived from current research (Davis et al., 2005, p. 8) and must be embodied by an appropriate underlying leadership theory like that of instructional leadership (Pounder, 2010, p. 63; Orr, 2011, p. 120; Robey & Bauer, 2013, p. 264), then the proposed list of courses and topics by Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 68) and Bush (2012, p. 6) can be considered a decent beginning for developing the ideal or exemplary educational leadership learning programme. However, because course-based or modular programmes possess a propensity for being overly theoretical, such programmes ought to be supplemented with teaching and learning strategies

or instructional applications such as mentoring, peer networking and coaching, experiential learning activities as well as problem-based learning (Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 23; Hargreaves, 2025).

Active Teaching and Learning Methodologies and the Provision of Quality Internships

In close relation to a logical and consistent curriculum is the "active teaching and learning strategies that integrate theory and practice and stimulate reflection" and "quality internships that provide intensive, developmental opportunities to apply leadership knowledge and skills under the guidance of an expert practitioner" (Orr & Orphanos, 2010 p. 22). Although active teaching and learning methodologies are basically about instructional applications (*tools and artefacts*) that could be applied in successful educational leadership learning opportunities, it also touches on two crucial debates. First, it contributes to the long-standing debate regarding the place and essence of theory as well as practice in such programme. Second, it adds to the issue of context which educational leadership learning is offered.

Theory and Practice. The global trend of increasing integration of theory and practical features of programmes of educational leadership learning is identified by Huber (2010, p. 230) to be a result of participants' satisfaction from such balanced learning model. This satisfaction has resulted in the assertion "that dovetailing theoretical and practical aspects is essential for designing effective development programs which aim at changes in the participants' behaviour and dispositions through the process of teaching and acquiring knowledge" (Huber, 2010, p. 230). He further opines that experience from theory and practice are interdependent and should therefore be developed side by side. It is obviously evident that many programmes are moving away from an emphasis on theory only or practical only, to a more balanced approach which involves the two aspects. More and more programme designers

now develop teaching and learning methodologies for their participants with the involvement of learning situations which can provide the chance of purposefully connecting new knowledge to previous knowledge and experience. In these situations, the challenges and past experiences of the participants become the departure point for the selection and development of learning methods and contents (tools and artefacts) to be employed (Huber, 2010, p. 239).

According to Glatter (2009, p. 226), leaders greatly depend on both formal and informal knowledge. The informal knowledge he refers to as personal or tacit knowledge and the formal knowledge as public or explicit. Personal knowledge, he argues, is the most resourceful knowledge to school leaders because it is the knowledge that resides in the leader and is mostly acquired through experience and observation or participation in leadership duties, functions and activities. This type of knowledge which he also refers to as wisdom or maturity of judgement, is extremely more challenging to transfer when compared to formal knowledge which is acquired from various theories of education. The research done in 1992 by Cave and Wilkinson (Glatter, 2009, p. 227) shows that with the exception of type of skills and knowledge needed for competence in leadership functions and roles, performers who are above average possessed a certain amount of political acumen and powerful intuition. In addition, they possess some cerebral or higher order capabilities which include an exceptional ability to offer fair and balanced decisions as well as the capability to read situations effectively. This prompts Glatter (2009, p. 228) to state that such higher order capabilities are necessary for the effective application of skills such as school finances management, establishing sound human relationships or other complex circumstances which school leaders may find themselves in. The significance of experiential capacities (that is, leadership wisdom mainly acquired through practice and experience) should not be overlooked when developing and planning education leadership learning programmes. Both Brundrett (2000, p. 364) and Smylie et al. (2005, p. 143)

agree to this when the latter posit that while there are identifiable nodal knowledge and skills that could be assessed and imparted, successful educational leaders must be assisted in developing wider intellectual capabilities that help in solving daily school problems. In other words, they must be practically effective theorists. On his own part, Smylie et al. (2005, p. 143) state that though theoretical or technical knowledge and understanding are essential, they are more often than not, insufficient for successful practice of school leadership if not supported by skillful “craft knowledge” (Glatter, 2009, p. 228). Regarding this, Browne-Ferrigno (2003, p. 470) stresses the importance of balance when she posits that transitioning from being a teacher to an education leader necessitates carefully balanced development of “knowledge through classroom activities and skills development through situated learning activities” while classroom activities or contents delivered formally should be aimed at and should strive to make meaning of the more experimental or practical activities of learning (Pont, 2020). A typical instance of the connection between practice and theory is Finland and the USA where prior to appointment as principal at schools, a prospective candidate must possess a diploma in school management and administration and Master’s in school administration respectively (Derring et al., 2005, p. 34; OECD, 2020; Bureau of Labor Statistics, U.S. Department of Labor, 2022). Although offered in many different forms by various universities and other educational institutes and centres, this programme comprises theoretical courses as well as hands-on activities of learning with mentoring as one of the major focus areas (Derring et al., 2005, p. 34).

In what appears to be a contrast to this emphasis on practical education leadership learning, Bush and Glover (2003, p. 228) warns that in spite of professional education leadership programmes based entirely on theoretical knowledge providing extremely limited opportunities for actual educational leadership learning, educational institutes offering such

programmes must avoid diminishing or discarding its theoretical contents. In fact, they emphasize the critical significance of theory in successful educational leadership learning. Walker and Dimmock (2006, p. 82) agree to this when they argue that programmes of educational leadership which fail to integrate practice and theory risk losing relevance and as a result, also effectiveness.

Regarding the issue of theory and practice, the *know-what* of academic competence and *know-how* of operational competence is contrasted by Brundrett (2000, p. 365) but advocate that both concepts are relevant in educational leadership learning. The developers of situated cognition learning theory, Brown, Collins and Duguid substantiate this when they posit that both cognition and learning are situated. Put in another way, the *know-what* and the *know-how* are "inextricably intertwined" (Leonard, 2002, p. 173). Various challenges to establishing and delivering educational leadership learning programmes are noted by Crawford and Earley (2011, p. 108). One of them is the critical requirement of balancing the academic, which is the theoretical aspect, with the practical components of educational leadership training. Bush and Jackson (2002, p. 424) report that some education systems in the world are at the forefront of striking this balance by integrating theory, practice and research. One of such is the Swedish Principals' Leadership Programme which employs tutors to work closely with participating school leaders who have vast professional experiences with the aim of assisting with developing connections between the taught theory and their experiences/practice (Norberg, 2019). It is important to mention that these tutors are leaders of schools with huge experience who hold master's degrees and in some cases are students at PhD level. According to Rhodes and Brundrett (2009, p. 365), this connection between learning circumstances or situations and work is a characteristic of effective educational leadership learning experiences.

In summary, consensus seems to concur with Crawford and Earley (2011, p. 108) opinion that a balance must be struck between theory and practice as a requirement for developing programmes of educational leadership training. This is for the purpose of maximizing its effectiveness in preparing leaders of schools for the responsibilities they are faced with in the 21st century schools.

Teaching and Learning Strategies/Instructional Applications. As have been discussed earlier, teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications of exemplary educational leadership learning interconnect with the characteristics of quality internships to a significant degree, both of which will be discussed hereafter.

The characteristics of exemplary educational leadership training reflect the tenets of the theory of constructivist learning in that it proposes that the programme creators and designers should create circumstances where learners can become an active part of their own learning rather than relying on formal instruction (Leonard, 2002, p. 37; Schunk, 2012, p. 231). The fifteen educational leadership learning programmes studied by Bush and Jackson (2002, p. 427) highlight the diversity of teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications abundant in such learning. These strategies of teaching and learning or instructional applications include but not limited to online provision, tutoring and action research, mentoring (Conigrave, 2022; Nyiramukama, 2025), contact courses, the use of study groups, coaching (Conigrave, 2022) and internship (Coker, 2020). These notwithstanding, with respect to teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications, schools' focus in the 21st century has moved from *what* is being taught, that is content, to the mode of teaching the content, that is *how* such content is structured and presented (Bush, 2012, p. 6; 2023). This corroborates the global tendency identified by Huber (2010, p. 233) to some extent, as moving from what it is now to a more comprehensive and broad educational leadership learning programmes.

According to Bush (2012, p. 10) and Osman and Miller (2022), educational leadership learning programmes take various forms globally. Diploma or certificate level training (England, Finland, Malta, South Africa), postgraduate level training (South Africa, the USA) and seminars, onsite training, clinical experiences, mentoring and networking, workshops, shadowing, and probationary appointments are examples of such forms. In spite of the previous discussed contention that there seems to be a global curriculum for educational leadership learning, the global diversity of teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications can be attributed to the numerous conceptualizations of both education leadership and educational leadership learning (Bush & Jackson, 2002, p. 412). For the purpose of presenting an overview of teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications, some of them will be discussed in relation to both learning theory and exemplary educational leadership learning.

In the year 2001, it was reported that the uttermost typical strategy to educational leadership learning is the conventional classroom-based learning that teaches basic leadership principles. This format was employed by approximately 85% of organisations offering educational leadership training at the time (Day, 2001, p. 588). It is contended that in spite of its evident popularity back then, because the majority of such program graduates had difficulties applying their newly acquired information to their professions, the teaching and learning methodologies or instructional applications were deemed insufficient for successful leadership preparation and development (Day & Harrison, 2011, p. 457). In the midst of this obvious issue with knowledge transfer, Burgoyne and Williams (2007, p. 10) advise that educational leadership learning programmes should incorporate "input driven sessions" to achieve a mix of theory and practice. These "input driven sessions" are components of the programmes within which theoretical knowledge is taught to learners through the use of specific tools and artefacts. These tools and artefacts include government policy or academic

journals discussions, presentations using power point and more experiential learning-oriented sessions that involve teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications like action research, mentoring, project-based work and coaching (Burgoyne & Williams, 2007, p. 10).

Multi-source, also known as 360-degree feedback, a strategy for increasing leaders' self-awareness and knowledge by offering feedback and evaluation from individuals at various levels of leadership, is another teaching and learning strategy or instructional applications employed in educational leadership learning programmes (Day & Harrison, 2011, p. 457). This approach calls for the organized gathering of performance ratings from members at every level in the organisation (colleagues, supervisors) for the compilation of an exhaustive 360-degree image of such leaders' behaviour and abilities. This image is then utilized to increase the leaders' self-awareness in order to effect behavioural change. However, one of the disadvantages of this strategy is that it lacks guidance on how to modify leadership behaviour change and overload of data could be cumbersome. Day and Harrison (2011, p. 458) offer a solution to this challenge by proposing the use of "executive coach" whose responsibilities are to help leaders in their learning. This employment of "executive coach" points directly to the high-quality internship characteristic of exemplary leadership learning programme identified by Orr (2011, p. 120). Day and Harrison (2011, p. 459) define it as an individual-based learning opportunities aimed at achievable and practical goals for enhancing self-knowledge as well as behavioural transformation. Also, the use of the executive coach in itself has a major drawback in that the assignment of a coach to employees carries the negative belief of disciplinary action (Day & Harrison, 2011, p. 459) despite its intensive and personalized nature.

The teaching and learning strategy or instructional application with the most powerful efficacy, according to Paterson and West-Burnham (2005, p. 111) is mentoring. This is corroborated by Bush (2012, p. 8) when it is affirmed that alongside coaching, facilitation and

networking, mentoring is one of the most commonly utilized and effective approaches globally and points to the high-quality internship characteristic of exemplary leadership training. Mentoring, as explained by Day and Harrison (2011, p. 558) is the involvement of a leader with senior ranking in advising and developing relationships with a less experienced or less senior leader. They continue that the main goal of mentoring is for the creation of an extended understanding in the protégé by learning from the mistakes and experiences of the mentor. While Cheng (2023) posits that it is a central part of learning and training, Walker and Dimmock (2006, p. 131) suggest that mentoring can be optimized when the mentors are well experienced and qualified educational leadership professionals are engaged not only during the design and implementation stage but also the during the review of such programme. Furthermore, they mention that these mentors should be given well-defined functions during the implementation stage and the emphasis should be on bringing the theory and content to real life for their protégés in their social contexts and schools. Bush and Jackson (2002, p. 425) mention that mentoring can take different forms such as peer support, counselling, coaching, internship and socialisation.

Networking is another teaching and learning strategy or instructional application that has the potential of building individual and organizational capacity in both structured and unstructured settings. Networking and building networks include (i) engaging with members of similar organizations for better grasp of teamwork ideals, problem solving, improved resources, collaboration and enhancing socialization (ii) interacting and engaging with people of the same organization at different levels, functions, roles and positions. It is reported by Bush et al. (2007, p. 87) that networking in the form of school visits and in-person events were adjudged the most valued and popular activities within training programmes. This is supported by Earley and Weindling (2004, p. 4) when they state that the most valued activities amongst

leaders in training is "working with others, especially other school leaders who are known to be effective" and networking with them. Networking should not be limited to formal settings alone but must be extended to informal settings too. The formal networks and groups are those established specifically for and from participants within the programme. However, participants should be given some form of encouragement to join or establish informal circles both outside and inside such programme for the satisfaction of their own cravings for interacting with other people in similar and comparable cultural, school or social contexts.

A potent approach to networking, according to Davis et al., (2005, p. 9) and (Orr, 2011, p. 120) is the utilization of cohorts in educational leadership learning programmes with the former emphasizing that learning involving adults works "best when it is part of a socially cohesive activity structure" that focuses on sharing learning and opportunities for teamwork and collaboration. This is in consonance with the global educational leadership learning trend of encouraging experiential learning and developing reflective skills amongst active and potential school leaders (Huber, 2010, p. 237). The promotion of these skills as proposed by Huber (2010, p. 237) can be done through peer networks, peer assisted learning, critical partnerships, coaching (Conigrave, 2022), shadowing (Hughes, Kilderry & Keamy, 2022) and mentoring (Conigrave, 2022).

Several researchers in the educational leadership learning field have acknowledged the use of high-quality internships (Coker, 2020), field-based experiential learning, and action learning as a teaching and learning approach or instructional application. Zhang and Brundrett (2010, p. 155) opine that the time has come for attention to be turned away from the conventional formal leadership learning to real-world learning inside school environments. This assertion is made on the basis of comments by certain participants involved in their study which evaluated school leaders' perspectives of the best strategies to improve school leadership

abilities. Zhang and Brundrett (2010, p. 155) report that "an almost ubiquitous response from respondents indicated that leadership learning arose out of a variety of informal routes such as group work, learning communities and collaborative work within and across schools". Lauder (2000, p. 27) recommends learning acquired from the field which gives room for the utilization of work experiences as well as simulations while Hallinger and Snidvong (2005, p. 8) give backing to learning of educational leadership that is field-based with an emphasis on the employment of real world challenges that are "closely related to the actual work and functioning of the school". Donmoyer, Donmoyer and Galloway (2012, p. 11) provides an intriguing suggestion in this regard when they suggest the adaptation of the medical field's "teaching-hospital" model for application in the experiential educational leadership training field. The selected schools would be those where the principals not only display exceptional and exemplary collaboration but also instructional and "distributed leadership practices" as well as schools in which the students are performing academically well. Educational leadership learning students can then be sent to those schools to serve in a range of administrative capacities to "learn about effective leadership experientially" (Donmoyer et al., 2012, p. 11).

Osman and Miller (2022) report that such experience-based elements, for instance, project work, internships, simulations and field visitations have been added in conventional formal programmes of leadership learning in the USA and the UK for some years now. However, Glatter (2009, p. 234) warns that although these elements can contribute positively to leadership learning, they require careful monitoring and management. In their discussions on lessons learnt from a pilot project of the National Preparation for Headship Qualification (NPHQ), Crawford and Earley (2011, p. 116) suggest that administrative internship or in their own words "leadership apprenticeships" can be beneficial in developing future leaders of schools and should be incorporated into leadership learning programmes. On a final note,

Rhode and Brundrett (2009, p. 365) recommend that creating opportunities for work shadowing, that is, developing school leaders following and observing an experienced leader, is a vital asset in developing leaders of schools overall.

The foregoing discussions is excellently summed by Walker and Dimmock (2006, p. 155) when they posit that emphasis ought to shift from the formal development of leadership "to real-world leadership learning within schools". They continue that "no formal training programme will, on its own, prepare and develop effective leaders without internal and contextual support from within the school". The increasing emphasis on real-world learning is mirrored in the worldwide trend in educational leadership learning. This trends tilts towards collaboration amongst key players in the field (higher institutions, education professionals in schools and educational organizations) and the ensuing establishment of school-based initiatives and internships as huge parts of educational leadership training process (Huber, 2010, p. 230; Coker, 2020).

In terms of establishing a framework for successful programmes of educational leadership training built on a relevant learning theory or a mix of theories as advised by Davis et al. (2005, p. 9) and selecting suitable teaching and learning methodologies or instructional applications, a review of literature involving learning theories discloses the availability of a plethora of applicable teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications. A quick summary of additional teaching and learning strategies that could be added to the already discussed strategies for teaching and learning from the main paradigms of learning theory would be useful:

(i) The teaching and learning strategies obtained from the constructivist learning theory includes modelling, peer collaboration, observation and group learning (Schunk, 2012, p. 236). To these, more strategies such as personal curriculum design and de-schooling which refocuses

learning on the learners by giving curriculum options and selections tailored to their own learning preferences and requirements could be added. Also, dynamic evaluation that permits peers to examine and appraise each other in both summative and formative manner is useful. More so, generative or active learning which is the teaching and application of reasoning, problem-solving and teamwork skills are essential in order to link old and new knowledge and experience (Leonard, 2002; Aji & Khan, 2019).

(ii) To the teaching and learning strategies derived from humanistic learning theory already discussed, mastery learning which stipulates that learners set their individual learning pace and also supplied with feedback in order to allow room for them to assess their learning success (Schunk, 2012, p. 102; Akpan, 2020) could be added. Also, holistic learning is another approach related to experiential learning that employs and considers the learning environment for the purpose of connecting the acquired attitudes, abilities and knowledge to the real life experiences of the learner (Leonard, 2002, p. 85; Miller et al., 2018).

(iii) The strategies for teaching and learning obtained from the behaviourist theory of learning that could be added to the previously discussed strategies include imitative learning which entails vicarious learning through observing others' behaviours and actions (Schunk, 2012, p. 121; Zhiwei, 2019) and behaviour modelling which involves providing a model instructor with exemplary behaviour for learners to emulate.

(iv) Regarding cognitivist learning, goal-based scenarios which necessitates the instructor to initiate simulations or instances where the learners play a specific role or perform some actions in order to build new skills, could be added to the previously discussed strategies (Leonard, 2002, p. 81; Kandın & Şendurur, 2022). These simulations or instances should be done within the curriculum.

The Educational Leadership Learning Context. An excellent statement for discussing context as part of the means of delivery or active learning strategies of exemplary education leadership learning would be that made by Lumby et al. (2008, p. 3). "If we should avoid thinking of leadership in simplistic de-contextualized ways, should we not also think of leadership preparation and development as contextualized?" (Lumby et al., 2008, p. 3). This discussion on the educational leadership learning context supplements and expands the previous discussions on the tenets of andragogy which specifies that adults possess life experiences which they take to their learning environments (Knowles, 1984, p. 11; Tight, 2002, p. 104; Renger & Macaskill, 2021) and that they learn from a more practical viewpoint, thereby projecting contextualization and relevance to their real-life essential as important (Knowles, 1984, p. 12; Tight, 2002, p. 105; Renger & Macaskill, 2021).

Several researchers have claimed that school leadership is dependent on context. One of such researchers is Christie (2010, p. 696) who states that school leadership is rooted in wider understanding of culture and social ties and is impacted by location, gender, socio-economic background, race and the perception of what is wrong or right in a specified context. Huber (2010, p. 229) states that the worldwide trend of giving educational leadership learning providers more leeway in programme design suggests greater flexibility in meeting the demands of participants. In order to deal with and enhance school leadership practice, Eacott and Asuga (2014, p. 930) argue that practitioners and researchers in the field of educational leadership learning should consider the legacy of colonialism, leadership construction and socio-geographical contexts. On their part, Zhang and Brundrett (2010, p. 154) believe that contextualization is one of the two most essential components in educational leadership development and learning with the other one being the necessity for leaders of schools to accept responsibility for developing up-and-coming leaders based on their own school contexts.

Because of the idea that educational leadership learning programmes equip leaders of schools with the knowledge and skills they need to cope successfully with various contextual situations, Brauckmann and Pashiardis (2012, p. 20) state that it is crucial for the designers of such programmes to consider contextual factors in order to be adequately prepared for responding to school leaders' needs. This strengthens Bolam (2003, p. 68) and Lauder (2000, p. 25) arguments who stress that educational leadership learning should be "rooted in" a specific individual and institutional/school context.

In further contribution to the above arguments, Walker and Dimmock (2006, p. 139) express the view that the learning of educational leadership should employ contents and approaches that are culturally and contextually relevant as vehicles for such learning. For this, they suggest the incorporation of more theoretical and formal contents on reform, policy and change as well as the utilization of action learning that must be adapted, tailored and contextualized to befit the specific school and societal culture of the learners. In continuation, they suggest that the methodologies, approaches and contents (tools and artefacts) to be employed must be grounded in leadership realities and be a representation of the school's mission and culture. To do this, the curriculum and methodologies of the programme should be problem-based to a greater extent with more opportunities for solutions, practices, and divergent perspectives. This, they state, supports personalized growth and development amongst leaders of schools, including the formation of a knowledge of both the distinctiveness of each school leader and their situations, as well as their common challenges and the variety of options available to solve these challenges. They further state that effective programmes use multiple means of delivery which include seminars and lectures (formal learning) as well as shadowing and school visitations (informal learning).

Educational leadership learning contextualization should be personalized, including options such as allowing learners to choose the sequence in which their study modules or activities can be best completed and should allow learners "negotiate the kinds of practice activities they engage in or support they receive" (Simkins, 2012, p. 629) through such strategies as coaching, action learning projects and mentoring (Simkins, 2012, p. 629; Conigrave, 2022). This personalization, Simkins (2012, p. 629) links to a constructivist educational leadership learning approach, claiming that programmes that adopt such personalization could achieve promoting co-construction between programme providers and the learners.

Regarding educational leadership learning that goes "beyond best practices", Walker and Quong (2005, p. 97), in their discussion, advocate "the wise practice" concept as an alternative to best practices. They define "the wise practice" concept as a type of learning that is deeply rooted in the culture and contexts that shape the lives of the school leaders as well as their schools. They posit that the improvement and enhancement of leadership practice in education does not necessarily have to rely on best practices but on a flexible design that is adaptable to situations and individuals. On this particular topic of contextual learning of educational leadership, Bush et al. (2007, p. 87) propose the "polar model of leadership learning" in which the traditional style of leader development, scale, content-led, classroom-based, off-site, standardized and prescribed models are substituted with leadership development, depth, process-rich, work-based, onsite, personalized and emergent models respectively.

Bearing in mind their backing for integrating theory and practice to attain successful educational leadership learning (Bush & Jackson, 2002, p. 424), as well as the prior caution about ignoring theory when developing educational leadership learning programmes (Bush,

2003, p. 228), the “polar model of leadership learning” prescribes that rather than developing individual leaders, leadership development should be prioritized. Also, the utilization of off-site settings (environments outside the school), formal classroom scenarios and theory-rich-only contents isolate the leader-in-training from their school staff members and contexts on whom they greatly rely on to become successful leaders. Furthermore, Bush et al. (2007, p. 89) identify a "re-entry" problem in which school leaders who had finished their training resist novel strategies and ideas from their staff members. To address this, they contend that contextualization and personalization of such training as well as the utilization of school-based settings, activities and learning that engage other key players would be critical. These would create a school climate that is more adaptive to change and an enhanced culture of distributed and instructional leadership as well as fostering collegiality in performing leadership duties and functions. With this model, Bush et al. (2007, p. 228) recommend that programmes of leadership learning in education ought to be developed in collaboration with participating leaders as much as is practicable in order to attend to their own unique experience and contexts as well as the unique challenges of their schools. In addition, such leadership learning programmes should avoid being content driven but instead focus on applying theoretical knowledge and traditional content through teaching and learning strategies such as mentorship and problem-based learning. They conclude that these recommendations *must* not be perceived as prescriptions but rather a take-off point.

Regarding theories of learning, the Situated Learning Theory, for instance, supports this discussion on the importance of developing and providing educational leadership learning in contexts. As detailed earlier, this theory presupposes that learning in the classroom is de-contextualized by nature; thus irrelevant. As such, the skills and knowledge presented within contextualized settings (for instance, the workplace) are not only more relevant but also more

effective. This theory further explains that learning is an interactive and sociable activity which should entail collaboration and mentoring to a great extent. Conclusively, the worldwide trend in the educational leadership learning field, namely, the increasing leeway educational leadership learning providers are given to design and develop such programmes (Huber, 2010, p. 229) has provided more flexibility towards the needs of education leaders and those of their schools and nation at large. However, it is compelling to take note of the relationship between learning leadership in context as one of the characteristics of exemplary educational leadership learning and this global trend in that a more successful strategy to educational leadership learning would be to provide opportunities for professional development to leaders-in-training based on their own unique contexts, personality, experience, and leadership style (Huber, 2010, p. 236).

Summary of the Literature Review

This section wraps up the literature review in the educational leadership learning field. First, it defined educational leadership as the formal policy goal, processes, programs and structures that are planned and executed to offer activities that are well articulated for the nurturing and continuous development of prospective and active school leaders. Educational leadership learning, on the other hand, is all the knowledge, skills as well as the contents and activities that form part of a formal programme or course of study aimed at expanding skills, knowledge and capacities which is intended to improve the effectiveness and understanding of education leaders. These definitions were then connected to that of learning which has been posited by various researchers to involve skills, knowledge, attitude, strategies as well as behaviour acquisition and modification and can be said to have taken place when someone is able to do activities in a different way (Schunk, 2012, p. 2 & 4; Waters, 2023).

In summary, and within learning and educational leadership learning definitions' context, first, the researcher asserts that the developers of educational leadership training programmes should take the following factors into account (i) the context in which leaders learn (ii) the effectiveness of teaching and learning methodologies or instructional applications proposed for such learning and (iii) the abilities school leaders must have in order to carry out their responsibilities successfully (Smylie, 2005, p. 139). Second, a further review of literature discloses that exemplary educational leadership learning programmes should be founded on valid education leadership learning theories (Davis et al., 2005, p. 8; Earley & Jones, 2010, p. x; Crawford & Earley, 2011, p. 108; Orr, 2011, p. 120), for instance, the instructional leadership theory (Southworth, 2002, p. 77; Bush et al., 2007, p. 400; Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 22; Huber, 2014, p. 673) which promotes well-defined curriculum where there is an obvious connection between the objectives and aims of the programme and the learning activities and contents on the one hand as well as the common beliefs and values of the underpinning leadership theory on the other hand (Davis et al., 2005, p. 8). The contents of the well-defined curriculum could be presented formally (seminars, lectures) in a classroom with learners divided into small groups (Lauder, 2000, p. 115; Davis et al., 2005, p. 9; Orr, 2011, p. 120) but should maintain a balance between theory and practice (Brundrett, 2000, p. 365; Crawford and Earley, 2011, 108).

Next, the means of delivering exemplary educational leadership training programmes should be developed within the theory of adult learning framework (Davis et al., 2005, p. 9) with consideration for the leader's (learner's) contexts (Walker & Quong, 2005, p. 97; Lumby et al., 2008, p. 3; Brauckmann & Pashiardis, 2012, p. 20) and should encourage experiential and active learning (Davis et al., 2005, p. 8; Zhang & Brundrett, 2010, p. 20; Orr, 2011, p. 120; Aji & Khan, 2019) through coaching (Bush & Jackson, 2002, p. 426; Conigrave, 2022),

mentoring (Bush & Jackson, 2002, p. 427; Davis et al., 2005, p. 9; Paterson & West-Burnham, 2005, p. 111; Conigrave, 2022), high quality internships (Crawford & Earley, 2011, p. 116; Orr, 2011, p. 120; Coker, 2020) and shadowing (Bush, 2012, p. 10; Hughes, Kilderry & Keamy, 2022). Finally, the learning theory of andragogy which specifies the learning pattern of adults is adopted as the most suitable to this study's educational leadership learning activity system after a thorough review of various theories of learning.

The next chapter will focus on the design of the research as well as the methodology employed in the study.

CHAPTER THREE: RESEARCH METHOD

While the previous chapter dwelt on discourse of the theoretical framework upon which this research study is built on – Engestrom Activity Theory, this chapter presents the research processes of the investigation into Nigerian teachers' perceptions regarding the educational leadership training they underwent in Japan. The purpose of the study was to assess the aspects of the training program that had the most impact as well as the aspects of it that had the least impact. The study's problem remains whether educational leadership learning programmes are still necessary, given that some academics in the field believe they are ineffective at enhancing leadership practices in institutions of learning.

More specifically, this chapter details the *who*, *where* and *how* of the research study. These include the paradigm, approach as well as the methodology selected for the study. It also comprises the study's design, data collection methods as well as the process and justification for the participants' selection. The last part of the chapter covers the ethical considerations employed throughout the study.

Research Paradigm and Research Approach

Research paradigm is a method of seeking knowledge and a set of principles or system of beliefs which lead to a consensus on what issues or phenomena are worth investigating and then, to a consensus on how these phenomena or problems could be investigated (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 5). In view of adequately explaining and comprehending the research paradigm concept, it is necessary to understand what Cohen et al. (2011, p. 5) refer to as two opposing research viewpoints in the social science field as well as the education field. The first, which is the interpretative viewpoint emphasizes how people are different from themselves and from non-living natural phenomenon while the second, which is the positivistic viewpoint aims to discover the universal and natural laws that define and regulate individual human and social

behaviour (Berryman, 2019; Ejnavarzala, 2019). These two distinctive viewpoints, Cohen et al. (2011) contend, is best explained by investigating the ontological and epistemological positions or assumptions on which they are founded. The next sections will discuss and carefully identify the paradigm appropriate for this research study.

Research Paradigm

Paradigms, in simple terms, are wide-ranging frames of view or ideologies. Research paradigms are collections of common presumptions and guidelines which researchers utilize to frame, approach and address problems. It is usually referred to as the three basic concerns that researchers employ to guide and direct their work: epistemology, ontology and methodological questions (Yong, Maizaitulaidawati & Suzilawati, 2023). On the part of Pervin and Mokhtar (2022), research paradigm consists of the overall beliefs and concepts that influence the way researchers view the field, the way they understand and interpret it, and how they act in it. Inherent in a paradigm are the beliefs of the researcher regarding the setting in which they reside and want to stay. Researchers use a range of paradigms which are dependent on the goals of their research study and the views they hold (Kumatongo & Muzata, 2021). Also, research questions as well as its objectives are examined based on the research paradigm. Paradigms and their proper choice in research are important because they serve as a useful guide through their principles and beliefs (Park, Konge & Artino, 2020).

Ontological Perspective of the Study. Ontology of a research describes reality from the perspective of the researcher (Ylönen & Aven, 2023). In accordance with Sarkia and Kaidesoja (2023), the assumptions of ontology concern the basic essence or character of the social phenomena under examination. In essence, ontology indicates the researchers' beliefs regarding the nature of social reality which rests on the researchers' answers to the question of what they consider social reality to be, that is, whether it is "the outcome of individual

consciousness” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 6) or “a reality external to social actors” (Bryman, 2012, p. 32). According to the latter, these are constructivism and objectivism respectively with reality being a collection of constructions from the actions and perceptions of social actors.

From the foregoing, the researcher asserts that the position of ontology here is constructive because he sees reality as being constructed instead of being objective. Constructivism, as defined by Bryman (2012, p. 32) is “an ontological position which asserts that social phenomenon and their meanings are continually being accomplished by social actors”. According to constructivism, knowledge is the outcome of people's attempts at interpreting their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018). It is the belief of the researcher that the Nigerian teachers not only actively developed and constructed knowledge for themselves during their training of education leadership but also constructed a reality for themselves as education leaders by means of the different training components and via their experiences as partakers in the training programme. The researcher's belief is in consonance with previous studies related to educational leadership learning programs such as those by McConnel, Geesa and Brown (2022) on “Mentor Perceptions of an Educational Leadership Doctoral Mentoring Program”. In their research, they report that participants constructed their unique professional and personal experiences through discussions with colleagues within the program. Another study by Arvin (2016) on “Principal Perceptions of the Effectiveness of University Educational Leadership Preparation and Professional Learning” suggests that a huge number of participants developed their knowledge through field experience which was a component of their training program.

Epistemological Perspective of the Study. As was defined in the earlier chapter, epistemology as a term can be used to describe how people learn; the way people discover reality or what is regarded as knowledge in the world (Roeber et al., 2024). In the exact words

of Cohen et al. (2011, p. 6), it is “the nature of knowledge – its nature and forms, how (it can be) communicated to other human beings”. The epistemological perspective of this study is interpretivism. Interpretivism seeks to advance knowledge via better comprehension of people's unique viewpoints and the meanings ascribed to them (Pervin & Mokhtar, 2022). In contrast to the positivist paradigm which is tied closely to the natural sciences and focuses on *explaining* the behaviour and activities of humans, the epistemological paradigm focuses explicitly on *understanding* the behaviour and activities of humans. In the words of Cohen et al. (2011, p. 17), it focuses on “understanding the subjective world of human experience”. In this regard, the researcher focuses on understanding the perceptions of the individual Nigerian teachers’ of their own leadership training during this study’s investigation.

In the light of the above discussions on ontology and epistemological perspectives of the research, it is truth that this research study is undertaken from a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm (Vogl, Schmidt & Zartler, 2019). The interpretative aspect stems from the study concentrating on the comprehension and interpretation of the human activity of education leadership training rather than its explanation while the constructive aspect arises from the belief of the researcher that reality is constructed and that the educational leadership learning students for this study constructed their own reality.

Research Approach

The researcher’s ontology and epistemological perspectives prescribe a qualitative approach to the investigative study of the perceptions of Nigerian teachers about their own leadership learning in education (Vogl, Schmidt & Zartler, 2019). Qualitative research is based on the constructivist and interpretivistic paradigms and aims to better comprehend rather than anticipate the subject of a study (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020). Over the past

years, qualitative research has developed its own varied identity and therefore it is no longer tenable to simply define it as “not quantitative research” (Kvale, 2011).

As McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 5) defines it, qualitative research is “research that refers to an in-depth study using face-to-face or observation techniques to collect data from people in their natural settings”. It is described by Creswell (2014, p. 11) as a valuable interpretative approach for comprehending and characterizing diverse human actions/activities in visuals or words within various contexts by gathering participants' detailed viewpoints, perceptions and descriptions for analysis as well as identifying and describing the specific themes or qualities of a phenomena within a given context. This description resounds the explanation of Bredal et al. (2022) who state that the goal of qualitative research is to examine specifics in order to learn more about the reasons behind the way things are and how people see them in certain contexts. Furthermore, it provides participants with an opportunity to use their voice to speak in order to formulate their own understanding of their intentions, actions, behaviour or the phenomena being investigated and how they perceive them (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 219). Overall, qualitative research respects people's lived experiences and is essentially sensitive to the biases of participants and the researcher as well (Tomaszewski, Zarestky & Gonzalez, 2020).

To sum up, the qualitative approach to research necessitates an extensive analysis and description of a particular phenomenon or human behaviour within a specific context by employing in-person methods of collecting data so as to offer the persons involved a voice and the chance to provide thorough descriptions and viewpoints on their perceptions and experiences. In this way, the people engaged in or participating in such activities develop and communicate their own interpretation of these tasks, contexts and phenomena as a component of their own reality. Since this research study seeks to investigate how Nigerian teachers

constructed their own learning of educational leadership within the context of their involvement in the MEXT training, which is the educational leadership programme for this research study, the qualitative research approach is adjudged to be the most ideal for application due to its personal face-to-face methodologies for collecting data, in-depth analysis and its provision for the participants' voices.

Furthermore, the researcher considered the logicity of an alternative approach such as quantitative or mixed approach, at one point during the research. However, bearing in mind the nature of the topic under investigation, none of these approaches is found to be appropriate in addressing the posed research questions or even supplementing the selected one.

Research Methodology

In simple terms, research methodology is basically how research is undertaken. In specific terms, it relates to the rigorous processes that researchers use to ensure that their study yields reliable results that meet their study's objectives and aims as well as address the research questions (Marx, 2023). It also entails how researchers made decisions on the type of data to be gathered, who and what should be surveyed and sampled, how it should be collected as well as how it should be analysed (Anubha & Manpreet, 2020).

Research Design

A research design is a strategy which specifies the course of actions and conditions for data gathering and analysis. Precisely, this is the general scheme or procedure for conducting research that answers questions about how, from whom and when the study's data would be gathered (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014). The design of research allows for developing the scheme for each component of a study such as how the respondents would be chosen, the data gathering procedures as well as the methods of data analysis (Kassu, 2019). With respect to this study, the design for this qualitative research is case study.

Case Study Design

Case study design is a qualitative research design which enquires about “a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2017, p. 18). The specific phenomenon and the context are often interconnected (Priya, 2021) but the case study should be a representation of bounded system that is clearly delimited and defined (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). This definition shows huge similarity with that of McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 32) who define “case study as a qualitative research design that enables detailed examination of a bounded system using data sources located within the case or system”. This type of design addresses the whole convolution of the research issue by embracing many sources and different kinds of evidence (Yin, 2017). These definitions are echoed by Bryman (2012, p. 66) as well as Patnaik and Pandey (2019) with the former positing that case study is “the detailed and intensive analysis of a single case”.

Wiesner (2022) submits that a case study usually adheres to the interpretivist research paradigm which perceives through the participants’ eyes. This opinion is corroborated by Gay et al. (2014, p. 13) when they state that case studies are often designed to provide “the interpretivist researcher” with a full grasp of how individuals in a particular situation or context construct or develop their own meaning of that phenomenon being studied. In conclusion, the definition of case study adopted for this study is the selection of a case of a population, system, community, organization, group, phenomenon or occurrence as well as its relevant and surrounding context for thorough and detailed analysis and examination via interpretivist standpoint.

Case Study Type

It is noteworthy that with respect to the characteristics and nature of case study, several types abound (Priya, 2021). However, instrumental case study is seen as the best fit for this research due to its capability to describe a particular phenomenon within its natural context (Ruzzene, 2023). Also, when case study is viewed in the context of “community” or “bounded system” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 290), then it is safe to assert that instrumental case study (in which a particular context is employed to examine a phenomenon or theme that appears in such context) is the most appropriate for this present study.

The choice of instrumental case study is due to its capability in investigating, completely describing and comprehending a phenomenon and the specific context within which it is present. Specifically, the bounded system or community of the MEXT training programme which serves as the educational leadership training programme for this research provides the activity system or context within which the researcher investigates the educational leadership learning phenomenon using the participants’ own experiences and perceptions. One justification for choosing case study over other designs such as phenomenology and grounded theory is that while phenomenology focuses on lived experiences and grounded theory builds new theory, case study matches the contextual and practical goals of this study; providing actionable insights for educational leadership and policy. Another justification is that while phenomenology uses mainly interviews and grounded theory uses theoretical sampling, case study aligns with the research questions, methods and units of analysis of this study.

In spite of the above advantages, there are also some limitations. These include the generation of large data for analysis. The researcher would address this by analysing contexts peculiar to all answers and not focusing on the entire stories/answers provided by every respondent. Another limitation is the researcher’s bias. To address this, the researcher, together

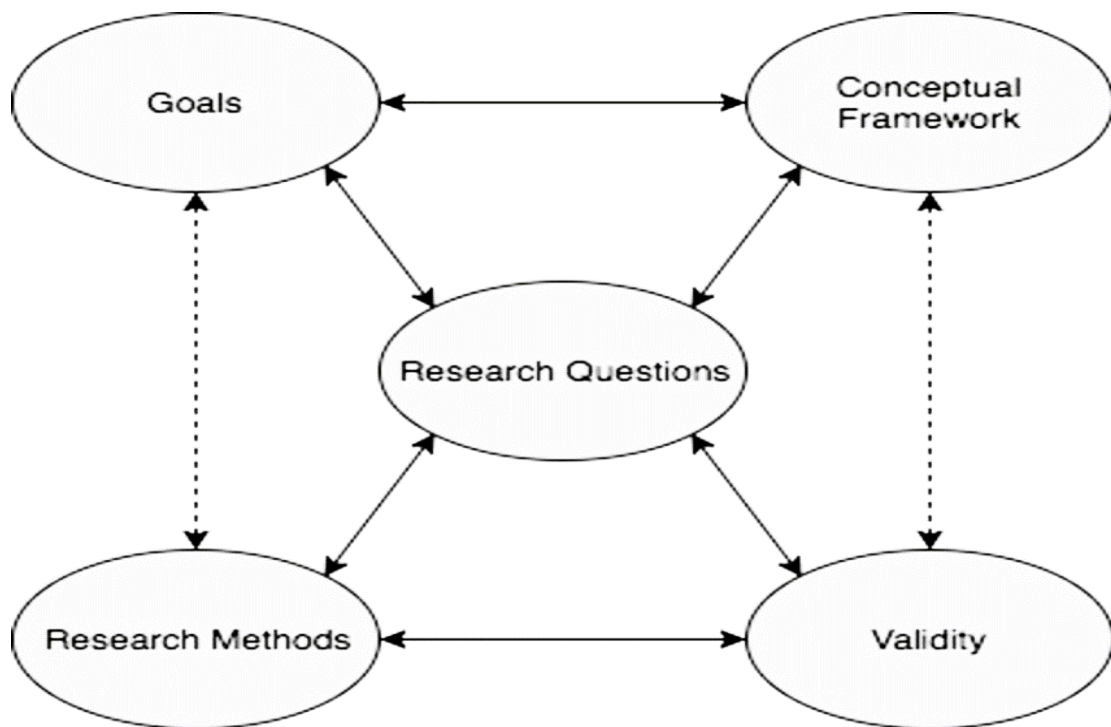
with his supervisor of this chapter, Dr. Steve Sharra, maximized their research skills and intuitiveness by meticulously determining the right questions to pose and in what manner to pose them in order to ensure the resulting data is significant.

According to Priya (2021), the essential elements of a case study design are the type of research study (descriptive, exploratory or explanatory) to be conducted which depends on the research study's purpose, the study of single (or multiple) case(s), the research questions and available resources in terms of time, money and labour. Other key elements include the sampling, epistemological perspectives of the study which determines the direction of such case study, the adopted data gathering methods and data analysis as well as the presentation of analysed data in an effective and cohesive manner which leads to the improvement of knowledge.

The researcher adopts the research design framework of Maxwell (2012) as shown in figure 3. The design outlines the general strategy used to integrate the many components of a research in an understandable and logical manner. This model is interactive in the sense that the components collaborate in a harmonious non-linear manner, enabling effective and efficient operation. According to Maxwell (2009), this model is meant to assist the investigator in understanding the real structure of their research, as well as planning it, carrying it out, and reflecting on research design decisions on a continuous basis. He continues that an “essential feature of this model is that it treats research design as a real entity” (Maxwell, 2009). This model is made up of five elements, each one of them addressing separate concerns that affect the study's coherence: aims (goals), methods, validity, research questions and conceptual framework. Maxwell (2012) does not name these elements sequentially as one, two, three, four or five but are simply overlapping elements that give room for additional investigation and examination of concepts discussed in connection with other elements.

Figure 3

“An Interactive Model of Research Design” (Maxwell, 2012)



The greatest advantage of this model is that when researchers employ this design, they are continually reflecting on all of the model's elements, which are connected in a fluid and organic manner. The questions posed by the research are crucial to the model, linking all of its elements. This link demonstrates how each element informs and responds to the others (Maxwell, 2009). The model's upper triangle (research questions, conceptual framework and goals) should be closely tied to the lower one (research questions, validity and methods) and this connection is shown in figure 3 using the thick arrows. Maxwell (2009) maintains that the questions posed by the research ought to be clearly connected to the research goals and guided by what is already known, theory as well as current knowledge. He continues that the “methods you use must enable you to answer your research questions, and also to deal with plausible validity threats to these answers” (Maxwell, 2009). This research design model has been used

by various researchers including the study, “Holding it together: an explanatory framework for maintaining subjective well-being (SWB) in principals”, which is a doctoral thesis at an Australian University in Queensland by Carter (2016). Others are Koolen, Gorp and Ossenbruggen (2018) in their study, “Toward a model for digital tool criticism: reflection as integrative practice” as well as Carter et al. (2023) in their research, “An exploratory study: using adapted interactive research design and contributive research method”.

The Research Method

Research methods are the collection of all actions undertaken in preparation for collection of data and its analysis (Pauwels & Mannay, 2020). It also comprises the selection of a sampling approach as well as its application to the total population in an attempt to identify the study’s participants, prepare for, collect and analyse the necessary data.

Sampling

It is almost unfeasible for researchers to obtain data from the whole population under investigation (Taherdoost, 2016). In essence, researchers often depend on collecting data from a whole population’s sample in most cases with anticipation that whatever is discovered in the small, selected group (sample) would apply to the entire population (Chang, 2024). In some other situations, certain factors tied to the population, the study’s phenomenon or even the (investigator) researcher, for instance, resources and time would determine the exclusion or inclusion of possible participants. For this study, the selection (inclusion) criteria for the MEXT cohort participants include:

1. Participants were included if they successfully completed the MEXT educational leadership training programme in 2019, 2020 or 2021.
2. Held or had held a formal school leadership position (e.g. principal, vice-principal, HOD, teacher).

3. Were directly involved in school leadership practice at the time of participation in the programme.
4. Were willing to participate voluntarily and provide informed consent.

The selection (inclusion) criteria for government officials include:

1. Officials were included if they held an official position within the relevant education ministry or agency.
2. Were directly involved in the coordination of the MEXT training programme and/or orientation of trainees.
3. Had decision-making authority or oversight responsibilities related to leadership preparation.

The exclusion criteria for the MEXT cohort participants include:

Individuals who did not complete the MEXT programme or who participated outside 2019 – 2021, participants without a formal leadership role and those who declined consent. For government officials, the exclusion criteria include officials with no direct involvement in the programme and administrative staff without policy insight.

Gay et al. (2014, p. 134) posit that the process of considering each of these factors, followed by the selection of a smaller representation of such population is termed sampling. In as much as the total participants in the MEXT training programme is not high, some factors related to the potential participants and the researcher as well necessitate careful consideration of the participants' selection and thus influence the study's sampling process. The sections that follow will discuss these factors extensively.

Sampling Types. Probability and non-probability sampling are the two (2) methods utilized by researchers to establish the sample of every research (Wiśniowski et al., 2020). Random sampling, also referred to as probability sampling, is a technique of sampling common in quantitative studies where every sample has the same chance of selection as a participant for

a study (Stratton, 2021). In contrast, non-probability sampling is a technique commonly employed in qualitative studies which does not allow every member of a population of interest to participate in a research. Rather, the participants are chosen by the researcher, self-selected to participate in a study or are suggested to the researcher (Stratton, 2021). Since non-probability method of sampling permits the purposeful removal or addition of some samples of a population (Stratton, 2021) and is better suited to qualitative studies, it is therefore chosen for this study. A variety of sampling strategies are identified under non-probability sampling which include:

(i) Purposive sampling: In this case, the researcher deliberately chooses participants from the entire population for particular purposes (Andrade, 2021). Usually, this method depends on the researcher's discretion to choose cases or people who are capable of supplying the greatest information that would achieve the study's objectives. Researchers employ this method when they are in need of data that have sufficiently-rich information and specific to a phenomenon or when the study's population is not large (Obilor, 2023, p. 4).

(ii) Quota sampling: The researcher chooses the sample in such a way that factors such as gender, religion, social status, age, education or occupation in the whole population have a proportional representation in the selected sample (Iliyasu & Ilker, 2021; Obilor, 2023, p. 4).

(iii) Snowball sampling: Here, the researcher selects a few samples who meet the inclusion requirements for their study and then these few samples subsequently aid in identifying some other qualified individuals (Frey, 2018; Obilor, 2023, p. 4). This method can be employed to attract participants through other participants if the population is difficult to reach.

Sampling Strategy for the Study. To realize the aim of this research, the researcher makes two critical selections. First, he selects a suitable educational leadership training activity system by adhering to the recommendation of Bush and Jackson (2002, p. 424)

who prescribes that leaders of schools should pursue educational leadership learning at post graduate level because teaching profession is a graduate-level job. The choice of the MEXT educational leadership training programme for this research study is done for convenience and purposefully (Obilor, 2023, p. 4) because (i) its curriculum is designed for current teachers most of whom are active or aspiring leaders at various levels in their respective schools (ii) the programme is the closest to an educational leadership training for Nigerian teachers who most often than not, are or become leaders in their schools since Nigeria has no sufficient official national leadership learning programme for its teeming school leaders (iii) the researcher was a participant in the programme making access to past participants convenient.

Second, according to Obilor (2023; p. 4), “an effective purposive sample must have clear criteria and rationale for inclusion”. Therefore, the actual participants are chosen on purpose from among the ranks of recent past students who had studied and had graduated from the training course and also government officials. This is because they are deemed knowledgeable about the past and current developments regarding the topic being investigated or as McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 152) put it, “they will be representative or informative about the topic of interest”. Hence, purposive sampling ensured that data were generated from individuals positioned within the system either as subjects (participants) or structural actors (government officials). Also, including both MEXT participants and government officials enabled analysis across multiple levels of the activity system – capturing both lived experience and systemic design intentions. Furthermore, the rationale for purposive sampling is theoretically grounded in that sampling across participant and policy levels enabled examination of the full activity system, including the subject (participants), community, rules (government actors) as well as the intended object of MEXT leadership training.

The Actual Participants' Selection

With regard to the purposive sampling definition given and this study seeking to explore the perceptions of Nigerian teachers regarding their own educational leadership training, the potential participants who are likeliest to have the essential information to answer the questions presented by this research on educational leadership training would be the most recent graduates (2021 cohorts) of the programme. However, the researcher decided to include the more recent graduates (2019 and 2020 cohorts) to capture the recent programme iterations while allowing sufficient time for participants to reflect on the impact of the training on their leadership practice. These cohorts also represent a period of contextual transition in educational leadership, including pandemic-related work pressures. Moreover, government officials were included to add a distinct dimension to the project, particularly to provide systemic-level perspectives regarding the MEXT programme, thereby complementing experiential data from the selected cohorts.

Due to the researcher being a part of the year 2019 class and also conversant with the 2020 and 2021 classes, the study's sample is restricted to these classes due to their recency. This decision purposefully excluded the 2018 class and preceding classes since their graduation is not recent (more than five years ago). The researcher is unconcerned about a situation in which students from the 2019, 2020 and 2021 classes generate data with poorer trustworthiness and credibility owing to "subject effects" (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014, p. 126) which is changes in the responses and behaviour of participants that may occur due to a reaction to some elements, for instance, the researcher. This is because the researcher throughout his training in the programme was merely a beneficiary just like the other scholars and so does not feel that his acquaintance with these classes would induce "subject effects".

Although there are no clearly defined answers to the sample size required for a research study (Maree & Paterson, 2007, p. 178), Cohen et al. (2011, p. 144) as well as Mocănașu (2020) state that the total population size, purpose and nature of the study are essential factors that should determine the size of a qualitative research sample. Considering this study's purpose, the total population of 31 prospective participants (table 3.1) as well as the qualitative nature of the research, the researcher arrives at the decision to interview at least 16 participants and at most 23 participants.

Table 3.1

The Class and Gender Classification of Potential Participants

| Cohort | Number of Participants (Male) | Number of Participants (Female) | MEXT Graduation Year | Average Age | Average Years of Experience | Total |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|------------------------------------|--------------|
| 2019 | 9 | 4 | 2021 | 36.9 | 7.6 | 13 |
| 2020 | 5 | 2 | 2022 | 34.7 | 3.5 | 7 |
| 2021 | 6 | 1 | 2023 | 31.4 | 1.7 | 7 |
| Government Officials | 2 | 2 | N/A | 47.5 | 12.5 | 4 |
| Total | 22 | 9 | N/A | 37.6 | 6.3 | 31 |

Asides the consideration of the total population as well as the purpose and nature of this study, the sample decision is reached based on the minimum/maximum permissible limit of participants advised by Maree and Pietersen (2007, p. 178) and Vasileiou et al. (2018) who suggest that (i) A higher number of a population should be involved in a research study if the total identified population is small so as to increase the credibility and trustworthiness of the

obtained findings (ii) the budgetary and time limitations must be considered after other essential factors have been factored in.

The researcher obtained the names, phone numbers and emails of the potential participants from the Nigerian Alumni Association of the MEXT programme. Then, the first point of communication is by telephone through which the potential participants individually received sufficient information regarding the study, were given time to process it, and then given the freedom to choose whether or not to participate. This is followed by an invitation letter (see Appendix B), which formally inquired about their willingness to be involved in the study and also an informed consent letter (see Appendix C) to their email addresses. Only the interested participants who signed and returned their letters either through electronic mail or physical mail are part of the research.

Out of the 31 participants, six (6) of them refused the invitation to participate after several telephone contacts. Four (4) other teachers did not respond to the consent letters sent to them by electronic mail after showing initial interest to participate. Due to distance (over 25,445km), the participation of four (4) others were considered unfeasible as they reside in Nigeria while the researcher resides in Japan. In the light of the above, only seventeen (17) participants were willing and available for voluntary participation (table 3.2). The researcher was concerned about potential biases that could arise during the selection of sample such as risk of leaving out experienced individuals as well as inadequate population representation. However, based on the chosen sample's average age of 5.3, it is fair to state that they are quite experienced. Furthermore, every individual in the population was sent an invitation letter (see Appendix B) and so no one was left out except for those who willingly refused the invitation or did not respond and/or ignored the consent letter.

Table 3.2 shows that the number of females sampled in this study is small (4) when compared to their male counterparts (13). This stems from the relatively small female population (9) who have undertaken the MEXT training programme in the recent past. Several reasons have been attributed to this which include gender stereotypes and cultural expectations that mostly restrict females to family duties thereby hampering their professional ambitions. Another reason is the challenge of balancing work-life situations where childcare and family engagements take priority over aspiration for teaching and leadership positions that are usually demanding and time-consuming. The collection of data from three cohorts of MEXT graduates is unique to this research in that it provides a variety of data for comparison between recent and past teachers who have completed the programme and how they have translated their experience to the Nigerian educational context.

Table 3.2

The Class and Gender Classification of Actual Participants

| Cohort | Number of Participants (Male) | Number of Participants (Female) | MEXT Graduation Year | Average Age | Average Years of Leadership Experience | Total |
|----------------------|--------------------------------------|--|-----------------------------|--------------------|---|--------------|
| 2019 | 4 | 1 | 2021 | 37.8 | 8.0 | 5 |
| 2020 | 3 | 2 | 2022 | 34.0 | 3.3 | 5 |
| 2021 | 5 | 0 | 2023 | 31.0 | 1.4 | 5 |
| Government Officials | 1 | 1 | N/A | 47.5 | 12.5 | 2 |
| Total | 13 | 4 | N/A | 35.9 | 5.3 | 17 |

Summarily, the study utilizes a non-probability method (Andrade, 2021; Stratton, 2021) known as purposive sampling (Cohel et al., 2011, p. 156; Obilor, 2023, p. 4) in the selection of participants from the MEXT training programme of 2019, 2020 and 2021 classes for

investigating and understanding the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers of their own leadership training in education. The reason being that these participants who were students of the training programme are reasonably anticipated to be knowledgeable and insightful on the subject of educational leadership. The size of the sample is decided using the total available population, the study's purpose and nature as well as the cost and time considerations. In the end, 17 individuals participated: 15 MEXT cohort members, one government official from Japan, and one government official from Nigeria.

Materials/Instrumentation of Research Tools

The Data Collection

“If you want to know how people understand their world and their lives, why not ask them?” (Kvale, 2011, p. 1). Considering this advice, the researcher chose interview to be one of the best suitable ways of gathering data that could “provide responses to the questions of the research” (Robinson, 2023).

The Method of Data Collection (Interview)

It is argued that interview is one of the most traditional means of producing information and knowledge (Kvale, 2011, p. 5). Interview is “a purposeful interaction in which one person obtains information from another” (Gay et al., 2014, p. 338). Creswell (2014, p. 238), on the other hand, declares that an interview is held “when researchers ask one or more participants open-ended questions and record their answers”. The goal of qualitative interview as posited by Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 87) is to collect “rich descriptive data” on the perspective or viewpoint of the participants and their “ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours”. Robinson (2023) highlights that interviews can be used to successfully obtain data on how people make meanings of and “make sense of the important events of their lives”. Bearing these distinct attributes in mind, the researcher chooses interview as one of the most appropriate and

suitable means for examining the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers regarding their leadership training. Of all the several kinds of interviews available from literature, the researcher decides to select semi-structured interview.

The Semi-Structured Interview

Despite generally being presented in interview protocol, “semi-structured interviews often include a set of questions that could be asked and responded to, in any order and could be supplemented by extra probing or explanatory questions” for the purpose of comprehensive data collection (Bryman, 2012, p. 470). When compared to structured interviews, the semi-structured interview questions are often more general in their frames of reference. Bryman (2012, p. 470) further suggests that interviews which are semi-structured give the researcher more room to ask probing or/and clarifying questions which in turn provides much details in the responses of the participants and thus greater richness and depth of data. On a final note, Robinson (2023) opines that interviews that are semi structured are perfect for obtaining rich information about participants’ experiences, hence, its adoption for this study.

A semi-structured interview is therefore said to be a conversational exchange amongst two or more people, with one as the interviewer and the other(s) as the interviewee(s) (Buys et al., 2022). This conversation amongst these people is usually aimed at comprehensive and rich information gathering on a particular phenomenon or issue. As the discussion progresses, the interviewer may use suitable supplemental prompts and questions to probe or prompt the interviewee deeper into an issue. The researcher establishes an interview protocol of questions (Creswell, 2014, p. 247) for this study that corresponds to the selected theoretical framework elements and also centres on the educational leadership training issues as was presented to these participants while undertaking their training programme.

The Interview Protocol

This study's interview protocol questions "for the individual semi-structured interviews" are established within "the selected elements' framework of Engestrom Activity Theory" (Engestrom, 2015, p. 78). Also, these questions address topics that arose in Chapter 2 during the literature review on educational leadership learning. These elements that formed the interview protocol's structure include community, tools and artefacts, the division of labour as well as rules (see Appendix A). Questions expounding these elements were created to assist in addressing the research questions presented in Chapter 1. This approach of using Engestrom Activity Theory in structuring the interview questions is innovative in that while earlier research focus on general challenges or outcomes of educational leadership training programmes (Bitton & Barnes, 2024), this study used the theory as a generative research tool that structured data collection.

Because the interview protocol is developed by the researcher, the validation and piloting of the protocol is taken very seriously to avoid ethical issues. In its development, first, the researcher not only ensures that the interview protocol is inquiry based but also the alignment of the interview questions with the questions posed by the research. Since people's experiences are complex and do not always unfold neatly before a researcher, the researcher, in addition to asking purposeful and pertinent interview questions, encourages participants to articulate their experiences by listening attentively, displaying patience and deliberate follow-up (Knott et al., 2022). The researcher also considers the words of Seidman (2013, p. 9) when they counsel that,

The purpose of in-depth interviewing is not to get answers to questions... At the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experiences of other people and the meaning they make of that experience... At the heart of interviewing research is an interest in other individuals' stories because they are of worth.

It is also important to state that verifying the alignment of interview questions and questions posed by the research does not imply that a researcher should automatically draft questions based just on the research question and ignoring the contexts that shaped the lives of the participants, for instance, their languages or daily routines. Rather, the questions are developed with the goal of eliciting pertinent responses that are insightful and helpful in comprehending the interviewee's viewpoint. To ensure that the interview protocol generates conversations that are inquiry based, the organisation of the questions adhered to social norms of everyday conversation, the questions were varied and included prompts and likely follow-up questions. More so, the questions of the interview are written differently from research questions in order to promote discussion. Maxwell (2013) points out that the telling difference between interview questions and research questions is that while the latter defines what the researcher wants to know, the former obtains that information.

Next, feedback and advice were sought and received from a key informant (a MEXT alumnus) familiar with the participants, as well as from two professionals in the educational leadership field conversant with the topic, before pilot testing was conducted (Yeong et al., 2018). This step is necessary so as to collect information on how the participants would feel about responding to the questions and to also enhance the research instrument's reliability and trustworthiness. In general, feedback tells the researcher how well interviewees comprehend the questions and whether or not their comprehension is in line with the researcher's intentions or expectations (Patton, 2015). These key informants closely examine the protocol's length, style of writing, structure and comprehension while putting themselves in the shoes of the participants. To enable the researcher, hear the key informants' thoughts during the interview and to inquire about how they arrive at their answers, they are instructed "to think aloud as they answer the questions" (Noushad, Van Gerven & de Bruin, 2023). The researcher devotes some

time to explaining the rationale behind the think aloud interview and the steps involved so that the participants are not bewildered about why they are being told to answer the questions and to describe their thought process (Willis, 1999). The questions are then revised and restructured severally based on the feedback and advice received.

Finally, the pilot interview was done with a small group of participants. The initial four interviews from the sample, who were willing to have a debriefing session with the researcher afterward, were considered pilot testing. Here, the researcher attempts to replicate the original interview conditions as closely as feasible. These conditions include space, recording, rapport, timing, consent and process for testing the research study's instrument. Through piloting, the researcher is able to determine whether participants are actually capable of answering the questions and how long the interview will take in a realistic sense. Considering the smooth process of the interviews and understanding of the participants of the interview questions, no changes were made in the interview protocol. The interviews were done in English language, conducted face-to-face and one-on-one and the average duration of the interviews was 40 minutes. During these interviews, the researcher took notes that were helpful in the analysis of the collected data. In conclusion, this research study benefits immensely because of the careful formulation and assessment of the interview questions before collecting data.

An alignment between the theoretical framework's selected elements, interview questions and the research questions will be practically illustrated using the following excerpts from the interview protocol.

Tools and Artefacts. Based on this element, the protocol comprises questions that center on the structure and content of the modules that make up the MEXT programme. Some examples of the posed questions are 'Generally, what were your learning experiences regarding education leadership during your MEXT training programme?' and 'What were your

educational leadership learning experiences as facilitated by the different offered modules' contents?'. With particular reference to this second question, the participants who are given a cue with the modules' title are also encouraged to detail their educational leadership training experiences in each separate module. A combination of these selected sample questions and other such questions added to the tools and artefacts section were developed to assist in addressing the research questions that seek to investigate the perceptions and experiences of the course work part of their training programme.

The interview protocol includes another aspect in the section of tools and artefacts that examine (i) the delivery modes of the contents of the educational leadership training programme and (ii) the employment of ICTs during the course of the programme as well as how these impacted their perceptions of educational leadership learning. These questions include 'How would you describe your experience regarding the delivery modes of the modules?' and 'Do you believe the delivery modes of the modules and the teaching strategies contributed in any way to your educational leadership learning and how suitable were they for you as an adult learner?'. These questions directly speak to the manner in which they perceived the transfer of the educational leadership training content to them while question such as 'What contribution do you think ICT made to your educational leadership learning experience?' is used to probe their perceptions and experiences of the use of ICT as an aspect of their training in educational leadership.

Also, the interview protocol includes another aspect in the tools and artefacts section that investigate their perceptions on the tools and artefacts' contribution to their practice of educational leadership using questions like 'Which of these modules, if any, was the most relevant to your educational leadership position and role and why do you believe this/these module(s) is/are relevant to your position and role?' and 'What contributions do you think the

educational leadership training you received in the module(s) you just discussed had on your practice as an education leader?'.

Community and Division of Labour. These elements include and describe every involved participant in the training programme as well as their various functions, for instance, the roles carried out by the university staff members (research project supervisors, administrative staff and lecturers), constituted study groups for the different offered modules as well as those carried out by the individual students. Some of these questions that touch on these theoretical framework elements are 'How was your experience regarding your interaction with students within your class in terms of the benefit this engagement provided to your educational leadership learning and practice? Cite any significant instances, if any' and 'What particular role(s), in your opinion, did the following people (supervisors, administrative staff, study groups, fellow students and lecturers) play in your educational leadership training throughout your participation in the program?'

Rules. The rules of the MEXT training activity system include all the practices, regulations, traditions and culture concerning for instance, the submission of assessments, student/lecturers relationship and lesson attendance. Some questions that focus on this element are 'What were the regulations and rules that guided your educational leadership learning' and 'What elements or traditions of the MEXT training programmes's culture were identifiable with those in Nigeria?' The perceptions and experiences of the traditions and cultures of the programme as it concerned the participants' training is investigated with these questions, 'What were your experience with these rules and did they, in your opinion, contribute practically to your training?' and 'How did these traditions and cultures, if at all, in any way, impact your leadership?'

The Method of Data Collection (Graduation theses)

As part of the requirements for the completion of the leadership training programme of MEXT, all the participating teachers were required to complete and submit a thesis before graduation. These theses were prerequisites for their various courses before the award of their certificates. According to Cambridge online dictionary (2023), thesis is “a long piece of writing on a particular subject, especially one that is done for a higher college or university degree” or “a piece of writing involving original study of a subject, especially for a college or university degree”. Since the fundamental reason for collecting data is to gather evidence that would attempt to provide answers to posed research questions, the researcher deems it necessary that collecting data from different sources would improve the quality and integrity of such evidence hence the inclusion of the participants’ theses as a source of data. This approach would put the researcher in a vantage position to predict future trends and probabilities on the topic of interest, which is educational leadership training. This process of researchers collecting data that are already existing or not originally produced by them is called secondary data collection. These pre-existing data are usually essential because they help researchers triangulate when combined with other data sources thus increasing a study’s trustworthiness. More so, triangulation aids in determining the consistency of a study’s findings and also in developing a greater grasp of the topic under investigation.

The Analysis of Theses Data (Thematic analysis)

The data gathered from already existing documents (theses and graduation reports) would be analysed using thematic analysis “following inductive-deductive approach” (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Camarero-Figuerola et al., 2022). In the first place, “document is a term used to refer to a wide variety of material including visual sources, such as photographs, video, and film” (Morgan, 2022). The use of pre-existing data, Morgan (2022) continues, is analogous to

the use of interviews' data in that the texts in articles, books, journals and other such documents represent people's beliefs in the same way that data gathered by a researcher through interviews would. An advantage of analysing existing documents is that it poses lesser ethical concerns when compared to other qualitative means of data collection (Agazu, Dejenu & Debela, 2022). The analysis of documents was conducted to supplement and reconfirm the interview data, adding an additional layer of evidence beyond the approaches commonly adopted in earlier research.

The choice of the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm supports that the employment of “thematic analysis is a suitable method to the analysis of secondary data” (Braun & Clarke, 2022). In accordance with Braun et al. (2019), thematic analysis can be explained best as “an umbrella term, designating sometimes quite different approaches aimed at identifying patterns across qualitative datasets”. It is a versatile and comprehensive analytical approach that offers “tremendous flexibility” (Clarke & Braun, 2013, p. 120) which enables researchers to use perspectives and theories to generate meaningful qualitative results (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). The initial readings and analysis of the research documents would use an inductive approach to find patterns and categories from the data while subsequent readings and analyses, however, would use a deductive approach to connect these emerging categories to the selected theoretical framework for the study (Camarero-Figuerola et al., 2022). The coding, categorization and establishment of themes as well as the analysis of the secondary data will be done using NVivo 14 computer application software.

The thematic analytical method is considered the best fit for the secondary data because it functions best when there are not many previous studies and grounded theories that characterise the phenomenon being studied, or when the phenomenon being investigated is fragmented. In addition to the above, it engages in practices and procedures that are quite

common with other qualitative analytical approaches and can analyse various data types as well as various sizes of data set (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020).

The Analysis of Interview Data

Data analysis, as defined by Cohen et al. (2011, p. 537) “is the process of organising, accounting for and explaining the data”. McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 395), on their part, add that “it is an inductive process that entails categorizing the data so that patterns, themes and trends that are developed as well as the relationships between these categories could be identified and explored”. Cohen et al. (2011, p. 537) continue that although there are no singular ideal approaches to qualitative data analysis, the wholeness of the selected analytical process is critical and ought to protect as well as maintain the study’s trustworthiness and credibility (Creswell, 2014, p. 221; Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 113). Furthermore, the researcher’s selected procedures and process must be “fit for purpose” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537), which means that it should suit the study being undertaken in purpose, design and nature.

In accordance to the “fit for purpose” catchword (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537), Creswell (2014, p. 221) and Bingham and Witkowsky (2021) propose “a solid framework for a credible and reliable data analysis process” which comprise (i) preparing and organizing data (ii) data coding (iii) development of themes and categories and data reorganization or restructuring (iv) the analysis as well as interpretation of data and finally (v) data and findings presentation.

It is essential at this juncture to point out and discuss a critical choice the researcher made regarding the employment of technological aid in the procedures and process of the study’s analysis of data. It is posited by Creswell “that in spite of the proliferation and prevalence of computer application software for qualitative data analysis in recent times, researchers still have a choice about whether to hand analyse data or to use a computer” (2014, p. 221). He continues that, generally, hand analysis is apt when (i) “the researcher is involved

in the process of data collection personally and aims to retain a close and strong relationship with the data to ensure a hands-on feel for the study” and (ii) the set of data is small (less than 500 transcribed data pages). In view of the above, because the researcher collaborated closely with the research participants, personally collected the data, did the preparation and processing and had 300 pages approximately after transcribing and interpreting the data, the researcher decides to analyse the data by hand.

In addition, the choice of hand analysis over computer analysis was influenced by the researcher’s desire to retain the original interviews’ true language and for the preservation of the nuances, richness, idiosyncrasies and flavour (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 104; Cohen et al., 2011, p. 536) of each interview. Therefore, the interviews conducted in Nigerian pidgin were coded in its original language form. Because no computer application software for qualitative data analysis (for instance NVivo, Atlas.ti, Delve, MAXQDA) has a provision for analysis of data in Nigerian pidgin English, the researcher decided to analyse the data manually. Nonetheless, computer was used for all aspects of data processing and organisation, including transcription, categorization, and theme reorganisation.

The justification for the use of dual methods of data analysis (manual and NVivo) stems from the fact that, although two different strategies were employed to analyze the primary and secondary data, both datasets were examined within the same constructivist-interpretivist paradigm and guided by the same theoretical lens. This ensured that the analytic logic remained consistent. Furthermore, a unified coding framework, guided by Engestrom Activity Theory and refined during analysis of the primary data, was applied to the secondary dataset within NVivo. This ensured conceptual continuity across datasets and prevented divergence in interpretation during analysis. Moreover, because NVivo was used as a data management tool solely, interpretive decisions remained researcher-driven and coding categories were

conceptually derived rather than software-generated. Thus, methodological consistency was maintained through a shared paradigm positioning, theoretical alignment, and a common coding scheme, despite the use of dual data analysis methods. The dual methods were complimentary and enabled the capture of both experiential meaning from interview data and systemic structure from secondary data within a single analytical framework.

Preparation and Organization of the Interview Data

Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 103); Creswell (2014, p. 195), McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 396) and Bingham and Witkowsky (2021) posit that the initial stage of the analysis of data is the preparation of the data while the data preparation's first step is giving a full account "of the sampling procedure and the actual participation" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 104). The data is then reworked into a format that is straightforward to deal with and easy to manage, transmit, and store subsequently (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 398). To make these tasks easier, recordings were done digitally and the transcriptions for all interviews followed. Despite that transcription of interviews are often demanding and essential parts of it (context and mood) could be omitted especially when not done by the interviewer themselves, it "provides important detail and an accurate verbatim record of the interview" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 537).

Some suggestions offered by Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 104) and Lester, Cho and Lochmiller (2020) are heeded by the researcher in this study. In the first place, they suggest that instead of hiring transcribers, researchers should ensure they transcribe their own data so as to obtain the very true essence of the spoken words as well as to ensure familiarity with the obtained data. Second, if feasible, the transcription should adhere to the original interview's language. Based on the above suggestions, the researcher decided to transcribe as well as analyse the entire interviews in their original language. However, the presentation of these data was done in English language since that is the language for this research study.

After the data preparation stage, the data is reorganized into the categories prescribed by Engestrom Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2015, p. 78) framework which include rules, tools and artefacts, division of labour and community. This reorganization entails “cutting and sorting the data from the interview into new forms (documents)” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 405; Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020) under the titles of “each of the elements of theoretical framework’s selected elements” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 104) previously mentioned. It is essential to state that this reorganised data is further categorized after coding.

Data Coding and Establishment of Categories and Themes

The coding is done following the data transcription and its reorganization into the identified categories of the theoretical framework, so as to establish “collection points for significant data” (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 105). Basically, this process involves carefully reading and rereading the data line by line to “get a sense of the whole” (Creswell, 2014, p. 268), followed by allocating special codes - names allotted to certain aspects of the data for better meaning and understanding - to the significant aspects of the data (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). This open coding process allows the “researcher to develop sub-categories within these categories” (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020). After the initial coding, “a master list of codes is finally established” (Creswell, 2014, p. 269) and then reapplied to the data. Similar codes are then combined and also the redundant ones are discarded.

The reliability in data analysis with respect to coding interviews began with defining the coding approach – inductive coding, meaning that themes emerged directly from the collected data. It is important to state that the researcher singlehandedly coded and analysed the interview transcripts. Although coding was conducted by the researcher alone, reliability was ensured through iteratively refining the codes as well as peer review of coding extracts. The findings were then triangulated to ensure consistency and confirmability.

On a final note with respect to categorization, researchers are admonished to exercise caution in identifying categories so as to guarantee the accurate reflection of the nature of data under analysis (Lester, Cho & Lochmiller, 2020) as well as the research purpose. In defining this research study's categories, inclusion of the protocol of interview as well as the emergence of additional categories during coding, the ultimate list of categories and themes accurately reflect, to the researcher's best knowledge, "the theoretical lens employed in examining the human activity of educational leadership learning as well as the purpose of the study and the nature of the data" (Wilkinson, 2021).

The Analysis and Interpretation of Interview Data

The choice of the constructivist-interpretivist paradigm suggests that the "use of content analysis is appropriate for the analysis of this qualitative data" (Nicmanis, 2024). The term "content analysis refers to the inductive process of examining qualitative data sources such as transcribed interviews" (Nieuwenhuis, 2007, p. 101) from many perspectives for better comprehension and interpretation of the raw data (Kyngäs, 2020). Inductive reasoning allows for studying a number of individuals or cases in order for generalizations to emerge (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 5; Kyngäs, 2020). Put in another way, it enables researchers "to be open to new ways of understanding" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 347). This singular characteristic of content analysis which is its attribute that enables the emergence of findings from the data (Kyngäs, 2020), makes it appropriate for this qualitative study. Furthermore, it allows for "the use of both pre-existing categories and emergent themes in order to generate or test a theory" (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 564). The researcher would make use of predetermined categories from the theoretical framework's selected elements and also make provisions for development of categories throughout the data coding phase, confirming once more that content analysis is the best data analysis approach for this kind of research.

Data interpretation entails “the researcher steps back and forms some larger meaning about the phenomenon” (Berthet et al., 2023) stemming from personal experiences and viewpoints as well as from previous studies’ findings during the review of literature. The data interpretation for this research based on the elements selected from Engestrom Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2015, p. 78) which are rules, tools and artefacts, division of labour and community as well as findings from the reviewed learning theory’s literatures. To ensure data analysis reliability and validity, recording devices are used during the stage of data collection. More so, primary data is collected using a validated and piloted instrument and the researcher ensured the triangulation of both data analysis methods and data sources.

Presentation of Data and Findings

The report on the results of this study is done from three angles namely (i) the research questions (ii) the components of Engestrom Activity Theory (Engestrom, 2015, p. 78) and (iii) lastly, the topic or theme that developed from the data. Despite that there is a limitation with this approach in that researchers could lose sight of “the individual participants and thus data could become decontextualized” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 551), it holds the advantage of providing an ordered, economical and logical data handling and presentation approach. It is the position of the researcher that although the individual teacher’s perceptions and experiences of the phenomenon are important, they are not necessarily the most important (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 552) but the emergent themes from the data about these Nigerian teachers.

Possible Threats to Trustworthiness

The Researcher’s Role

While it has been suggested by different authors that the researcher is an essential part of their research and should be treated as “member of the field under study” (Kvale, 2011, p. xi), Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 79) posits that “the researcher is the data gathering instrument”.

Rather than denying the subjectivity of humans that could influence qualitative research, McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 356) suggest that research should “take it into account through various strategies” while Norman and James (2020, p. 27) advise that “researchers use their bias as it exists in interpretive repertoire.” Regarding this research study, the researcher employs the reflexivity concept (Norman & James, 2020, p. 27) which is the “rigorous self-scrutiny by the researcher throughout the entire (research) process” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 356). This process, therefore, defines the researcher’s impact and roles which include (i) the desire to be accurate or “get it right” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 357), (ii) the recognition of himself as part of the research study (Norman & James, 2020, p. 27) and (iii) the recognition of the participants by giving identity to their voices (Norman & James, 2020, p. 27).

In an effort to further enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research study, and to an extent ensuring its reflexivity, the researcher employs two of the various suggestions by McMillan and Schumacher (2014, p. 356) which are auditability practice and the use of field log. Auditability is the “practice of maintaining a record of data management techniques and decision rules that document the trail of evidence” (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 359). In relation to this research, the researcher safely stores the comprehensive computerized files of the entire codes used for the research data as well as the themes and categories that emanate from the data during its processing. For the purpose of further audit and review, the entire draft of the preliminary findings is electronically stored. For the field log, the field work and its build-up (that is, processes that lead to the field work) are carefully documented (Norman & James, 2020, p. 27). This build-up includes, but not limited to, the participants’ selection, the arrangements made as well as the process of interview conduction in order to generate “a

chronological record by date and time” of all the processes involved in the study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 358).

Self-Reporting Bias

The threat of self-reporting bias is not considered a huge possibility since more than one data gathering method (semi-structured interview) is employed in which the participants are encouraged to answer questions regarding their leadership training perceptions and experiences and research thesis in which their submitted research reports are collected and analysed. Self-reporting is seen as the “people’s assessment of and statements about themselves” (Schunk, 2012, p. 16). According to Donaldson and Grant-Vallone (2002, p. 247), self-reporting bias, also known as social desirability bias (Adams et al., 1999, p. 190), is the participants’ tendency to respond, “in a way that makes them look as good as possible”. This bias, they continue, is prominent in circumstances in which the participants are afraid that their answers could possibly get to someone in authority who has the power to harm them.

“It is naïve to think about owning and discarding researcher bias” (Norman & James, 2020, p. 28), however, researchers, in an effort to reduce this bias to the bare minimum, must be selective in instances where they use self-reporting particularly “the specific questions being asked and the types of research questions one wants to answer” (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002, p. 247). Although depending on the research questions’ type, self-reporting method of data collection should be avoided by all means when a research intends participants to respond to questions concerning health or work-related performance of a population regardless of whether it is in interviews or questionnaires. In a similar way, questionnaire items or interview questions that require participants to respond to their physical and mental health ought to be avoided so as to control and reduce bias of self-reporting (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002, p. 249).

With regard to this study, its intent is to provide answers to questions related to the educational leadership training perceptions of Nigerian teachers and not concerned with their performance as educational leaders or as participants in the programme. A study of the schedule of the semi-structured interviews indicates that none of the questions constitutes any kind of risk to the participants if their responses were exposed to some people in authority.

Furthermore, Donaldson and Grant-Vallone (2002, p. 248) also suggest these factors to be considered which are:

- (i) The participants' dispositions: In this case, given the topic under study and the instruments for collection of data being employed, researchers need to ask themselves and consider the likelihood of participants feeling coerced to provide socially desirable responses.
- (ii) The study's situational characteristics: In this case, the researcher should consider the amount of pressure there is to give socially desirable responses. The educational leadership learning phenomenon investigated in this study is not specifically sensitive. Also, because the research questions do not ask the participants about work-related performance as educational leaders or their performance as students, the researcher believes that the risk of self-reporting bias is reduced and controlled as much as possible.

In terms of the disposition of the study's participants, the situational characteristics as well as the degree to which these elements, in light of the topic and the methods employed for gathering data, might force participants to offer answers that make them "feel as good as possible" (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002, p. 247), the earlier-mentioned examination of the protocol of interview reveals that no question is directly connected to leadership or academic achievement/performance, hence, participants will not be feeling steered towards providing socially desirable responses.

Summarily, in spite of the possibility of self-reporting bias being construed as threat to the reliability and trustworthiness of a study (Donaldson & Grant-Vallone, 2002, p. 245; Creswell, 2014, p. 284; Norman & James, 2020, p. 28) under certain situations, the researcher identifies some elements that reduced the influence of this bias on the study under consideration. Here, the instruments for collecting data used are developed to reduce the risks presented by inquiries or questions on the participants' individual performance, hence, minimizing the threats of self-reporting bias or social desirability. In addition, the educational leadership learning phenomenon being investigated is not sensitive hence limiting the influence of self-reporting bias.

Ethical Principles Considered

Prior to data collection which spanned forty-four (44) days from the 18th of March, 2024 to the 30th of April, 2024, ethics approval (decision A: “approved without revision or comments”) was received from the supervisor of this chapter, Dr Steve Sharra, as well as from the Unicaf University Research Ethics Committee (UREC) on the 4th of March, 2024 (see Appendix D). Afterwards, the researcher also obtained an official letter of permission from the Nigerian MEXT Alumni Association (see Appendix E), formally giving their permission to interview its members for the purposes of this research study. Researchers across every discipline of study and in particular “the social sciences, where the emphasis is on people, ought to be mindful of the moral issues” (McMahon & Milligan, 2023) their research work imply at all times and of the potential and actual good or negative consequences of their studies on persons/participants involved (Cohen et al., 2011, p.75; McMahon & Milligan, 2023). Nonetheless, ethics in research are often “situated” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 77), which means that each research environment/context will dictate its explication and implication of ethics. The ethical considerations “within the context” (Creswell, 2014, p. 266) of this particular

research will be explored in this section. The two primary concerns of social science research ethics are “informed consent” (Creswell, 2014, p. 266; Gay et al., 2014, p. 16; McMillan and Schumacher, 2014, p. 130; Resnik, 2020; Ederio et al., 2023) and “access and acceptance” (Creswell 2014, p. 252; Gay et al., 2014, p. 22).

Informed Consent

The informed consent principle stems from the generally recognized human right to self-determination and freedom, based on section 33 of the Federal Republic of Nigeria's 1999 constitution, which serves as the study's backdrop. “Informed consent is realized when individuals choose whether to participate in an investigation after being informed of the facts that would be likely to influence their decision” (Cohen et al., 2011, p. 81). It means that the choice to participate is entirely optional, and in order for any volunteer to come to a decision, they must be given all pertinent information regarding the research (Gay et al., 2014, p. 21; Resnik, 2020; Ederio et al., 2023). These pertinent information includes the research purpose, the researcher’s requirements of the participants if they consent to participation, the potential consequences or benefits of such participation, the freedom to quit at any moment, anonymity, “privacy and confidentiality” (Creswell, 2014, p. 167) as well as the use of data after completion of the research (Gay et al., 2014, p. 22; Yale University, 2023).

The Research Purpose. This consent letter states that the purpose of the research is to give an accurate image of how participants who took part in the MEXT training programme perceived and experienced their educational leadership learning during the programme (see Appendix C). Stating the study's purpose provides potential volunteers with the knowledge they need to provide informed consent after making an informed decision, as well as guarantee that the researcher is considered to be honest and open with people he intends to include in his study.

Voluntary Participation. This study's consent letter explains that the decision to participate is voluntary and entirely the choice of the volunteers (Creswell, 2014, p. 166; Resnik, 2020; Ederio et al., 2023) and that the choice to take part or not would not impact their relationship with the researcher. Also, the participants are notified of their "freedom to quit the study at any moment without facing any repercussions or penalty" (Yale University, 2023).

The Researcher's Expectations of the Participants. The consent letter also details the researcher's expectations of the participants, that is, to participate in interviews individually and to review their interview transcript for confirmation of the content. Also, it informs the participants of the possible dates for the interview which are subject to change depending on the participants' convenience. The interview protocol is attached to the consent letter and then sent by electronic mail. The interview protocol is sent in advance for two major purposes. First, it provides the consented participants with the opportunity to prepare better for the interview and second, it assists the prospective participants in understanding the nature of the research and what is expected of them. To guarantee that participants feel at ease with the information and knowledge they share, they are supplied with a written transcript of their individual interviews and admonished to proofread and finally approve its content. The aim of this is not just to contribute to the study's trustworthiness, but also to protect the participants' right to willingly continue or withdraw (Creswell, 2014, p. 167; Ederio et al., 2023; Yale University, 2023).

Anonymity, Privacy and Confidentiality. The consent letter also addresses the concern over participants' anonymity, privacy protection as well as the confidentiality of the data supplied by the participants. It is made clear in that letter that the participants' "privacy would be protected by anonymity" (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 133) and that none of the participants would be mentioned by their names or made easily identifiable at any point in

time. This is ensured by allotting pseudonyms (Gay et al., 2014, p. 23). These pseudonyms are unique numbers given to every participant in accordance to the order in which the interview is done while the researcher is the only one having access (the password) to the documents containing the participants' names and their corresponding unique numbers. Also, the consent letter assures the confidentiality of the supplied information by the participants through the use of password protection on the entire collected data and that only the researcher could access the recorded interview and other related information related. All the physically collected documents and the stored electronic data will be destroyed and deleted respectively 5 years after the completion of this research.

Benefits and Risks of Participation. The consent letter informs the participants that no other benefits will emanate from the research apart from that it would contribute to existing knowledge (Gay et al., 2014, p. 131; Yale University, 2023), particularly, that of the educational leadership learning by Nigerian educators. Also, the letter clearly states that the study's participants would not experience any form of harm or risk.

The Intended Use of Data. The letter informs the participants that the study's findings would be documented and subsequently published in the form of a thesis for the award of doctoral degree in education. It also informs the participants that the study report with the results and recommendations of the research would be available to them based on indication of interest.

Access and Acceptance

Access entails seeking for and receiving authorization to conduct a study in a given place or with certain research subjects (Gay et al., 2014, p. 25). The willingness and goodwill of Nigerian teachers in the 2019, 2020, and 2021 classes as well as that of the selected

government officials toward the researcher is critical to the research study's accomplishment and success.

Data Collection Venues. The data collection venues are suggested by the researcher and in some cases, the participants agreed to such venues while in other cases, the participants declined and suggested their own convenient venues. Also, the researcher offered to reimburse the transportation costs for their travelling which they rejected. Furthermore, some participants requested the interview meetings to be held at their places of work. In such cases, the researcher insisted on meeting after working hours or other scheduled appointment in order to not interrupt their work activities. Ultimately, twelve (12) participants were interviewed at their workplaces. Out of these twelve (12), eight (8) interviews were done after work hours at their assigned schools while four (4) were done at other scheduled times. The remaining five (5) interviews were done at the homes of the participants at their convenient times. At the conclusion of the research field work, the researcher travelled over 8,000 kilometres and visited fifteen (15) different prefectures of Japan to complete the process of data collection.

Based on the above, it is the belief of the researcher that all ethical concerns have been addressed. However, in the event of unanticipated ethical issues, the researcher would employ the “notion of reflexivity and ethical competence” (Schmid & Garrels, 2024). These basically involve the researcher's readiness to recognise the ethical aspect of developing circumstances and react suitably (Robinson, 2020) within the scope of “ethics in practice” (Guillemin & Gillam, 2004, p. 269).

Summary

This chapter provides detailed information on the research study's paradigm which is undertaken from a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm (McMillan & Schumacher, 2014, p. 14). The qualitative approach to this research necessitates an extensive analysis and description

of a particular phenomenon or human behaviour so as to offer the people involved a voice and the chance to provide thorough descriptions and viewpoints on their perceptions and experiences. The case study adopted for this study is the selection of a case of a population, system, community, organization, group, phenomenon or occurrence as well as its relevant and surrounding context for thorough and detailed analysis and examination. The choice of instrumental case study for this research is due to its capability in investigating, completely describing and comprehending a phenomenon and the specific context within which it is present. The researcher establishes an interview protocol of semi-structured questions (Creswell, 2014, p. 247) for this study that corresponds to the selected theoretical framework elements and also centres on the educational leadership training issues as was presented to these participants while undertaking their training programme.

Also, this chapter outlines the processes involved in the participants' selection. The study utilizes a non-probability method (Andrade, 2021; Stratton, 2021) known as purposive sampling (Cohel et al., 2011, p. 156; Obilor, 2023, p. 4) in the selection of participants from the MEXT training programme of 2019, 2020 and 2021 classes as well as officials from the Nigerian and Japanese government. In spite of the possibility of self-reporting bias being construed as threat to the reliability and trustworthiness of a study (Donaldson and Grant-Vallone, 2002, p. 245; Creswell, 2014, p. 284; Norman & James, 2020, p. 28) under certain situations, the researcher identifies some elements that reduced the influence of this bias on the study under consideration. Here, the instrument used for collecting data is developed to reduce the risks presented by inquiries or questions on the participants' individual performance, hence, minimizing the threats of self-reporting bias or social desirability. In addition, the educational leadership learning phenomenon being investigated is not sensitive thereby limiting the influence of self-reporting bias.

Finally, the ethical issues considered and contextualized for this research are described. Here, the participants are educated that the choice to participate is entirely optional, and in order for any volunteer to come to a decision, they were given all pertinent information regarding the research (Gay et al., 2014, p. 21; Resnik, 2020; Ederio et al., 2023). These pertinent information includes the research purpose, the researcher's requirements of the participants if they consent for participation, the potential consequences or benefits of such participation, the freedom to quit at any moment, anonymity, "privacy and confidentiality" (Creswell, 2014, p. 167) as well as the use of data after completion of the research (Gay et al., 2014, p. 22; Yale University, 2023). The following chapter will dwell on data presentation, its findings as well as analyses.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

This chapter presents the findings of the research on the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers regarding the educational leadership training of MEXT and followed by the discussion and evaluation of the research findings. Moreover, the credibility and trustworthiness of the research was also discussed.

Credibility and Trustworthiness of the Study

The following section presents the measures taken to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of this research. Authors rated credibility and trustworthiness more appropriate terms in qualitative research than validity and reliability (Creswell, 2014, p. 283; Norman & James, 2020). The researcher ensured the credibility and trustworthiness of this research data through three major strategies: crystallization, member checking and triangulation.

Crystallization

Borkan (2022) states that “crystallization is an inductive, iterative process for identifying themes, categories, and patterns from the data.” Bearing in mind that this research is deeply rooted in constructivism, it acknowledges that every participant has constructed their individual reality and knowledge and continues this process. Therefore, in order to crystallize significant and meaningful themes from the collected data, the researcher probed into the graduation theses and interview data of the participants repeatedly for about five weeks through listening to the recorded audios, reviewing the transcripts and extracting themes. These emergent themes were analyzed further by adding more relevant themes and removing repeated ones before categorizing them. Further analysis of the themes was done and subsequently merged into patterns and interpretations. The researcher continued the process of extracting and analyzing themes, as well as putting them into categories until final interpretations that could be reported were achieved and no further interpretations or patterns observed.

Member Checking

Member checking has been described as the verification of the data accuracy with participants (McKim, 2023). It is a process that could be informal as well as formal and ranges from re-phrasing and confirming the interview answers of the participants during the interview to sending every participant a verbatim transcript copy of their own interview for comments and confirmation. It could also include the return of the final report to some participants to verify not only its correctness and completeness, but also the realistic nature of the emergent and analyzed themes as well as the representativeness and reasonability of the data interpretations.

Member checking is carried out both formally and informally by the researcher. It is done formally by sending verbatim transcript copy of their own interviews to them through electronic mail, and informally, by casual discussions with the participants for clarification and confirmation of their answers to some questions. Every participant is later called by telephone to acknowledge receipt of such mails and to send in their replies at their own convenience.

Triangulation

Triangulation, as stated by Donkoh and Mensah (2023), is the study of a phenomenon from various data sources, using different methods, theories and researchers. Many researchers have stated that besides the use of triangulation in validating and confirming qualitative research results, there are several other benefits of triangulation and therefore, it is an important skill which researchers should use to ensure quality research (Arias, 2022).

Regarding this research, the researcher triangulated the data collection methods by employing two methods - interviews and graduation theses/reports. The interview data served as the primary data source as they were collected directly from the participants by the researcher while the graduation theses/reports served as the secondary data source. The method of data

analysis was triangulated as well. The primary data was analysed using inductive content analysis whereas the secondary data was analysed using thematic analysis.

Demographic Details of the Participants

In the presentation of the results, as suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2007, p. 104), Levitt et al. (2018) and Byrne (2022), it starts with describing the participants and then proceeds to the presentation of the research findings as it relates to the research questions that guided the research. Table 4 presents the profiles of all participants involved in this research. The participants of this research are the Nigerian teachers of the 2019, 2020 and 2021 cohort studies of the MEXT training programme as well as government officials of both the Nigerian and Japanese government. The total population of the participants is 31 out of which 17 of them consented to participate in the interview. However, after the interviews had been conducted, one of the participants declined the use of their collected data for the research, hence, the research ends up with 16 participants as shown in table 4.

Table 4*Demographic Information of Research Participants*

| Participants' Code | Leadership Position | Job Types | Gender | Age | Years of Leadership Experience | Year of MEXT Leadership Learning Enrolment | MEXT Graduation Year |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|------------------|---------------|------------|---------------------------------------|---|-----------------------------|
| RPA | Vice Principal Administration | Private | Female | 39 | 10 | 2019 | 2021 |
| RPB | Head of Department | Private | Male | 36 | 7 | 2019 | 2021 |
| RPC | School Administrator | Private | Male | 37 | 9 | 2019 | 2021 |
| RPD | Quality Control Head | Private | Male | 38 | 6 | 2019 | 2021 |
| RPE | Head Mistress | Private | Female | 32 | 5 | 2020 | 2022 |
| RPF | Vice Principal Academic | Private | Male | 39 | 8 | 2019 | 2021 |
| RPH | Vice Principal Administration | Private | Male | 36 | 3 | 2020 | 2022 |
| RPI | Head of Department | Private | Male | 33 | 4 | 2020 | 2022 |
| RPJ | Acting Head of Department | Private | Female | 35 | 1 | 2020 | 2022 |
| RPK | Head Master | Private | Male | 32 | 3 | 2021 | 2023 |
| RPL | Head of Department | Private | Male | 33 | 2 | 2021 | 2023 |
| RPM | Head of Department | Private | Male | 30 | 2 | 2021 | 2023 |
| RPN | None | Private | Male | 31 | 0 | 2021 | 2023 |
| RPO | None | Private | Male | 29 | 0 | 2021 | 2023 |
| RPP | Assistant Director | Public | Male | 45 | 10 | N/A | N/A |
| RPQ | Director | Public | Female | 50 | 15 | N/A | N/A |

Note. The total number of participants is 31.

With the exception of the participants RPN and RPO, all the other participants are in positions of leadership at their workplaces prior to their participation in the research. Their age ranged between 29 years to 50 years. The average age of the participants is 35.9 years. The average age of the participants which stands at 35.9 years could be due to the fact that the maximum age of enrolment in the educational leadership programme under study is pegged at 35 years old and as such, most participants in the programme are relatively young Nigerian educational leaders. The most experienced participant has 15 years of educational leadership experience while their average years of experience is 5.3 years. One of the requirements for application to the educational leadership programme under investigation is that prospective participants must have at least five years of working experience as teachers in their home countries with years of educational leadership experience being an advantage hence the average of 5.3 years. Lastly, the school contexts in which the participants function are mostly the same as all of them are private school employees with the exception of two.

Interview Results

Results will be presented under suitable headings and by following the elements of Engestrom Activity Theory as the unit of analysis (Engestrom, 2015). The following are the key elements of the theory: community, rules, division of labour, and tools and artefacts. The following section will present the results linked with these elements.

Perceptions of Nigerian School Teachers on the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme

The following section presents the results of the research question: “How do teachers from Nigeria who underwent MEXT training perceive their educational leadership?” The results will be presented under the following components of the theory: Community, Rules, Division of Labour and Tools and Artefacts. After the analysis of the interview data, a total of

32 codes emerged in relation to this question. Further analysis of the codes generated resulted in nine themes.

Community. One theme emerged from the interview transcripts in relation to the interaction of the participants with the activity system's community. Overall, the data showed that the community contributed positively to the perceptions of Nigerian teachers regarding their leadership responsibilities. The theme, *professional assistance*, emerged from the responses of the participants.

Professional Assistance. This theme, professional assistance, strongly emerged from the interview transcripts with some participants stating that it positively contributed to their leadership roles and practices. One shared:

'Many of them were either HOD, vice principal, head teacher or principal. Just by interacting with them I learnt a lot from them.' – RPL

One mentioned:

'I will say on a scale of 10, eight of their suggestions saved my difficult situations at school.' – RPJ

Another reflected:

'I learnt so many things from them. The ones I can remember I put in my school. I have their social media handles; I still contact them for assistance.' – RPN

One participant stated:

'They told me a lot about how things work in their schools and I know I can take some things and do in my school, they gave me advice on how to do things.' - RPM

Rules. From the data analysis, a significant theme emerged from the interview transcripts with regard to the activity system's rules. Overall, the data showed that most of the participants indicated a positive perception of rules on their educational leadership roles and duties. The theme: *skills and values that enhanced leadership responsibilities*, emerged from the interview data.

Skills and Values that Enhanced Leadership Responsibilities. The interview data revealed that most of the participants acquired some values and skills relevant to their leadership duties. These skills include responsibility, time consciousness, management and organization, as well as being independent. The participants reported that these skills contributed to their leadership practice in a positive way. Majority of the participants reported that interacting with the rules of the activity system resulted in the effectiveness of their leadership responsibilities. One of them said:

'Before someone even gets to the point of being a trainee, such a person must have a certain degree of commitment because the MEXT aptitude exams and interviews demand such skill. The programme in itself makes one better at becoming more and more responsible.' – RPP

Another participant said:

'I come to class on time, hand in my assignments, get ready for the lectures, share my experiences with others in class, sometimes even on Saturday, this defines my commitment.' - RPB

Many of the participants stated that punctuality and a better time awareness are other values they acquired during the training that has contributed to the leadership duties. Regarding this, one of them highlighted:

'The timing issue was planned well, the lecture times, the breaks in between lectures, the lunch break, everything running smoothly like a computer system, I should prepare myself to be prepared always.'

– RPH

Another shared:

'Three to five minutes before lectures, we must be seated and quiet, if there is need to talk, it should be in low voices, because everywhere is quiet, our voice should not be loud and that has disciplined me.' – RPO

One participant told the interviewer:

'Organization is their thing; this is one of the parts of the programme. I want to translate to my school.' - RPM

One participant reflected:

'Every appointment was done well in advance and it's cool with me. I try hard to do the same in my job daily, the system was near perfection due to good time management.' - RPN

A few other participants reported that the interactions with the rules of the activity system made them more independent, which positively influenced their leadership responsibilities. One of them stated:

'Independence is what I grabbed from that programme – nobody has my time, once lectures end, all man goes their ways. I learned independence and it impacted my work positively.' – RPK

A participant shared:

‘Things are done independently here (Japan) in an effortless way because it is taught from childhood. The MEXT training programme follows the same pattern, too. It helps someone tackle their own problems and makes an independent person much more independent.’ – RPQ

Division of Labour. Based on the analysis of interview transcripts, no theme emerged on the participants’ perceptions of the roles of division of labour in the transfer of learning to their leadership responsibilities.

Tools and Artefacts. Six themes emerged from the interview analysis, with regards to the tools and artefacts element. The themes are as follows: (a) *modules that contributed the most to their leadership practice*, (b) *contribution of the MEXT training to the practice of leadership*, (c) *empowered with the ability to empower others*, (d) *exposure to/insight into the leadership viewpoints of other leaders*, (e) *broader perspective on styles of leadership* as well as (f) *ICT Usefulness in Education Leadership*.

Modules That Contributed the Most to Their Leadership Practice. A good number of the research participants perceived that the module on education administration contributed greatly to their leadership roles due to its emphasis on professional and staff development. One of the participants stated:

‘Exposure to professional development courses is essential for better knowledge transfer. I will say education administration is the most important module. In such courses, the experienced leaders also use their knowledge to help the less experienced leaders.’ – RPO

One participant emphatically said:

'Definitely, the most relevant module is educational finance and administration. It really resonated with me because of its resourcefulness and guidance.' – RPF

Another submitted:

'That administration one (module) focused very much on management, how to deal with and discipline other staff and students.' – RPA

One of them highlighted:

'All these offered courses are taught to educational enthusiasts (educational leaders). They make one (educational leaders) more professional when the courses are diligently undertaken.' - RPQ

Contribution of the MEXT Training to the Practice of Leadership. Some research participants perceived specific contributions of the tools and artefacts to their education leadership roles and practices. One of the participants stated:

'My practices have been completely turned around. It gave me a new perspective because I have been managing without contemporary or recent issues and policies. MEXT opened my eyes very widely.' - RPC

Another participant highlighted:

'I was empowered tremendously. I feel like I have acquired new skills which can be dished out with confidence.' – RPF

A participant expressed themselves this way:

'I see this programme as life transforming. It is very unbelievable how it changed my level of knowledge and understanding. As it

stands now, the way people consult me on different issues, I feel like a trainer.’ – RPE

One of the participants shared:

‘My perspective to teaching and education in general has changed. I now approach things with confidence and authority. I take decisive steps with more authority.’ – RPJ

Another mentioned:

‘My people have more respect for me and when I talk during meetings, they value my contributions. That’s how influential I have become.’ – RPM

A participant said:

‘I am not intimidated by any challenge now; I confront them head-up. No fear anymore, I am more strategic, always thinking ahead, trying to stand out in all things, self-conscious that others are watching and possibly emulating me.’ - RPL

Empowered with the Ability to Empower Others. Some research participants perceived empowerment from the programme which provided them with the ability to empower others. One of such participants said:

‘Of course, man is a product of learning. One can only give what he or she has. The teachers are more powerful now because they have been given the momentum by MEXT to help their colleagues in their respective schools.’ – RPQ

Another confirmed their empowerment in these words:

'If I do not focus, I cannot empower my colleagues, especially if I am not empowered. I suppose that's the goal of the programme.' –

RPO

One of the participants stated:

'The way I reason changed in a positive way, it stressed discipline, management of curriculum, staff development and empowerment.

Overall, it is very helpful in different school situations.' – *RPB*

A participant shared:

'I have forgotten the name, but that module was very practical and applicable to my current position in my school. It kept on talking about developing the staff. If I don't do that, they will run into problems.' - *RPK*

Exposure to/Insight into the Leadership Viewpoints of Other Leaders. A

good number of the research participants perceived the value they obtained about others as well as the exposure to and insight into the various variety of leadership viewpoints as positive to their leadership roles. One highlighted:

'I was exposed to some things I would never have known till I die, different people from different places with different leadership styles, views and other such things.' - *RPN*

A participant described:

'The part that was interesting was my fellow students' perspectives who have more experience than me – that gave me a clearer understanding of their frustrations, expectations, needs and school types.' – *RPJ*

Another stated:

'Sure, it changed definitely, the things that are normal in Nigeria are not normal in other places. I can see better and understand the plight of others.' - RPI

Broader Perspective on Styles of Leadership. A few research participants perceived the activity system's tools and artefacts as contributing positively to their education leadership roles in that they have a broader perspective on a variety of leadership styles. One said:

'My leadership style was influenced in that aspect, gave me a broader perspective on my leadership style, if I didn't get this (training), I could have lost this opportunity to grow.' – RPH

Another participant explained:

'I realized that it is possible to apply more than one effective leadership strategy. I know the democratic style is better or even best but there are others that can be used effectively depending on the situation at hand.' – RPA

One participant stated:

'I am in a management team but I don't just say do this and this and that, I get to work with them. I'll say, how about doing it together? Everyone involved becomes comfortable and we achieve our goal in a short time.' – RPC

A participant said the following:

'I think the greatest lessons trainees take home from this programme is that what works in one setting may not work in another. In fact,

you can even modify an already existing style to suit your school and solve its peculiar problem.’ - RPP

One research participant mentioned what he called leadership intelligence in this way:

‘My approach to life generally has changed, my interaction with the people I work together with. I have leadership intelligence, I can handle several situations, including resistant and stubborn staff. I have the skills to do that wisely.’ – RPD

ICT Usefulness in Education Leadership. Some participants perceived that the effectiveness and frequency with which they used ICT were positive to their educational leadership roles. One participant told the interviewer:

‘In today’s world, where kids of 5 years are already computer savvy, any teacher who doesn’t have such skills is far behind and that is a once in a lifetime opportunity this programme offers to many teachers.’ - RPQ

One participant recounted:

‘Often times, I encounter something strange that needs searching on the internet, I just do that with a click, the information is before me and I share with others.’ –RPD

One of the participants stated:

‘I cannot underestimate ICT importance in my practice, studies and the future to come.’ – RPL

Experiences and Impact of the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme on Nigerian Teachers' Professional Growth and Leadership Practice

This heading presented data on the experiences and impact of the MEXT educational leadership training programme on Nigerian teachers' professional growth and leadership practice. The results will be presented under the following components of the theory: Community, Rules, Division of Labour and Tools and Artefacts. After the analysis of the interview data, 103 codes were generated. Later, these codes were linked with 21 themes.

Community. Two themes emerged from the interview transcripts in relation to the interaction of the participants with the activity system's community. Overall, the data showed that the community contributed positively to the educational leadership training and professional growth of the participants. The themes: (a) *value added learning by interacting with other students* and (b) *interacting with the community enhances educational leadership*, emerged from the responses of the participants. These themes are presented below and supported with relevant interview chunks.

Value Added Learning by Interacting with Other Students. The majority of the research participants seemed to have placed a huge value on the contributions made from interacting with the activity system's community to their professional growth and practice. One of the participants explained:

'Honestly, we bonded together very closely. Based on my experience, it was a positive friendship. It was just reassuring to know that people had your back every step of the way.' - RPM

Another said:

'You see, these communications always make a huge difference because they are like your mirror that show you what you have done right or wrong, what you are doing well, how to deal with obstacles and what you should do to remain in the right path.' – RPP

A participant stated:

'I would have side discussions with some of my classmates about different things. It was an avenue for extra learning.' – RPO

Interacting with the Community Enhances Educational Leadership. Many of the research participants broadly described the effects of interacting with the activity system's community on their educational leadership learning as twofold; namely providing/receiving support and motivation. These two broad descriptions are shown by the following interview chunks. One participant stated:

'As I think about it now, I can confidently say they did two things for me: support and encouragement.' - RPD

Another participant shared:

'Everyone's morale was boosted by the presence of the community and they (community) also backed up everybody.' – RPF

Another participant mentioned:

'They (community) motivated and supported one another.' – RPQ

Receiving and Providing Support. Many of the research participants described support from two viewpoints - Receiving and giving. This can be seen from the following excerpts below. One of the participants explained:

'I saw most of my classmates as family. We helped one another academically, emotionally, psychologically and financially too.' – RPF

Another stated:

'I helped others in my small capacity. Of course, my experience was different from theirs and theirs were different from mine so I offered assistance when necessary.' - RPI

A participant shared:

'They helped me understand some of the offered modules. Had it not been for them, I might have failed some modules.' - RPO

Motivation. Another resulting effect of interacting with the activity system's community on the participants' educational leadership learning and professional growth is motivation. Some of the participants described their motivation experience like these:

'The interaction was a wakeup call for me. Everyone was positive, they wanted to succeed and they wanted you to succeed too.' – RPN

Another shared his experience thus:

'They (the interactions) were good I suppose. We motivated each other. No one was left behind in my small group.' – RPK

Another added:

'It (the interaction) pulled me up and pushed me forward, very encouraging indeed. We were a good influence on ourselves.' - RPH

A participant responded like this:

'I considered throwing in the towel, but my fellows encouraged and motivated me, and I succeeded in finishing the programme.' - RPJ

Rules. Three themes emerged from the interview transcripts with regards to the rules of the activity system. The themes are: (a) *rules improved the confidence of research participants*, (b) *rules improved the discipline of research participants*, and (c) *rules stipulated diligence and commitment*.

Rules Improved the Confidence of Research Participants. It is reported by many of the research participants that by interacting with the rules governing the programme, and the fact that the rules determined the meticulous selection of students rather than a blanket admission of students, confidence in their abilities were boosted thus impacting their leadership practice. One of the participants admitted:

‘MEXT did not hand pick recipients. They selected only those who made it because we took qualification exams and did series of interviews before we were shortlisted. It gave me confidence in myself and my abilities.’ - RPB

Another participant explained:

‘They are very meticulous in their recruitment. There is always a benchmark which one must achieve before consideration.’ - RPQ

A participant said:

‘I don’t really know much in education besides the teaching aspect but by the time I rounded it up, my confidence increased significantly.’ - RPE

Rules Improved the Discipline of Research Participants. The majority of the research participants appreciated the manner in which interacting with the rules of the activity system impacted their professional growth. One of them shared her experience:

'You can quote me anywhere, Japanese people are the most disciplined people in the world and once you study here, it is automatically transferred to you.' – RPQ

A participant admitted:

'I became disciplined overnight. You know the saying when you go to Rome, you behave like the Romans? That was exactly what happened to me.' – RPE

One participant added:

'We received notifications of deadlines to assignments one week in advance. That helped everyone to adjust and plan in advance too. Here (in Japan), rules are strictly obeyed, no excuses. Breaking a rule in Japan is like the greatest sin on earth.' - RPC

A participant highlighted:

'The thing (rules) made my life easier to a large extent. It was less stressful than I imagined because all that is required of me gets ready before it is asked for.' - RPD

Rules Stipulated Diligence and Commitment. Many participants reported that the rules of the MEXT programme made significant contributions to their leadership practice and professional growth by improving their awareness for the need to be committed to the highest standards, be diligent and also dedicated to their training.

In this vein, one of them shared:

'The most significant thing for me is the energy level that must be put in, which is very high, there was no room for mediocrity.' - RPJ

Another participant reported:

'You are required to study hard, work hard, research hard but not sleep hard.' – RPF

A participant explained:

'It is either you are up there or down here, no sitting on the fence. It made me realize that there is no respite, that the standard is very high and must be maintained.' – RPH

A participant added:

'Work and study are like religions here (Japan). It is taken very seriously. You must meet up with your task.' - RPP

Division of Labour. Two themes emerged from the interview transcripts in relation to the duties and responsibilities of the different role players in the activity system. Overall, the data showed that the different role players contributed positively to the educational leadership practice and professional growth of the participants except for that of the thesis supervisor that indicated mixed feelings amongst the participants. The data gathered from the interview showed that most of the research participants categorized the roles of their community members into two themes: (a) *the major roles*, (b) *the supplemental roles*. The division of the roles of the individual players into two is exemplified by these interview chunks. One participant stated:

'The main people are the lecturers and my fellow students. Others are just addition.' – RPB

Another participant shared:

'God will not be happy with me if I do not add my supervisor as one of the major role players.' – RPD

One other participant explained:

'To be honest, they tried in their individual capacity, but their jobs are not the same. The administrative staff and the study groups did not have major functions like the lecturers.' – RPA

One participant added:

'The lecturers, my classmates and supervisors are the first class (major), then study groups and the administrative staff are the next in line (supplementary).' – RPN

These themes consistently emerged throughout the interview transcripts and summed up the participants' perceptions and experiences regarding the contributions of the different role players during their training.

Supplemental Roles. Many of the participants categorized the roles of these community members: (a) *administrative staff*, (b) *study groups* – as supplemental. This can be seen below:

The Administrative staff. In as much as many of the research participants described the roles of the administrative staff in their various institutions as supplemental, their interactions with these staff were mostly positive. One of them said:

'As the programme drew to a conclusion, their (the administrators') responsibilities became more noticeable. They explained all the documents needed to be submitted for graduation in detail with patience and respect, they were helpful.' – RPO

Another explained:

'The one (administrator) that assisted me with my final compilation was very courteous and time conscious because I had to do different

things at the same time, it was beneficial. She was always available to assist.’ – RPH

Study Groups. Despite a significant number of the research participants indicating that they had worked in collaboration with other students, it was not a formal requirement of the programme. However, when they did so in informal settings or groups, such interactions added value to their educational leadership training and experiences. Regarding this, one of them highlighted:

‘We formed study groups. Our meetings were not usual but whenever we met, it was a source of new knowledge.’ – RPN

Another said:

‘The discussions were mostly on assignments, tasks and projects. We gathered on a round table and did important discussions after writing down our personal discovery at the dormitories.’ - RPD

Major Roles. Many of the participants categorized these community members as key players: (a) *thesis supervisors*; (b) *other students* (c) *lecturers* - and described them to have played the most significant role within the division of labour element.

The Other Students. The data gathered from the interview seem to clearly show that a few of the research participants reported that the other fellow students contributed the most to their professional growth and educational leadership learning experiences. One responded like this:

‘My colleagues were inspiring directly and indirectly. For example, just by someone saying, “I have finished my assignment”, even though the end date is still far, I will be motivated. It was a competition kind of.’ – RPB

Another participant emphasized:

'Some of them (fellow students) were working libraries (extremely smart). I got a lot of information from them. I could hardly ask a thing, and a student will not know it... they were that smart.' – RPI

A participant answered:

'My closest friend who was also my school mate was a big influence – very hardworking and motivated, she does the reading, we do the sharing.' - RPM

Another had this to say:

'There was one who was very experienced in research, he was my saviour, my second sensei, always ready to help.' - RPK

The Lecturers. Although a few of the research participants reported that the other fellow students contributed the most to their educational leadership learning experience, the roles of the lecturers seem to be rated as the greatest contributor to learning by some others.

One of them stated:

'If I have to choose (who contributed the most to my learning), I will say the lecturers because they were the ones that did the most difficult part, they taught all the modules. They were the most useful.' – RPC

Another remarked:

'They did not just lecture, they motivated using their life experiences, they also treated everyone individually, that inspired me.' - RPF

Another shared their experience like this:

'Up till now, although I am not his student anymore, I still have a cordial relationship with my sensei. When I encounter any challenge about what I was taught then, I would message or mail him and within 24 hours he will respond.' - RPL

The Thesis Supervisors. As part of the requirements for the award of a certificate in the educational leadership training of MEXT, this study's participants were required to complete and submit a research thesis. Because of this, every student of the MEXT training programme was assigned a supervisor with the aim of research guidance. The interview data seemed to disclose mixed reactions about the supervisors' roles in the educational leadership learning experiences and professional growth of the research participants. While a number of them experienced the interactions with their supervisors as disappointing, others deemed these interactions positive. One of the participants said:

'Above the academic knowledge he possessed, he was kind, sympathetic and empathic.' – RPJ

One participant reported:

'My supervisor read my work line by line with corrections and comments on any and everything that needs to be corrected and adjusted.' – RPD

Another participant remarked:

'After submission, my mind tells me that I have done my possible best and that the work is ready for final submission. But when the work is returned with suggestions and comments for corrections, I realize that there is much more work to be done. It developed my research skills better.' – RPF

Another explained:

'At first, I was frustrated with the corrections, but I kept on doing what I can and implementing those corrections and my research work became very good. I was very proud of the final report.' - RPA

Tools and Artefacts. A total of 14 themes emerged from the interview transcripts with regards to the tools and artefacts element. Overall, the data showed that the participants had a positive experience by interacting with and utilizing the tools and artefacts required for their training. These themes were mostly about the experiences of the participants regarding their educational leadership learning as well as the impact on their professional growth. e.g. (i) *the contents of the modules* (ii) *supporting learning materials* (iii) *the employed teaching and learning methodologies* (iv) *strategies for assessment* and (v) *use of ICT during the course of the programme.*

The Contents of the Modules. The majority of the participants indicated that they had a positive experience during the coursework. Some of them used words such as enabling, exciting, progressive, relevant and helpful in describing their experiences thus definite themes emerged from the interview data. These themes are: (a) *participants felt empowered by the modules' contents*, (b) *acquisition of leadership identity and confidence*, (c) *the realization of leadership deficiencies*, (d) *practical applications of learnt theories* and (e) *exposure to the theories of instructional leadership.*

Participants Felt Empowered by the Modules' Contents. A significant number of participants indicated that they seem to be empowered by the modules to do their jobs better and more efficiently. One of the participants shared:

'I can tell you that some modules were powerful. Presently, I have learnt and now know a lot of things that would contribute positively

in doing my job hence I'm more excited about my job than ever. I can now manage myself, the school, the students and the parents better.' - RPA

Another participant stated:

'From the educational administration course, I gained a lot of knowledge. It taught me how to organize myself and the people that I lead. In this way, everybody knows what to do, how to do and when to do.' - RPC

In a similar tone, a participant responded:

'For me, that (the educational administration module) is the best part of MEXT programme. This course teaches all that you will likely encounter in future and how to deal with them in diplomatic ways.' – RPP

A participant said:

'I realized that there was no order and discipline. Everything was abnormally done but I tried my best to return things to normalcy.' - RPJ

Acquisition of Leadership Identity and Confidence. Another emerging theme that resonated amongst many of the participants is a perception change of themselves about leadership as well as confidence development in their leadership capabilities. One of the participants explained:

'I used to be very fearful so I couldn't do things on my own, especially the fear of getting sacked. Now, it does not cross my mind.' – RPK

Another participant stated:

'My attitude to work has changed tremendously because I have much more confidence.' – RPF

One participant said:

'These kind of programmes and the modules they offer emboldens you and brings back lost virtues and qualities along the way.' - RPQ

The Realization of Leadership Deficiencies. Some of the research participants observed that the contents of the learning materials exposed their leadership deficiencies and weaknesses. One of the participants highlighted:

'I realized that I have not arrived yet and that I still have a very long way to go.' - RPE

Another participant shared.

'It gave me the awareness of what I have been doing wrong. How I should behave and talk to my colleagues and not subordinates as I used to think.' – RPM

One explained:

'My eyes were opened to the loopholes in my leadership skills. That I have been unnecessarily bossy and not empathetic.' – RPL

A participant highlighted:

'My style of leadership has changed a bit. It put me on the same pedestal with the people I lead.' – RPB

Practical Applications of Learnt Theories. Many of the participants reported the application of the knowledge they gained from the contents of the modules, as well as the practicality of the skills they acquired during the training. One of the participants emphasized:

'The modules' content is very much related to my current work. Although still new but I can relate to it because they are not different from what I see every day at work.' - RPO

A participant mentioned:

'I have been in this business (of teaching) for years. I did my job based on what I learnt from my predecessor. Now I know that those responsibilities had theories backing them.' - RPD

Another participant stated:

'They do not just teach you the theories in class. They take you to a real school during observational practice and tours (course) where you see these applications so you can do so when you get to your own school.' - RPH

A participant described:

'Before, our budget was manually done which involved a lot of drawing of line, pressing calculators and so much mistakes. These things no longer happen because I can now use excel (Microsoft excel) to do a proper budget.' - RPC

Exposure to the Theories of Instructional Leadership. Some participants indicated that the MEXT programme exposed them to the theory of instructional leadership and how this leadership relates to the culture and environment of the school. One of the participants shared:

'My eyes were opened to instructional leadership and management in which the school leader (principal) is both the school's manager and the instructional manager.' – RPF

Another participant stated:

'I learnt instructional leadership, management of the classroom and the whole school. I learnt about situating leadership within the environment and culture of the school I lead.' - RPE

One of them shared:

'I have to lead the curriculum. It changed my mentality of depending on the Head of Department (HOD) to manage the curriculum.' - RPD

Supporting Learning Materials. This aspect of the tools and artefacts examines the experiences of the research participants as well as the impact of supporting learning materials as provided by their host institutions. After carefully observing and studying the data, most of the participants seemed to have had huge positive experience with the learning materials. One theme that stood out was: *the learning materials served as tools.*

Learning Materials Served as Tools. Many of the participants reported that the learning materials have become tools in carrying out their functions as leaders. A participant responded:

'You might not realize how important it is until you run into a problem at work. You know in such situations you will be compelled to look for solutions from all area and that might just be your saving grace.' – RPQ

A participant explained:

'Of what use will the programme be if the trainees forget what they have learnt in a few years' time? Their support would be the materials they were given from their respective schools.' – RPP

Another participant had this to say:

'I still refer to them (the modules) steadily.' – RPH

The Employed Teaching and Learning Methodologies. This aspect of the tools and artefacts element investigated the research participants' experiences regarding the teaching and learning methodologies employed during the programme as well as the impact on their professional growth. Some themes were identified regarding the various teaching and learning methodologies which will be detailed below:

Appropriate Instructional Applications for Adults as Learners. The most significant finding on the teaching and learning methodologies is that majority of the research participants experienced these methodologies as appropriate for their age as adults which positively impacted their practice and professional growth. One participant said:

'It was not the usual style of reproducing exact words from modules without understanding their meanings. There, one must discover things for themselves.' – RPM

Another participant explained:

'I did not expect a teacher to stand in front of me and give me everything. That method is for younger students. Moreover, it was a research programme so I would say that I was even lucky to have been taught these courses.' – RPB

One of the participants highlighted:

'Adults learn differently because they have to form their own activities and problems. So there is more responsibility when adults learn.' – RPN

Two other participants explained:

'This stuff is not meant for kids and so everything was done with the targeted audience in mind.' – RPQ

'The Ministry understands their aims and objectives and want to achieve them accordingly, so they use appropriate means to communicate it to the recipients who are mature people.' - RPP

Self-Study. Another observation from the interview data was that the research participants experienced a variety of teaching and learning methodologies or instructional applications within the boundaries of applications suitable for adults as learners during the programme. One of such is that they were required to do most of the work by themselves. A few of the participants experienced this methodology positively. One of such participants recounted:

'Everyone was required to read independently and share what they had read or experienced, with the exception of a limited portion of the topics covered by the sensei (teacher).' - RPI

Another said:

'One of my professors told us that the course was there for us to master and own meaning that it was on us to learn and not on him (our duty to learn the course contents and not his). He will just do the preamble and then leave us to do the rest.' – RPL

A participant stated:

'You must study rigorously to show yourself accepted as one deserving the scholarship.' – RPP

Class Chats. Some research participants extensively reported the use of chats and discussions in facilitating their learning. One of them highlighted:

'We had some occasions for confabulations.' - RPJ

Another participant explained his experience as follows:

'I liked the group discussions because they were very enlightening. Everyone gets involved because you look unserious if you don't participate actively and really, you would be left behind.' – RPK

The above experience was echoed by another participant:

'The lecturers decided on the mode of learning but in general, they were not bad because we had many discussions of different topics.'
– RPM

A participant answered:

'I was surprised that nobody teaches you anything, everybody gets involved in the discussion and you can write down what you have learnt. I kind of enjoyed it at last.' - RPE

Presentations. One of the most mentioned teaching and learning methodologies or instructional applications by the research participants is presentations. The interview data gathered appeared to indicate that many of the research participants were required by the facilitators to present part of the modules. One said:

'We sometimes prepared and presented some topics, about 10 to 15 minutes.' - RPB

In the same vein, another remarked:

'Often times, we would be asked to do some short presentations. That way, we learnt from each other.' – RPD

Similarly, a participant responded:

'Immediately after the introduction, they will ask us to do some oral presentations on the topics and then the power point (presentation) in the next class.' – RPC

One of the participants answered:

'That presentation stuff was good. It increased my understanding of concepts unlike what I am used to.' – RPH

Sharing of Experiences. Another instructional application which many of the research participants stated to have immensely impacted their educational leadership practice and professional growth was sharing their experiences and also sharing in the experiences of others. This is strongly linked to and validated the finding that the research participants experienced the utilization of classroom discussions as adding value to their learning. One participant stated:

'Experiences differ by location. What we do and how we do things back home is different from what happens here. When these things (experiences) are mixed together, they become richer, and we learn from each other.' – RPQ

Another said:

'One module about school management gave us nice chances to discuss our opinions and experiences. You just have to learn from their experiences how they overcame their challenges in case you find yourself in such tomorrow.' - RPF

Another participant highlighted:

'Also I have had my own fair share of work frustrations too and when I shared them, we discussed, and my mates gave me their

opinions and how to deal with them. It's like real-time solutions from people who have had the same experiences and not just from written books.' - RPC

Cooperation and Collegiality in Learning. A good number of the research participants reported that the nature of collegiality within the environment of learning and their experience of collegiality had a positive impact on their educational leadership practice and professional growth. One said:

'Nobody saw themselves as superior to others no matter the country they are from. We were not seen through the lens of inferiority.' – RPA

Another participant explained:

'Group sharing is very much encouraged and a culture I would say. These kinds of things have huge impacts on people and their output.' – RPP

A participant shared:

'They were very committed and cultured, treating us with respect and encouragement. All we needed for success was made available by them.' - RPH

One of the participants summed up collegiality using these words:

'What I couldn't understand on my own, I understood with the help of others.' – RPB

Strategies for Assessment. Many of the participants, as an aspect of the tools and artefacts, seemingly experienced the strategies for assessment in the course of the programme to have had a meaningful impact on their learning. One of them had this to say:

'There was score percentage for class attendance. Everything was not book knowledge, they also assessed your character and attendance.' - RPC

A participant reflected:

'They gave us points for community development services which made up for some shortfalls in academics.' – RPD

Use of Information and Communication (ICT). ICT seem to have played a huge role in the experiences of some of the research participants as an aspect of the tools and artefacts of the educational leadership training. A good number of the research participants indicated that the programme provided unlimited internet browsing data and computers for research and other uses. One of them stated:

'My room had 24/7 data for my own use alone. Everywhere around the campus, there was also free Wi-Fi.' – RPF

One participant reflected:

'It's not like we don't have these (ICT) in Nigeria but it is faster and more efficient in Japan. It helped my research a lot. I could find anything on the internet within few seconds.' – RPE

Another explained:

'You could be walking around the university, and something pops up in your head, you quickly check it on your smart phone immediately because there is internet service all over the place.' – RPL

A participant said:

'We used google classroom on a weekly basis for more than 6 months during the pandemic. I enjoyed it because it was seamless and not stressful.' – RPF

Another participant explained:

'We were always directed to moodle. There we could download lecture notes, assignments and other important information and also upload our assignments when we are done. It was a good experience.' – RPH

Challenges Faced by Nigerian Teachers During the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme

The following section presents the results of the research question: “What challenges did teachers face during the MEXT educational leadership training programme?” The results will be presented under the following components of the theory: Community, Rules, Division of labour and Tools and Artefacts. After the analysis of the interview data, a total number of 31 codes were generated. Further analysis of the generated codes resulted in eight themes.

Community. The data gathered from the interview transcripts indicated that the community did not pose any significant challenge to most of the participants' experiences. Majorly, the community was experienced positively and thus seem to have contributed positively to their educational leadership learning and practice. This observation is shown by these interview chunks. One participant said:

'It was positive; I'm talking about our working relationship (with the lecturers, supervisors and administrators).' – RPA

Another participant said:

'The lecturers, supervisor, administrative staff, everybody was cooperative.' – RPD

One other participants explained:

'The lecturers were our mentors. With the other students and administrative staff, we were like a team.' – RPE

One of them shared:

'What I couldn't understand on my own, I understood with the help of others (other community members). It was symbiotic.' – RPB

Another participant stated:

'When studying alone, I feel like I'm isolated which is very frustrating especially when I need something to be clarified. In such situations, I realize the importance of having my colleagues around me.' – RPL

Rules. Also, the data gathered from the interview transcripts indicated that the rules did not pose any significant challenge to the Nigerian teachers' experiences. In general, the rules as well as their applications were experienced positively and thus seem to have contributed positively to the educational leadership learning and practice for most of the participants. This observation is exemplified by these interview chunks. One of the participants highlighted:

'The rules made my life easy. I did not struggle much. I could meet up with the deadline because I stuck to the rules.' – RPD

A participant stated:

'They – the rules – molded me into the person that you see today. It refined me totally and now I find it easy to follow orders even when I don't like them or they don't augur well with me.' – RPF

One other participant shared:

'It was painful at the time but thinking about it in hindsight, the result was worth the pain.' – RPH

Another participant shared:

'As the programme drew to a conclusion, its positive impact became more conspicuous. I believe it is because I followed the rules to the letter.' – RPE

Division of Labour. Despite the thesis supervisors' roles in the activity system generating mixed reactions, only a few of the participants opined that the relationship with their supervisors posed a challenge to their leadership learning. The theme, *difficult supervisors*, emerged from the data.

Difficult Supervisors. A few of the research participants stated that the difficulty of their supervisors posed a challenge to their learning. One of them explained:

'My former supervisor was a pain in my neck, we disagreed on a lot of things and he got mad a few times, I considered quitting at some point.' – RPC

Another participant reported:

'Sometimes, I wondered if the other students were also receiving the same treatments from their own supervisors. Her treatment was not fair.' – RPE

One participant answered:

'Thinking about it now, I had no need of a supervisor especially with my assigned supervisor. I could have done it alone sufficiently or I

would rather say, I could have finished earlier if I had a different supervisor who was empathetic.’ - RPB

Tools and Artefacts. Based on the interview analysis, seven themes emerged from the interview transcripts with regards to the tools and artefact element of the MEXT activity system. Overall, the data showed that some aspects of the tools and artefacts posed a learning challenge to the participants. These themes emerged from the interview transcripts: (a) *absence of personal experience and previous knowledge consideration*, (b) *modules not directly related to leadership learning in education*, (c) *delayed feedback*, (d) *insufficient contact time*, (e) *teaching strategies*, and (f) *Use of ICT*. These themes are presented below the supporting interview quotes:

Absence of Personal Experience and Previous Knowledge Consideration. The challenge mentioned by most of the participants was the little or no consideration for various levels of leadership experience and previous knowledge. In view of this, one of them stated:

‘Some modules were more like a time of reflection on what I already knew, it was below my current level.’ - RPC

A research participant said:

‘I already have much experience in education so a few of the modules did not give me that wow experience.’ - RPA

Similarly, a research participant reported:

‘Some of the modules did not interest me that much because I had taken several related courses before.’ - RPB

One of the research participants substantiated this theme using these words:

'They were not my favourite because I already knew many things in those modules.' - RPB

Modules Not Directly Related to Leadership Learning in Education. The next most mentioned challenge was the issue of some modules not directly related to educational leadership. The observational practice and tours module was particularly identified by some of the research participants. One of the participants expressed their disappointment in these words:

'That module was not so good. I can understand how important it is to them but they added next to nothing to my knowledge store.' – RPO

Another expressed their disappointment like this:

'I did those tours because they were conditions for the programme.' – RPM

One of them highlighted:

'I can't see the relevance to our African setting.' - RPN

Delayed Feedback. Although none of the research participants mentioned the absence of feedback, the third most mentioned challenge by a few participants was the delay in feedbacks.

'The feedbacks from my supervisor was mostly during our meetings, on the spot (instead of the stipulated one week in advance at least). I couldn't prepare in advance because of this.' – RPB

One of them reported:

'Before they change my supervisor, he will usually respond one or two days before we meet (instead of the stipulated one week in

advance at least). It made my study more challenging and difficult.'

– RPC

Insufficient Contact Time. A few of the research participants made comments on the contact time allotted for lectures as a challenge to their experiences of educational leadership learning. One of such is:

'I'm not quite sure the contact was enough because most of the modules were once or twice a week which lasted one hour per contact.' – RPF

Another participant remarked:

'Plenty materials but less time with the lecturers and other classmates to digest it.' – RPH

A participant stated:

'There was so much work to do in such a short period of time and each module has about 2 to 3 assignments per week aside the presentation.' - RPE

Teaching Strategies. The sub-themes identified regarding the various teaching and learning strategies are: (a) *absence of differentiation*, (b) *absence of instructional applications variety*.

Absence of Differentiation. Although the issue of differentiation is not limited strictly to teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications, it however seemed to influence significantly the mode of delivery of the presented modules, thus negatively impacting the experiences of few research participants. This is observed in the explanation below:

‘When you are faced with a group of experienced education leaders, the way you teach them should be different from when you are faced with inexperienced ones – the language, vocabulary, explanations and so on should differ.’ - RPA

Absence of Instructional Applications Variety. A few research participants indicated that wider variation in teaching and learning strategies or instructional applications could have improved their experiences of education leadership learning. One of them stated:

‘I was surprised to observe that one lecturer takes a whole course, so if you don’t understand his or her method of teaching, you are done for.’ – RPD

Another remarked:

‘I don’t think it’s right to dish a material to people on the spot, give them about 10 to 15 minutes and then tell them to do a presentation on it all in the same contact.’ - RPH

Use of ICT. Although ICT played a huge role in the experiences of some of the research participants, a few others seemed to feel otherwise. This observation is seen from these sub-themes below:

Computer Illiteracy. The main challenge to ICT use experienced by a few research participants is illiteracy in computer at the start of the MEXT training programme. A few of these participants seemed not to have experienced the electronic platform for learning as a positive contribution to their learning and practice. These observations are seen from these sub-themes below: One of them explained:

'The use of computers was problematic for me. I did not know enough about its use. It was as if I was learning something complicated at an older age.' – RPC

Another answered:

'It was hard initially; I couldn't do things with the computers because I was not good at the time.' – RPL

Another participant mentioned:

'Due to my ineptitude, I seek help from other students in the department.' – RPB

One of them said:

'In the beginning, it was not easy because I did not understand what was happening.' – RPL

A participant shared:

'I did not really get a grasp of that thing. I always visited my next door neighbour for assignments and lecture notes who luckily happened to be my classmate.' - RPA

Language Barrier. A few of the research participants were not completely convinced of the value of the ICT provided by their institutions due to language barrier. These excerpts from the interview data demonstrate this theme.

'All the computers were in Japanese language. We learnt the language, but I was not interested at the time and that explains my difficulty in using their computers.' – RPM

One participant stated:

'We were provided with personal email address from the school website and given computers that were programmed in Japanese language to use and set it up.' – RPN

Another participant highlighted:

'I don't know whether to say it was not user-friendly because it took some time to figure out their computer.' – RPJ

Results of the Secondary Data

As part of the requirements for graduation and the award of certificates, the research participants developed and submitted reports and/or thesis. These written documents served as the secondary data for this research study. The findings of these secondary data will be discussed under the themes that emanated during the data analysis.

Results of the Secondary Data: Perceptions of Nigerian School Teachers on the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme

The following section presents the results of the research question: “How do teachers from Nigeria who underwent MEXT training perceive their educational leadership?” Because the secondary data is part of the Tools and Artefacts component of the MEXT activity system, the results will be presented under this element only. After analysis of the secondary data, 12 codes were generated. Further analysis produced the following theme.

Tools and Artefacts. The theme: *contributions to leadership roles and practice*, emerged from the secondary data with regards to the tools and artefacts element. Overall, the data showed that the participants largely perceived their research to be of positive value.

Contributions to Leadership Roles and Practice. A few of the participants perceived that their research added to their practice of educational leadership. A participant stated that his research contributed to his leadership roles through:

'Equipping him with better skills at managing children.' – RPD

Results of the Secondary Data: Experiences and Impact of the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme on Nigerian Teachers' Professional Growth and Leadership Practice

This heading presents the results on the experiences and impact of the MEXT educational leadership training programme on Nigerian teachers' professional growth and leadership practice. After the data analysis, 15 codes were generated. Further analyses merged these codes into two themes.

Tools and Artefacts. Two themes emerged in relation to the research documents as an aspect of the tools and artefacts element of the MEXT activity system. Overall, the data showed that research impacted the participants' educational leadership training and professional growth. The themes: (a) *realization of school leadership as a critical aspect of education*, (b) *research resulted in change of perception*, emerged from the secondary data.

Realization of School Leadership as a Critical Aspect of Education.

Although some of the research works presented by the participants as part of their course requirements before graduation were not directly related to educational leadership, the majority of the participants indicated that its contents contributed to their training and professional growth in a positive way. One of them whose report is related to educational leadership, mentioned that through her research, she realized that:

'School leadership is a critical aspect required for the success of a school.' – RPA

Another participant reported:

'Conscious school leadership is the reason Japanese students do things on their own from infancy because their learning relies on emulation and copying (of their teachers).' - RPD

Another participant reported:

'The value placed by the Japanese government on educational leadership is the difference between them and others.' – RPH

One participant shared:

'School leadership in Japan is constantly evolving; seeking new ways to improve learning experience through the use of technology.' – RPL

Research Resulted in Change of Perception. Another theme that emerged from the secondary data is that many of the participants changed their perceptions regarding teachers' responsibilities and duties. In this regard, a participant reported that her perception about her duties has changed from the conventional classroom teaching to

'Teaching students stress-reduction techniques, sharing real-life encouraging stories with students, creating a space for students to express themselves.' - RPJ

Similarly, another participant reported:

'The adoption of a new approach through provision of diagrams that assist students in solving problems independently.' – RPI

One participant highlighted:

'Now, I focus on areas needing urgent attention.' – RPH

Another participant reported that his research:

'Shaped (his) mentality about (his) duties as a teacher and exposed areas of improvement.' - RPB

Results of the Secondary Data: Challenges Faced by Nigerian Teachers During the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme

The following section presents the results of the research question: "What challenges did teachers face during the MEXT educational leadership training programme?" After the data analysis, 10 codes emerged. Further analysis of the generated codes resulted in two themes.

Tools and Artefacts. Based on the analysis of the secondary data, two (2) themes emerged with regards to the research component of the tools and artefact element of the MEXT activity system. Overall, the data showed few challenges to the participants' transfer of research results to their home country. The themes that emerged were: (a) *environmental and social differences*, (b) *absence of support for students*.

Environmental and Social Differences. The challenge to participants' learning experience mentioned by a few of them was the environmental and social differences between Japan and Nigeria. In view of this, one participant whose research was on "After School Care Centres for Elementary School Students in Japan" reported:

'This arrangement (having 1st to 6th grade elementary school pupils in the same room) is more likely to expose children to social vices; could fuel vices amongst children in Nigeria where the crime rate is fairly high.' – RPJ

Absence of Support for Students. Another challenge to learning experience mentioned by a few of the participants was the absence of support for students. One participant who studied "the impact of anxiety on the performance of students in High Schools" reported:

'Schools are supposed to serve as a place of succour for students. However, the society the high school students live in is the primary source of anxiety mostly due to indifference to students' emotional needs.' – RPK

Discussion and Evaluation of the Research Findings

It is important to reiterate that the main aim of this research is “to probe the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers regarding their MEXT educational leadership training in Japan”. The findings of this study will be discussed under two broad headings: “Integrated Synthesis of the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme’s Influence on Nigerian Teachers’ Perceptions, Experiences, and Professional Growth” and “Challenges Affecting Nigerian Teachers in the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme.” As mentioned elsewhere, this research is using the lens of the activity theory developed by Engestrom (2015). Thus, next to the broad headings, this section is organized following the components of this theory.

Integrated Synthesis of the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme’s Influence on Nigerian Teachers’ Perceptions, Experiences, and Professional Growth

The experiences and perceptions of the participants as the activity system's subjects regarding their interactions with the other elements of the activity system were derived from the data analysis. Their experiences and perceptions, in relation to the rules, division of labour, tools and artefacts as well as community, were that such interactions impacted their educational leadership learning and professional growth positively. The value acquired from the training programme reported by the participants is reflected in their use of words such as advice,

friendship, broadened perspectives, support, sharing, networking opportunities and empowerment.

Community

It was identified that the participants appreciated their interactions and engagements with the activity system's community in that such interactions broadened their perspectives on various leadership contexts, challenges and the phenomenon of educational leadership in general. It was found that majority of the participants placed a huge value on the learning they acquired from others, in other words, their colleagues' perspectives on leadership, challenges, leadership styles as well as their empowerment to deal with and understand diversity better. This suggests that leadership understanding in the programme was not constructed solely through formal instruction but also through peer-based meaning-making within the activity system's community. Such interaction appears to function as a reflective space where participants compared leadership experiences across contexts, enabling them to reinterpret their own leadership assumptions. Also, the broadening of perspectives suggests that interaction within the programme's community functioned as a critical learning mechanism which allowed participants to reinterpret leadership challenges through exposure to diverse professional and cultural perspectives.

This finding is in line with one of the outcomes from the formal leadership programmes evaluated by Ueda and Kezar (2024), that is, the participants' appreciation of their individual differences and diverseness. Their study results are also related to the present diversity in educational leadership programmes and strategies all over the world. Moreover, this is also identified by the study findings of Bush and Moorosi (2011, p. 62). They believe that this diversity has resulted from the various conceptualizations and contexts of educational leadership in combination with the considerable leadership and educational challenges facing

the developing and developed countries in recent times. This finding is in accordance with that of Fisher (2021) whose research report affirms that training institutes of educational leadership should have a greater emphasis on cultivating multicultural leadership skills. Similarly, a look at the educational leadership programme of 2023-2024 in the Netherlands shows that due to their students' diverseness, one of the contents and themes of their session focuses on participants learning to create an encouraging, supportive and welcoming classroom that promotes student learning.

Furthermore, the finding by Lumby et al. (2008, p. xxx) that international educational leadership does not anymore benefit the world communities which used to be homogenous pre-globalisation, in combination with the fact that Nigeria is a heterogeneous nation with diverse cultures, languages, religions and ethnic groups substantiate further the significance of this finding on the participants' perceived broadened educational leadership perspectives. This finding is in accordance with the study results of Lee (2020) article, "Courageous Leaders: Promoting and Supporting Diversity in School Leadership Development" in that every participant acknowledged that the program's strongest point was the presence of community to support up-and-coming leaders, which allowed for more attention on leadership. Moreover, this finding correlates with Heystek (2007, p. 502) finding because the ACE: SL programme meaningfully prepared the participants to challenge and critique different elements, approaches and policies of educational leadership learning in South Africa.

It was revealed from the data that the participants' educational leadership learning was an opportunity for networking with other educational leaders within the community. Within the activity system framework, this networking can be interpreted as an important function of the community component, where participants interacted with peers who shared a common objective of developing leadership capacity. These interactions created a platform for

professional dialogue, allowing participants to exchange experiences of leadership practice across diverse institutional contexts.

In simple terms, networking entails linking people of one organization with each other as well as with members of other comparable organizations for the purposes of increasing socialization and awareness of the benefits of cooperation, teamwork, problem resolution and enhanced resources (Day & Harrison, 2011, p. 459; Azorín, 2022; Jones et al., 2023). However, from an activity system perspective, networking goes beyond simple professional connection. It represents a collaborative learning process through which participants negotiate meanings of leadership, reflect on their own practices, and draw insights from the experiences of others within the community. This suggests that the programme's structure enabled participants to function as both individual learners and contributors to a shared learning environment. It also suggests that the programme functioned not only as a formal training environment but also as a relational space where leadership knowledge was exchanged through professional interaction. Through networking, participants were able to compare leadership experiences across different institutional contexts, which appears to have supported reflective learning and collaborative problem solving.

This finding is in consonance with existing research that have ranked networking to be one of the most valuable and popular educational leadership learning activities (Earley and Weindling, 2004, p. 4; Jones & O'Brien, 2024). Some other research confirms this, for instance, the New Visions programme's evaluation of the NCSL in England (Bush et al., 2006, p. 185), the educational leadership learning for freshly appointed principals in Hong Kong (Walker and Dimmock, 2006, p. 136) and the ACE: SL study by Moorosi (2014, p. 800). This finding is also in agreement with Brauckmann, Pashiardis and Ärlestig (2023) finding that the Swedish principal preparation and training program provides avenues for networking of professionals.

Within the activity system framework, such networking can be seen as strengthening the collective dimension of leadership learning, where the cohort structure facilitates sustained interaction among participants. The finding that the use of cohorts is a key indicator and predictor of networking possibilities and opportunities within programmes of educational leadership learning by Day and Harrison (2011, p. 459) and Donmoyer et al. (2012, p. 10) aligns with the attribute of the educational leadership learning programme that represents the activity system for this study. This can be understood as an organisational feature that supports the community element of the activity system, enabling participants to share knowledge, reflect on leadership challenges and collaboratively develop strategies for addressing them.

It was found that the research participants experienced and perceived the community of the activity system as motivation necessary for the continuation and subsequent completion of the programme. From an activity system standpoint, this suggests that the community functioned not merely as a social grouping but as a motivational and supportive structure that sustained participants' engagement with the learning process. Through interactions with peers, participants appeared to draw encouragement and validation for their leadership journeys, indicating that the social dimension of the programme played a critical role in maintaining commitment to the learning activity.

Also, it was found that professional, academic and personal support to leadership practice is one of the contributions the participants experienced in the course of their interactions with the activity system's community. This form of support can be interpreted as a collaborative resource within the activity system, where knowledge, experiences and emotional encouragement were shared among participants. Such interactions seem to have enabled participants to reflect on their leadership practices, discuss challenges and explore possible strategies for addressing leadership issues in their respective contexts. In this regard, the

community element of the activity system functioned as a collective learning environment in which leadership development was reinforced through dialogue, peer advice and shared professional experiences. This interpretation also explains participants' perception that networking within the programme contributed positively to their leadership practice. By forming interpersonal relationships and professional networks, participants were able to access diverse perspectives and forms of support that extended beyond the formal curriculum of the programme. One research that identified similar outcomes is Dimmock (2006, p. 136) who finds that the participants esteemed the opportunities to interact with and establish interpersonal networks and relationships with the other students. Also, Bush et al. (2006, p. 193) investigation on the New Visions programme find that the students esteemed discussing and sharing their challenges with other leaders as well as the assistance they got and were able to offer. These findings reinforce the view that professional networking and peer interaction are central mechanisms through which leadership learning occurs in many development programmes.

Furthermore, this finding is in accordance with the step II and III of Jones and O'Brien (2024) model on "Professional Development in Education" which stresses organised assistance for colleagues in their careers. Similarly, a huge proportion of the qualitative studies evaluated by Ueda and Kezar (2024) supports links between outcomes of leadership and peer education, including fostering relationships to help others, all giving credence to the outcome of this research on the activity system's community as motivation and source of support. Taken together, these studies support the interpretation that the activity system's community provided both practical support and motivational reinforcement which enabled participants to navigate leadership challenges through shared experience and collaborative reflection.

However, it is important to point out here that in spite of the participants' perceptions of community interaction contributing positively to their experience and practice, this was mostly done informally, rather than as part of an integrated or planned instructional application. This suggests that the potential of the community component of the activity system may not have been fully harnessed through intentional instructional design. While informal interaction still produced valuable learning outcomes, integrating structured collaborative activities could further strengthen the role of the community as a systematic mechanism for leadership development.

Rules

It was found that the participants' interactions with the MEXT programme's rules boosted their leadership and academic confidence and thus were of great assistance in creating a disciplined environment of learning. This finding suggests that participants' interactions with the MEXT programme's rules did more than regulate behaviour; they functioned as mediating structures that shaped how participants engaged with leadership learning. Rather than merely enforcing compliance, these rules appear to have structured the learning environment in ways that fostered leadership identity formation. This created environment in turn positively contributed to their educational leadership learning and professional growth by prescribing diligence, dedication and very high academic standards. This suggest that the programme's regulatory framework created a disciplined learning culture that enabled participants to internalize professional norms associated with educational leadership. In this sense, the rules operated not only as organizational constraints but also as developmental mechanisms that channeled participants' engagement with the programme's learning activities, thereby supporting their professional growth.

This interpretation is in accordance with the research of Ndebele, Masuku and Mlambo (2022), who observe that their study's participants perceived that without the rules of the activity system, students resorted to alternatives which decreased effectiveness of instruction and learning, resulting in academic achievements that are below par. This finding also relates in part to the results of Alghamdi and Plunkett (2022) who report that rules were crucial in determining the academic results of their activity theory, both favourably and unfavourably. The present study extends these insights by illustrating how rules can facilitate the emergence of a disciplined and purposeful learning environment that indirectly cultivates leadership-related dispositions, such as diligence, commitment and high academic standards.

Importantly, the influence of rules also points to the presence of an incidental curriculum within the MEXT educational leadership training programme. While the rules were not explicitly designed as part of the formal leadership curriculum, participants' accounts suggest that they nonetheless contributed to the programme's learning processes by implicitly transmitting professional values and behavioural expectations which Japos (2024) acknowledges as essential elements of continuous development. Srinivasa, Kurni and Saritha (2022b) describes incidental learning to be "any unplanned, unintentional, indirect or additional learning resulting from other activities." In the case of this study, incidental curriculum implies that in as much as the rules that regulate the activity system's activities are not entirely a part and parcel of the main curriculum, they additionally contributed to the activity system's object (educational leadership learning) as well as the outcome (effective educational leadership learning).

The finding on the programmes' rules contributing to leadership practice and learning is in consonance with the findings of Liljenberg and Wrethander (2023) who reported that inexperienced school administrators first perceived learning activities as difficult but

eventually evolved into a mediation tool in their practice. These improvements they attribute to the rules, structure, systematic methodology, supportive resources and duration of the activities (Liljenberg & Wrethander, 2023). In addition, the participants' learning of skills and values support Menter, Holligan and Mthenjwa (2006, p. 11) findings that the SQH participants experienced enhanced professional values from the programme and thus aligns with Taylor, Russ-Eft and Chan (2005) position that developing and learning skills yielded better results when done under the guidance of rules. Taken together, these findings suggest that the rules of the MEXT activity system played a formative rather than just regulatory role, thereby shaping both the learning environment and the professional dispositions that participants developed throughout the programme.

Furthermore, it was found that the activity system's rules imparted a higher sense of accountability and responsibility in their jobs as leaders in education as well as their academic pursuit as students. Rather than functioning as just behavioural guidelines, the programme's rules appear to have operated as normative structures that reinforced expectations of professional conduct and self-regulation. Through repeated interaction with these rules, participants gradually internalized values associated with responsible leadership practice, including reliability, commitment to duties and responsiveness to institutional expectations.

Also, it was found that the acquisition of the value of time awareness is a much-needed value for time management and organization effectiveness. This suggests that the rules of the programme did not only organise learning activities but also shaped participants' professional habits by encouraging disciplined engagement with deadlines, responsibilities and academic tasks. In this sense, the programme's regulatory framework contributed to the formation of leadership practices that emphasise planning, organisation and accountability which are competencies widely recognized as essential for effective educational leadership.

The interesting aspect of this finding on time awareness is that it is in contradiction with van der Westhuizen, Mosoge and van Vuuren (2004, p. 715) findings who report that the participants of an ACE programme in a South African province considered their learning a partial success based on their opinion that change management, time management and strategic planning were not sufficiently dealt with to produce a remarkable difference in their jobs. The contrast between these findings may indicate that time management competencies are not always effectively transmitted through formal curriculum content alone, but may instead emerge through the structured demands and expectations embedded within programme rules and routines. In the present study, participants' development of time awareness appears to have been shaped less by explicit instruction and more by the disciplined environment created by the programme's regulatory framework.

However, the finding on the MEXT programme imparting a higher sense of accountability and responsibility on the participants is in consonance with two of the three major objectives of the Swedish principal preparation and training programme. These are that all participants acquire knowledge from the programme so as to (i) be accountable for making sure that every facet of the school activities becomes better and (ii) take responsibility to ensure that pupils receive legally correct and equal education (Brauckmann, Pashiardis & Ärlestig, 2023). The present findings therefore suggest that structured programme rules can contribute to similar leadership outcomes by reinforcing professional norms related to accountability and ethical responsibility. Here, the rules of the MEXT activity system appear to function not just as administrative mechanisms but also as formative elements that shape participants' leadership dispositions and professional conduct.

Division of Labour

It was found that the participants' interactions with other students and study groups contributed positively to their learning and professional growth. Through collaborative engagement, participants were able to exchange ideas, clarify academic concepts and support one another in navigating the demands of the programme. These interactions appear to have created a form of peer-mediated learning that strengthened both professional growth and academic understanding. Within the activity system, such interactions functioned as social mediating processes that facilitated collective learning, thereby allowing participants to draw on the experiences and knowledge of others while developing leadership-related competencies.

However, the categorizing of study groups as supplemental players is astonishing taking into account the participants' expressed perceptions of their enormous contributions. This classification is noteworthy because it highlights a disconnection between the formal structure of the programme and the informal learning practices that participants themselves found most valuable. This finding is most likely due to their collaborations and working together being mostly informal and not one of the requirements or recommendations of the programme; thus, not fully harnessed to the possible best. Since participation in study groups was neither formally required nor explicitly embedded within the programme's design, their contributions were not fully institutionalized within the learning framework. Consequently, while study groups played a substantial role in supporting participants' learning, their potential impact may not have been fully harnessed by the programme's formal structure. This finding suggests that informal peer collaboration can become a powerful but under-recognized component of leadership development programmes.

It was also found that the participants experienced both academic and administrative staff support, which they perceived to be very helpful. This support appears to have strengthened the learning environment by providing guidance, resources and institutional encouragement that enabled participants to engage more effectively with the MEXT programme requirements. This finding corroborates the findings of Chikoko (2010, p. 45) who revealed that the participants in the programme they studied acknowledged the staff members to be indispensable.

The finding on the study group's positive contribution is in accordance with those of Ndebele, Masuku and Mlambo (2022) who report that unless students had access to the required materials, most especially sharing these sources with others, or participate in study groups, their productivity was hindered. Similarly, this finding aligns with that of McKay and Sridharan (2024) who found that some participants in their study perceived studying and working in a group to be a positive contributor in achieving their goals in that it is an unbelievable rescuer in overcoming the sense of loneliness and has the capacity of cultivating a variety of soft skills, such as self-management, working in teams and leadership. These findings reinforce the idea that peer collaboration functions not only as an academic support mechanism but also as a developmental space for leadership-related competencies. In addition, the findings by Gökçe (2011) aligns with that of this research because they found that the majority of teachers gain from studying in groups in an efficient manner which enhances their confidence and friendships. This suggests that collaborative learning environments can enhance both cognitive and social dimensions of professional development.

Tools and Artefacts

It was found from the analyzed results that the offered modules as an aspect of the tools and artefacts of the activity system were recognized by the research participants to be a major

contributor to their educational leadership learning and professional growth. It emerged that the contents of the modules were a huge source of empowerment in achieving their desired aim and outcome of the activity system, which is to carry out their duties as education leaders in a more proficient manner. Through engagement with the module content, participants appear to have developed conceptual frameworks and practical insights that supported their ability to carry out leadership responsibilities with greater confidence and competence. In this regard, the modules functioned as knowledge-based mediational tools that connected theoretical understanding with leadership practice.

Amongst the various modules offered in the programme, the education administration module was the most mentioned module. This prominence suggests that participants may have perceived a direct connection between the module's content and the practical challenges they encounter in their leadership roles. The module likely provided procedural and conceptual knowledge related to institutional leadership, organizational management and policy implementation, thereby enabling participants to interpret their professional responsibilities through a more informed administrative perspective. Consequently, the module appears to have played a crucial role in bridging the gap between academic learning and professional practice.

In addition to the finding from interview data that research participants identified the programme's educational administration module contents as a source of empowerment, it was also found from the secondary data that their involvement in research and completion of independent research projects which resulted in the production of a limited-scope dissertation empowered them in performing their leadership roles. Engaging in research required participants to critically examine educational issues, analyze evidence and develop reasoned solutions all of which are processes closely aligned with the analytical and reflective competencies required in leadership practice. As a result, the research component of the

programme appears to have strengthened participants' capacity for reflective leadership and decision-making that are based on empirical evidence.

From secondary data also, the conduction of research enhanced learning of educational leadership with RPD noting that research contributed to his leadership roles through '*equipping him with better skills at managing children.*' This perception suggests that the research process enabled participants to translate theoretical inquiry into practical strategies for addressing leadership challenges within educational settings. In this sense, research functioned not only as an academic requirement but also as a developmental activity that enhanced participants' ability to analyse problems, generate informed responses and apply knowledge in real-world leadership contexts.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the programme's modules and research components acted as critical mediational tools within the activity system, shaping how participants acquired knowledge, interpreted leadership challenges and applied learning in their professional roles. By integrating theoretical instruction with research-based inquiry, the programme appears to have created opportunities for participants to develop both conceptual understanding and practical leadership competencies.

This study result resonates with those of Menter, Holligan and Mthenjwa (2006, p. 8), who find that the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) graduates reported enhanced effectiveness as leaders as a result of the modules they studied, among other factors. It also aligns with that of Bush et al. (2007, p. 193) who report that the New Visions programme offered by the NCSL in England considerably increased their graduates' understanding of educational leadership theory and practice, as well as their capacity to influence others. The convergence of these findings across different national contexts suggests that leadership preparation programmes may share common mechanisms that promote leadership growth, such

as exposure to leadership theory, reflective practice, and opportunities to connect conceptual knowledge with professional experiences. This interpretation is further supported by Cheng and Zhu (2021) whose study reveal that participants perceived effective and successful educational leadership and capacity building from Chinese higher institutions' educational studies. It also is in accordance with participants' perceived improvement of teaching/learning capacity and effectiveness from Ndebele, Masuku and Mlambo (2022) study of the perceptions of participants regarding the value of materials for learning of their modules in South Africa.

Collectively, these studies indicate that leadership development initiatives can function as critical platforms for professional learning by strengthening leaders' conceptual understanding, reflective capacity, and ability to influence institutional change. This present finding reinforces Butler and Yendol-Hoppey (2024) assertion that school leaders who have the reformation of their teachers in mind should be ready to learn to promote and enable change with a view to foster robust leadership.

It was found from the analyzed interview results that the activity system's outcome was attained through their various interactions with the tools and artefacts of the MEXT programme. These interactions assisted them in the development of their distinctive individual leadership identity and confidence on the one hand and the identification of their shortcomings in education leadership on the other hand; thus significantly contributing to their educational leadership practice. This dual process of identity formation and critical self-awareness appears to have played a significant role in shaping their educational leadership practice. Evidence from the secondary data reinforces this interpretation, as RPB noted that research activities "*shaped (his) mentality about (his) duties as a teacher and exposed areas of improvement.*" Such reflections suggest that the programme's tools and learning activities functioned as mediating artefacts that facilitated both professional growth and reflexive learning.

This pattern aligns with broader evidence from leadership development literature such as Bush et al. (2007, p. 185) as well as Menter, Holligan and Mthenjwa (2006, p. 8) where the latter evaluated the SQH students and found that they improved their leadership and personal confidence while the former evaluated New Visions programme students and found that they esteemed significant improvements in their leadership confidence. Similar outcomes are reported by An and Meier (2020) whose study shows that leadership training can significantly strengthen leadership personality traits, while Gilbert et al. (2012) found that participants perceived training as addressing their lack of confidence. Put together, these studies suggest that leadership programmes may contribute to leadership development by creating structured opportunities for reflection, knowledge acquisition, and practice-based learning.

Furthermore, evidence from Seeg, Gauglitz and Schütz (2022) indicates that leadership development programmes can positively influence a range of outcomes, including leadership personality and confidence. Comparable findings are also reported in African contexts. For example, Moorosi (2014) found that participants in the Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE: SL) programme in South Africa developed a stronger sense of leadership identity and increased self-confidence through their participation. The convergence of these findings across different contexts suggests that leadership development programmes can act as important mediating environments where individuals negotiate their professional identities while developing the confidence required for effective leadership roles.

This finding on individual distinctive leadership identity and confidence is viewed in light of the reality that, on a global scale, there is a rising awareness and acknowledgement that school leadership is a “profession in its own right” (Huber, 2010, p. 230). It is also viewed against a back-drop of current school leaders performing at a far higher level and under far greater pressure than past school leaders (Davis et al., 2005, p. 3; Mincu, 2022; Bush, 2024).

This is due to the continuous increase in education decentralization amongst other factors, which brought increasing responsibilities in areas such as learner and school performance, staff management and school policy implementation (Christie, 2010, p. 699; Mincu, 2022; Bush, 2024). Within such complex and high-pressure environments, leadership confidence and a clearly developed professional identity become essential resources that enable leaders to navigate these responsibilities effectively.

When viewed from the standpoint of the MEXT training activity system, participants' perceptions that their leadership learning enhanced both their leadership identity and personal confidence can therefore be interpreted as an important step toward achieving the object of the activity system (educational leadership learning). In turn, this strengthened sense of identity and confidence supports the outcome of the activity system, namely the development of more effective educational leadership practice. Thus, the programme's contribution to participants' identity formation and confidence development can be seen not just as a personal benefit but as a critical mechanism through which leadership training prepares individuals to respond to the increasing professional demands placed on contemporary school leaders.

Another crucial contribution to the participants' practice of educational leadership realized from interacting with the tools and artefacts of the MEXT training activity system is that they perceived their learning as an enhancement to their capability to empower their fellow staff and colleagues as well as their capacity to assist and advise others. Evidence from the secondary data reinforces this interpretation, as RPI explained that his research introduced new approaches that "*assist students in solving problems independently.*" This suggests that the programme's learning activities functioned not only as mechanisms for individual knowledge acquisition but also as mediating tools that enabled participants to facilitate learning and problem-solving among others within their professional environments.

This finding reflects a broader understanding in educational leadership literature that effective leaders play a central role in developing the capacities of those they lead. Scholars consistently identify the ability to understand, support, and develop others as core leadership competences (Bush, 2012; Harvard Business Publishing Corporate Learning, 2022; Deng et al., 2023). Similar outcomes have been observed in leadership preparation programmes internationally. For example, Menter, Holligan and Mthenjwa (2006) found that participants in the Scottish Qualification for Headship (SQH) programme reported an increased capacity to support colleagues and contribute to collaborative professional learning. Likewise, Barends et al. (2023) note in their evidence-based review that leadership development programmes often strengthen leaders' ability to create supportive environments that encourage the application of new knowledge and skills.

From the viewpoint of instructional leadership, this finding is particularly significant. This is because it aligns with one of Leithwood, Harris & Hopkins (2019, p. 22) seven focus of instructional leadership, that is organizing, controlling, management and planning of a vast range of activities regarding the development of staff, responsibilities the participants perceive they are now better equipped to carry out because of interacting with the MEXT activity system's tools and artefacts. This suggests that the MEXT activity system not only contributed to their individual leadership growth but also strengthened their capacity to foster collaborative learning and professional development within their institutions.

More so, it was discovered that the theories the participants learnt from the modules have applicability to their practice of educational leadership. Participants indicated that the theoretical knowledge gained from the modules informed their professional decision-making and helped them prioritize key leadership responsibilities. This interpretation is supported by the secondary data, where RPH noted that the research module of the programme influenced

his practice such that he *'now focuses on areas needing urgent attention.'* This suggests that the theoretical components of the programme functioned not just as abstract knowledge but as conceptual tools that guided participants' professional judgement and leadership actions.

This finding completely opposes the critique of a few researchers. For instance, Hale and Moorman (2003) as well as Hess and Kelly (2005) who criticized that a lot of educational leadership development programmes are unduly theoretical and completely unrelated to and disconnected from the regular functions and responsibilities of school administrators and leaders. Also, this finding contradicts some research studies which revealed that participants do not usually obtain the practical value of the theoretical knowledge they are taught in educational leadership development programmes (Kjellström, Stålné & Törnblom, 2020). Of specific interest is Manaseh, Mislav and Ngalomba (2022) study from Tanzania, Africa, which finds that graduates of educational leadership programmes in Tanzania lacked practicum directly linked to the fundamental duties of education leaders. The contradiction of this finding to other research could be due to the fact that one of the offered modules of the MEXT programme, "observational practice and tours", is intentionally and specifically focused on field trips to practically enhance the theories learnt in the classroom. Such experiences appear to facilitate the translation of theoretical concepts into practical understanding, thereby bridging the gap between theory and practice that has been widely criticized in the literature. From the viewpoint of the MEXT training activity system, these experiential components function as mediating tools that enable participants to contextualize theoretical knowledge within authentic leadership environments, ultimately strengthening their capacity to apply what they have learned in their own professional contexts.

Instead, this finding backs up the findings of some other research like that of Walker and Dimmock (2006, p. 126) investigation of the leadership development program offered by

the Education and Manpower Bureau of Hong Kong for newly recruited principals. Their findings reveal that participants, amongst other things, appreciate that the learning presented by the programme could be related to their specific school leadership practice and context. While it is noteworthy that the reported programme by Walker and Dimmock is not of the same level as the one being reported here, this finding does not suggest or report a comparison of both programmes, rather it stresses the commonality of significance the participants of the two programmes ascribe to their ability to apply what they learnt in theory to their educational leadership practice.

This convergence suggests that the perceived value of leadership development programmes may depend significantly on their ability to connect conceptual knowledge with practical leadership challenges. In this regard, the present finding reinforces Huber's (2010, p. 230) argument that effective leadership preparation requires the deliberate integration of theoretical understanding with practical experience. Without such integration, leadership learning risks remaining abstract and disconnected from professional practice. Furthermore, this interpretation is consistent with a growing body of research emphasising that leadership development programmes are most effective when they incorporate opportunities for experiential learning and engagement with real-world scenarios. Studies by Mianda and Voce (2018), Seeg, Gauglitz and Schütz (2022), and Barends et al. (2023, p. 11) similarly highlight the importance of linking theoretical instruction to authentic leadership situations in order to enhance the transferability of learning. Taken together, these studies suggest that the ability of participants in this research study to apply theoretical insights to their leadership practice may reflect the programme's deliberate integration of conceptual learning with practice-oriented activities, thereby strengthening the practical relevance of the leadership knowledge they acquired.

It was found that instructional leadership was the preeminent theory of educational leadership during the programme's course work. As expatiated on in chapter two, the theory of instructional leadership involves not only those activities and actions of school leadership which are focused on progressive learning of learners but also encompasses management and leadership-oriented functions, responsibilities and activities that are directed towards such progress. This theory is cited as "the linchpin" (Southworth, 2002, p. 77; Hallinger, 2010, p. 332; Huber, 2010, p. 673) between the practices of school leaders and the achievement of the learners. The prominence of instructional leadership within the MEXT training programme is analytically significant because it signals a particular conceptual framing of effective school leadership – one which embodies leadership practices centred on teaching and learning over other leadership paradigms such as transformational or distributed leadership. The participants' perception and experience of instructional leadership theory as the MEXT training programme's core theory as well as their perception of it being transferable and applicable to their practice of leadership speak volume to their improvement or acquisition of the knowledge and skills that educational leaders who are effective should have. This suggests more than simple knowledge acquisition, rather, it indicates a process of professional socialization in which participants begin to internalize a normative model of leadership that prioritizes instructional improvement as the central function of school leaders. This internalization implies that the programme may be shaping not only participants' technical skills but also their professional identity and understanding of leadership priorities. This knowledge and skills is described by Bush (2012, p. 5), Yaqoob and Ali (2023) and Liggett (2024) to be the capability of leading teaching and learning activities in schools – a fundamental responsibility of instructional leaders. Thus, participants' endorsement of instructional leadership can be interpreted not only as evidence of learning within the programme but also as an indication that

the programme is successfully aligning participants' leadership orientations with widely recognized conceptions of effective school leadership.

This finding aligns with the findings from the review of one of the leadership programmes in education largely touted as ideal which submits that the participants ascribed huge value on the distributed leadership and collaborative focus of the programme as well as the need for education leaders to be instructional leaders (Donmoyer et al., 2012, p. 10). The convergence between these findings and the present study suggests that effective leadership development programmes may intentionally integrate collaborative leadership approaches while still anchoring leadership practice in the improvement of teaching and learning. In this regard, collaborative or distributed leadership appears not as an alternative to instructional leadership but as a mechanism through which instructional priorities can be enacted more effectively within schools.

This finding on the instructional-leadership-focused nature of the programme equally aligns with the findings by Fisher (2021) who considers it as being critical in exerting a positive influence on effective educational leadership practices. Within the context of the MEXT programme, participants' emphasis on the importance and applicability of instructional leadership therefore signals more than a favourable perception of the programme's content, rather, it indicates that participants recognize the centrality of leadership practices that directly influence pedagogical processes and learner outcomes.

Further support emerges from the work of Chia and Goh (2016) whose study on the perceptions and experiences of teachers reveal that participants perceived the development of strong teaching abilities and a deep understanding of their students, along with the acquisition of the values and skills necessary to support each learner they come into contact with, as well as the freedom to choose how best to lead teaching and learning in the classroom as significant.

When considered alongside the findings of the present study, this suggests that participants' endorsement of instructional leadership reflects an appreciation of leadership as a practice that is closely intertwined with classroom realities and learner-centred pedagogical decision-making.

Taken together, these converging findings indicate that participants' perceptions of instructional leadership as a significant component of the programme reflect not only their engagement with its theoretical foundations but also evidence that the programme has facilitated the attainment of both the intended objectives and the broader outcomes of the MEXT educational leadership training programme. In particular, it suggests that participants have developed an understanding of leadership that positions the improvement of teaching and learning as the core purpose of school leadership practice.

It was identified from the interview data that the programme's learning materials made valuable contributions to the participants' experiences because of their resourcefulness and that they would still use them whenever the need arises and in day-to-day leadership activities. Analytically, this suggests that the materials functioned not merely as instructional content for the MEXT programme but also as enduring professional resources that support the translation of leadership theory into practice. In this regard, the materials appear to have played a role in bridging the often-reported gap between leadership training and the realities of school leadership practice.

This finding has a striking correlation to Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011, p. 31) research which find that the learning materials employed in the Advanced Certificate in Education: School Leadership (ACE:SL) programme, remained a valuable asset to the participants of the programme. The similarity between these findings suggests that well-

designed learning materials may play a crucial role in sustaining the impact of leadership development programmes beyond formal training periods.

This finding also aligns with that of McConnell, Geesa and Brown (2022) who, in an attempt to answer one of their research questions relating to resources most needed by the participants they studied, submit that participants indicated the wish to have had access to supportive learning resources to provide answers to some of their questions. When considered alongside this present study, this indicates that the availability of practical and well-structured learning materials may enhance the effectiveness of leadership programmes by providing leaders with ongoing reference tools that support problem-solving and reflective practice in their professional contexts.

Put together, these findings suggest that the MEXT programme's learning materials contributed not only to immediate knowledge acquisition but also to the development of a sustained resource base that participants can draw upon in their leadership practice. Consequently, the effectiveness of leadership development programmes may depend not only on the quality of their instructional delivery but also on the extent to which their learning resources remain applicable and accessible to participants as they navigate the complexities of educational leadership.

It was found that the employed strategies and instructional applications experienced by the participants during the course of the programme were appropriate for adult learners and contributed greatly to their experiences of leadership learning and to the activity system's object. Analytically, this suggests that the effectiveness of the programme may be partly attributed to the alignment between its pedagogical design and the principles that underpin adult learning. Leadership development programmes designed for practising professionals often require pedagogical approaches that acknowledge learners' prior experiences, professional

responsibilities, and preference for problem-oriented learning. The participants' positive evaluation of the programme's instructional strategies therefore indicates that the programme successfully created learning conditions that enabled participants to meaningfully connect theoretical concepts of leadership with their practical leadership contexts.

This finding directly aligns with the connection between leadership learning in education and the learning theories as found by Davis et al. (2005, p. 9) and Erkan (2020, p. 15) when they noted that leadership learning programmes must relate theory to practice within the context of adult learning theory. This finding also aligns with the incorporation of adult learning theory into school leader development programs as asserted by Allen, Rosch and Riggio (2022). In this context, the present finding suggests that the programme's instructional design may have facilitated deeper engagement with leadership concepts by situating learning activities within the participants' lived professional experiences.

This finding also corresponds with the observations of Broek et al. (2023) who explain that it is imperative when designing effective programmes that cater to the needs of adult learners, to comprehend the underlying dynamics that drive adults' involvement or lack thereof in the learning process which are embedded in adult theories of learning. By employing strategies that resonate with adult learning principles, the programme appears to have enhanced participants' engagement with the learning process and strengthened the practical relevance of the leadership knowledge they acquired.

As already discussed in the previous chapters, the researcher suggests that the theory of andragogy which focuses specifically on adult learning (Knowles, 1984, p. 6; Tight, 2002, p. 103; Renger & Macaskill, 2021) is the most suitable to the MEXT activity system. In the light of the above backing from research findings, the significance that the research participants placed on this element of the study's tools and artefacts seems to support the researcher's

suggestion. Participants' positive perceptions of the programme's instructional strategies lend support to this interpretation, as the strategies appear consistent with andragogic principles such as self-directed learning, the utilization of learners' prior experiences, and the emphasis on problem-centred learning.

Nevertheless, it is important to reiterate that the andragogy learning theory is not the only learning theory suitable for the activity system under study or for adult education. Other constructivist theories, for instance, Lave's Situated Learning Theory (Leonard, 2002, p. 174), Brown, Collins and Duguid's Situated Cognition theory as well as the theory of Social Development by Vygotsky (Schunk, 2012, p. 242) would also be suitable for this activity system. From this perspective, the programme's instructional strategies can be understood as drawing on multiple complementary learning paradigms. This interpretation is in consonance with Hergenbahn and Olson (2001, p. 50) statement who in an attempt to answer their question, "which paradigm is correct" replied "probably all of them." Consequently, the learning dynamics within the MEXT activity system are best interpreted as reflecting an integration of several adult learning theories rather than the application of a single theoretical model.

Additionally, it was also found that within the context of adult learners-appropriate applications, a few applications were experienced by the participants as having positively contributed to their educational leadership learning and professional growth. These applications found from interview data include students' presentations, class discussions, self-study and research (*secondary data*). Analytically, these activities reflect a learning environment in which participants were not merely passive recipients of leadership knowledge but active contributors to the learning process. Such pedagogical strategies appear to encourage reflection, critical engagement with leadership concepts, and the application of theoretical knowledge to participants' professional contexts.

This finding resounds that of Menter, Holligan and Mthenjwa (2006, p. 13) who reported that the students of the SQH programme valued the research offered by their institutions. Their findings suggest that research-oriented activities within leadership programmes can foster deeper engagement with educational issues and enhance participants' ability to critically examine leadership practices within their own institutions. Similarly, the present study aligns with Liljenberg and Wrethander (2023) finding that many school administrators produced systematic, high-quality outputs at their workplace as a result of using their written reports as tools. This indicates that written and research-based tasks may serve as mechanisms through which leadership learning is translated into professional practice.

The finding on the appropriateness of learners' self-study is affirmed by Chikoko (2010, p. 45) when he reports that the successful students of the programme he explored had a culture of self-study. This finding is also substantiated by Msila (2021) who posits that in order for leadership to be effective, leaders must first understand their own practices through self-study and introspection. This finding is consistent with that of Kitchen and Berry (2023) when they examined self-study in teacher education and conclude that it is an activity of professional growth geared towards the delivery of skills and contents in an efficient way.

However, this finding contradicts the research by Coker (2020) on self-study in an educational leadership program in the USA which revealed divided perceptions in that while some students expressed gratitude and celebrated this activity, the others expressed dissatisfaction. When considered alongside the present study, this divergence suggests that the perceived value of self-study may depend on factors such as previous academic experiences, participants' learning preferences and the degree of guidance provided within the programme.

From a theoretical standpoint, the self-study and research theses carried out by the participants of this activity system seem to favour the paradigm of constructivism above

cognitivism in that the latter places more focus on the instructor (Leonard, 2002, p. 97; Fodouop, 2024; Jabsheh, 2024) while the former generally places more focus on the learner (Leonard, 2002, p. 112; Chand, 2024; Fodouop, 2024). The experiences reported by participants in this study therefore suggest that the programme's pedagogical design leaned towards a constructivist orientation, where learning was facilitated through active participation and reflective inquiry. This orientation may have contributed to the participants' perception that these instructional applications supported their leadership learning and professional development.

This study finding on class discussions and presentations particularly aligns with the study by Chikoko (2010, p. 40) when they reported that the instructional applications of presentations by the students as well as class discussions are also popular amongst their studied participants who found them extremely useful and added that learning in groups encouraged profound comprehension. When viewed analytically, this convergence of findings suggests that interactive learning strategies may play a critical role in leadership development programmes by enabling participants to collectively interrogate leadership concepts and relate them to their own professional experiences.

A similar perspective is reflected by McConnell, Geesa and Brown (2022) who in suggesting areas of improvement for the programme they studied, submit that although presentations were helpful, discussions were far more effective at keeping participants accountable, on task, and on schedule. The implication of this finding is that while presentations encourage individual preparation and articulation of ideas, discussions appear to foster collective reflection and sustained engagement with programme content. This suggests that the complementary use of both strategies may enhance leadership learning by balancing individual knowledge construction with collaborative meaning-making.

The relevance of constructivist learning paradigm to the activity system under study is further reinforced by the participants' identification of presentations, self-study, research and class discussions as the positively employed instructional applications. Constructivist learning paradigms emphasize the active role of learners in constructing knowledge through dialogue, reflection, and interaction with others. In the context of this programme, the prominence of these activities suggests that learning was facilitated through participatory and reflective processes rather than through purely instructor-led instruction.

This interpretation is strengthened by participants' reports that additional activities – such as sharing their professional experiences, learning from the experiences of peers, and engaging in cooperative and collegial interactions – also contributed significantly to their leadership learning. Such experiences indicate that the programme functioned not only as a formal instructional environment but also as a collaborative learning space in which participants could collectively reflect on leadership practices. From this perspective, the programme may be understood as fostering elements of a professional learning community, where knowledge is co-constructed through shared experiences, dialogue and mutual support. These dynamics are particularly important in leadership development contexts because they enable participants to situate theoretical concepts within authentic professional realities while simultaneously learning from the diverse experiences of their peers.

The findings of Coker (2020) on an educational leadership activity validates the above findings on sharing experience in that one of the groups they studied appreciated the chance to work with one another and collaborate on different tasks. Also, findings from an empirical study conducted by Ngoc, Chang and Aysun (2022) resonate with the above finding in that the participants perceived interacting with their peers to have contributed to the effectiveness of the leadership program they studied. Taken together with the findings of the present study, these

observations suggest that collaborative engagement and peer interaction may function as important mechanisms through which leadership knowledge is constructed, shared, and contextualized within professional practice.

From a theoretical perspective, this sharing of experiences reverberates one of andragogy's tenets that adults have various experiences in life and that every community member of an activity system is an enriched resource for learning (Knowles, 1984, p. 11; Tight, 2002, p. 104; Livingston & Cummings-Clay, 2023; Waalkes, Smith & Hall, 2023). Within the context of the activity system examined in this study, participants' emphasis on the value of experience-sharing suggests that the programme successfully leveraged the experiential knowledge of its members as a learning resource.

This interpretation also resonates with a key part of the theory of social development by Vygotsky which states that learners bring experiences along with them whenever they find themselves in a new context or situation of learning and that these experiences impact hugely the kind of learning they acquire and share with others in an activity system (Schunk, 2012, p. 245; Tzurriel, 2021; Marcello et al., 2023). From this standpoint, the sharing of experiences reported by participants in the present study can be interpreted as a social process through which leadership knowledge was collectively constructed.

To sum it up, this finding also aligns with Kitchen and Berry (2023) finding that amongst adults, the most popular way to achieve effectiveness of learning is through working together with people in important friendships defined by practitioners engaging in both professional and personal interactions to interpret shared or individual experiences. This finding is also supported by the finding of Ladyshevsky and Flavell (2011) that exchanging knowledge and experience are essential components of learning about leadership, as it allows individuals to critically reflect on their practices while benefiting from the perspectives of others. In this

light, the emphasis placed by participants on experience-sharing, collegiality and cooperation, suggests that the programme facilitated a collaborative learning environment in which leadership knowledge was not only transmitted but also co-constructed through interaction among participants.

It was found from many of the participants that the strategies for assessment, as an element of the programme's tools and artefacts, contributed meaningfully to their perceptions and experiences of educational leadership learning. Participants indicated that these strategies not only enabled them to demonstrate their comprehension of leadership concepts but also supported their engagement with the programme's learning activities. Analytically, this suggests that assessment within the programme may have functioned not merely as a mechanism for measuring learning outcomes but also as a pedagogical tool that reinforced the learning process itself.

However, this finding seems to be in contradiction with the findings of Bush, Kiggundu and Moorosi (2011, p. 37) who report that one of the strategies employed for assessment, which is the use of portfolios as an assessment strategy in the ACE: SL, raised some criticisms by the participants. This raised concern is because the participants, amongst other things, had difficulties during the production of those portfolios. The divergence between these findings suggests that the perceived effectiveness of assessment strategies in leadership programmes may depend on factors such as the clarity of assessment expectations, the level of support provided to participants, and the extent to which assessment tasks are closely aligned with participants' professional responsibilities.

Although many of the MEXT participants attest to the meaningful contributions of the assessment strategies, it is in no way unanimous. This variation in perceptions therefore suggests that coordinators and designers of educational training programmes should carefully

consider including strategies that not just contribute to the achievement of the activity system's object, but at the same time, expedite such achievement. These suggested strategies should not just check whether or not the learners have learnt but should add to their learning as well. One of such strategies is "dynamic assessment" (Leonard, 2002, p. 57) that permits evaluation and assessment in a summative way (assesses the learning extent) and in a formative way (assesses learning progress) (Behbahani & Karimpour, 2024; Jones & Oh, 2024; Wood, Biggs & Molnar, 2024). Such an approach may therefore strengthen the role of assessment as an integral component of leadership learning rather than as a separate evaluative procedure.

The above suggestion agrees with McConnell, Geesa and Brown (2022) study in that their recommended first step in designing a program is collaborating with both the administrative staff and teaching staff in undertaking a needs assessment so as to be able to address and assess learning during the program. Through such collaboration, programme designers can ensure that assessment strategies are aligned with participants' learning needs and professional contexts. In the case of the activity system examined in this study, adopting such an approach may help ensure that assessment practices not only evaluate learning outcomes but also actively contribute to the development of participants' leadership competencies.

It was discovered that many of the participants placed a high value on the ICT element of the activity system's tools and artefacts both as an aspect of their learning as well as a positive contributor to their practice (that is, the practice of its use and the exposure to internet during the programme as well as the research and internet skills' training taught by their various institutions). From an analytical perspective, this suggests that ICT functioned not only as a technical resource within the programme but also as an enabling tool that supported

participants' ability to access information, conduct research, and engage with educational leadership knowledge beyond the classroom environment.

However, it was also found that questions on their institutions' e-learning platforms, generated mixed feelings and reactions. While some of the participants reported that they were unable to use the platform effectively and thus was not significant in contributing to their learning experiences, others report the opposite. This divergence in perception suggests that the effectiveness of digital learning tools within leadership programmes may depend on factors such as participants' prior digital literacy, the usability of the platforms, and the level of institutional support provided for navigating online learning environments.

This finding is in consonance with the findings on the perceptions of prospective teachers regarding the integration of ICT in learning programmes as presented by Sharik and Hairat (2023). They reported mixed feelings in that while some expressed difficulties due to barriers to finding pertinent information online, some others perceived ICT use to be positive due to its practicality and ease of use. When considered alongside the present findings, this suggests that although ICT has the potential to enhance learning by expanding access to information and facilitating flexible learning opportunities, its effectiveness is not uniform across all learners.

From the perspective of the activity system, these mixed perceptions indicate that ICT tools can simultaneously function as both enabling and constraining elements within the learning environment. While access to digital resources and research tools may support leadership learning and professional development, difficulties in navigating e-learning platforms may hinder participants' ability to fully benefit from these technological resources. Consequently, the findings imply that the successful integration of ICT within leadership development programmes requires not only the provision of digital tools but also adequate

training and support mechanisms that enable participants to utilize these tools effectively. Such considerations may help ensure that ICT contributes consistently to the achievement of the activity system's object of leadership learning.

On the one hand, the negative findings of this research on ICT concurs with the findings of Hu et al. (2021) regarding their empirical research report on teacher professional development which stated that due to consistent disconnection of internet brought about by strong stormy weather, the platforms for online learning posed a significant challenge to students' ability to learn. Such challenges highlight the infrastructural limitations that can constrain the effectiveness of digital learning tools, suggesting that the success of ICT integration in leadership development programmes depends not only on the availability of technological platforms but also on the reliability of the supporting infrastructure.

On the other hand, the positive finding aligns with the findings of Akram, Abdelrady and Al-Adwan (2022, p. 4) who observe that the teachers examined in their research perceived that ICT utilization expedited learning regardless of time and place because they felt more at ease interacting and advising their students both inside and outside of the school environment as a result of the digitally available tools of learning and platforms. These positive findings are also supported by Menter, Holligan and Mthenjwa (2006, p. 13) finding who observe that the students of the SQH programme valued the academic reading, theory and research offered by their institutions. When considered alongside the present findings, this suggests that digital tools may enhance participants' access to research materials and scholarly resources, thereby strengthening the academic dimension of leadership training programmes.

These backings from literature in turn validate the previous assertion made in this study that training programmes of educational leadership should be offered at postgraduate level where academic reading and research are a major aspect of the curriculum. At the same time, it

raises a pertinent question as to whether leadership learning in education should be done academically (academic degree) or professionally (professional degree). This question will be addressed in the next chapter, as it has crucial implications for the design and delivery of effective educational leadership programmes.

Challenges Affecting Nigerian Teachers in the MEXT Educational Leadership Training Programme

The interactions of the subjects of the MEXT activity system with the division of labour as well as tools and artefacts posed some challenges to their educational leadership learning and practice while the community and rules component had no negative effect on their leadership learning and practice.

Community

It was found from the data gathered from the interview that the community did not pose any challenge to the participants' perceptions and experiences regarding their educational leadership learning, practice and professional growth. In general, the community was experienced positively and thus contributed positively to their educational leadership learning experiences and practice. Analytically, this suggests that the programme successfully fostered a supportive and inclusive environment in which participants could engage with peers, mentors, and broader stakeholders without experiencing professional isolation. Such positive engagement likely enhanced participants' capacity to reflect on and apply leadership principles within their own contexts.

This result contradicts the findings of other research in which the studied participants of some preparation programme felt lonely and isolated professionally (Hobson et al., 2003; Wildy & Clarke, 2011). The divergence suggests that the structure and social design of leadership programmes – particularly the ways in which communities of practice are nurtured

– can significantly influence participants’ experiences of professional connectedness. In this study, the positive perception of the community appears to have enabled collaborative learning and provided social connections, which are essential in supporting both the acquisition and application of leadership knowledge.

The finding also aligns with the study results of Webber and Scott (2013) in that one of their suggestions for principal preparation programme is to cultivate the capacity to build connections and manage conflicting allegiances. This positive perception of the community is also supported by Slater, Garduno and Mentz (2018) who mentioned that understanding people from different backgrounds and the ability to work together with them harmoniously are the true hallmarks of effective programmes for training of school leaders. These skills, Slater, Garduno and Mentz (2018) continued, are necessary in equipping school administrators to be able to manage a variety of intricate daily contacts with different stakeholders (personnel, parents and guardians, members of the community as well as staff). In this light, the positive experiences of participants suggest that the community element of the programme functioned not merely as a social backdrop but as an active tool in the learning environment, supporting professional growth, collaborative knowledge construction, and the development of interpersonal competencies necessary for effective educational leadership.

Rules

Also, it was found from the analysis of the interview data that the rules of the activity system posed no challenge to the participants’ perceptions and experiences of educational leadership learning, practice and professional growth. In general, the rules were experienced positively and thus contributed positively to their educational leadership learning and practice. Analytically, this suggests that clear, well-structured rules functioned as enablers within the programme, providing participants with a framework for action, guiding decision-making, and

supporting accountability without constraints. Such an environment may have facilitated effective engagement with both theoretical and practical elements of educational leadership, allowing participants to focus on learning rather than navigating ambiguous or restrictive regulations.

This study finding contradicts the research of Harris and Jones (2018) who found that school leaders in Russia, Indonesia and Malaysia felt restricted by the rules of their programme and thus very reluctant to break away from regulations. The divergence between these contexts suggests that participants' experiences of rules are shaped not only by the rules themselves but also by the programme's broader culture, the clarity of guidance, and the flexibility permitted within the learning environment. Conversely, their counterparts in England and Australia experienced the rules of their programme positively in that they interpreted them as a manual for taking action (Harris & Jones, 2018) while the school leaders in the International Study of Principal Preparation (ISPP) research emphasized the significance of rule in effectiveness when they pointed out the necessity of explicit guidelines for accountability (Slater, Garduno & Mentz, 2018). These studies reinforce the present research finding that well-articulated rules can function as enabling tools rather than constraints within leadership development programmes.

While rules were interpreted as a manual for taking action (Harris & Jones, 2018) in the above mentioned research, the participants sampled in other studies found them challenging because they felt difficulty in achieving a balance between accountability and efficiency that foster contribution and growth (Cowie & Crawford, 2008; Nelson et al., 2008). From an analytical perspective, this underscores that rules are not inherently positive or negative. Rather, their impact depends on the degree to which they are perceived as supporting participants' engagement with learning objectives and professional practice. In the context of the present study, the positive experiences of rules suggest that the MEXT programme successfully

integrated regulatory guidance with flexibility, enabling participants to navigate expectations while contributing meaningfully to their leadership development and learning.

Division of Labour

It was found that the responsibilities divided amongst the community members contributed significantly to their leadership learning and practice, reinforcing the value of collaborative engagement within the MEXT activity system. Nevertheless, while a majority of the participants perceived and experienced their supervisors' interactions as constructive and supportive, a few others had negative experiences and perceptions, indicating that supervision did not consistently facilitate learning for all participants.

This finding contrasts Naderibeni and Karami (2024) research who found that the main function of supervisors is to facilitate the learning of those they supervise. Also, this finding is in contradiction with the stance of Vezy (2023), who found that supervisors perform crucial functions in providing motivation and advice to their supervisees in that they offer helpful ideas and criticism, mentoring and guidance as well as feedback to help individuals under their supervision improve and develop. Vezy (2023) found that through the support of supervisors, learning is impacted positively and the individuals they supervise are empowered to be successful in their positions.

Here, however, a few participants experienced and perceived the opposite, that is, their research supervisors hindered their learning. The negativities reported by these few participants suggest that supervisory support can be uneven in practice. These dissenting experience and perceptions align with the finding of Cardoso et al. (2022) who found that the interactions between supervisees and their supervisors showed apprentice and master kind of relationship (Cardoso et al., 2022) and has been criticized for waste of time, desertion and reliance on the supervisor as well as impeding the growth of different skills (Aimee, Mona & Karmen, 2024).

Analytically, these findings suggest that the effectiveness of supervision within leadership development programmes depends on both the quality of interpersonal engagement as well as the balance of guidance and autonomy provided. While supportive supervisors can enhance learning and foster professional growth, hierarchical or overly directive supervision may inadvertently limit participants' ability to take initiative and develop critical leadership competencies. This duality highlights the need for programme designers to structure supervisory roles in ways that encourage both guidance and independent problem-solving, ensuring that supervision contributes consistently to the activity system's objectives of leadership learning and practice.

Tools and Artefacts

Analysis of the interview data revealed that the most significant challenges within the activity system is the lack of consideration for the participants' previous experiences on leadership and general knowledge of education. It is worth noting that although the programme that functioned as the activity system required prospective participants to possess some level of work experience (MEXT, 2021a), it was found that there were differences in their years of experience with some participants having at least ten years' experience while some others had less than two years' experience. This disparity in experience was further complicated by participants' job contexts. Some of the participants had jobs with privately established schools in Nigeria which is generally more funded and developed (Olasunkanmi, Onuoha & Nwosu, 2013; Egbeki & Wakili, 2020; Angwaomaodoko, 2024) and where school leaders are more plausibly exposed to workshops, short courses and programmes of leadership training (Musone & Callaway, 1968; Bakare & Oredein, 2022) compared to the public ones.

Analytically, these findings suggest that the programme's one-size-fits-all approach to teaching and learning may have limited its ability to accommodate the diverse experiential

backgrounds of participants. By failing to account for variations in professional experience and prior exposure to leadership development, the programme may have inadvertently created uneven learning opportunities, where participants with different levels of experience faced greater challenges in engaging with content and applying learning. This highlights the importance of incorporating differentiated instructional strategies, adaptive learning pathways, and recognition of prior experience in leadership development programmes, ensuring that all participants can engage meaningfully and benefit equitably from the learning environment.

These findings and their significance are evaluated in light of the diversity of leadership knowledge, background and experience amongst leaders, not just within the community of this study's activity system but also in the context of the education system of Nigeria. These findings resonate the outcome of Slater, Garduno and Mentz (2018) who found that programmes for training school leaders did not sufficiently take into account the context in which they were being trained. On the contrary, these findings oppose the finding of Jerdborg (2022) who reported that every leadership education should incorporate the students' prior leadership knowledge and that perceptions of their own organisational environment and context must be incorporated into the broader philosophy/theory of leadership.

Analytically, these differences in perspectives highlight a critical gap in the design of the MEXT training programme which has significant consequences for leadership learning programmes globally but specifically points to the idea that the programme may not have been primarily designed and tailored for Nigerian educational leaders' heterogeneous professional experiences, past learning experiences and organizational contexts in particular. This limitation carries broader implications for leadership development programmes globally, particularly in contexts where participants' previous exposure to educational leadership varies widely. Specifically, the findings suggest that programmes not explicitly tailored to

participants' local educational environments may risk reduced relevance and effectiveness. The study will further explore these implications and provide targeted recommendations in the recommendations and contributions section.

It was found from the interview data that the next most mentioned challenge to their leadership learning and practice after lack of consideration for previous knowledge is the indirect applicability of some modules to leadership learning. This finding is similar to that of the secondary data when RPJ reported that the results of his research is '*more likely to expose children to social vices*' when applied to the educational leadership context of Nigeria, highlighting the potential misalignment between the programme content and local contextual needs.

This finding contradicts a number of researches. For instance, Orr (2011, p. 120); Robey and Bauer (2013, p. 264); Day, Sammons and Grogan (2020) as well as Gurr and Drysdale (2021) found that an ideal programme for educational leadership learning should have a consistent curriculum. This, Davis et al. (2005, p. 8) define as one in which there is a clear connection between the objectives and aims of the programme, the instructional applications or learning activities and contents as well as the common beliefs and values embodied in the underlying theory or philosophy of leadership. Furthermore, this finding also contrasts the outcome of University Council for Educational Administration (UCEA) research which found that the quality of preparation programmes on school leadership in the USA are evolving with their curricular showing strong cohesion and focus in achieving exemplary standards of leadership (Cosner et al., 2015; Jacobson, McCarthy & Pounder, 2015; Merchant & Garza, 2015; Young, 2015). Here, however, it was found that some participants perceived that some modules were not related to educational leadership learning and that their research results were not valuable to their training.

Analytically, this suggests that when programme content is insufficiently contextualized or indirectly applicable, it can limit participants' engagement, reduce perceived value, and hinder the translation of theory into practice. The finding underscores the need for leadership development programmes to ensure that every module is purposefully designed with clear, contextually relevant links to the objectives, practical leadership applications, and the underlying philosophy of educational leadership. Doing so would enhance the coherence of learning experiences and maximize participants' ability to apply knowledge effectively in their professional contexts.

This study finding, however, is in line with the research on criticism of preparation programmes on school leadership in that the researchers found that such programmes are unrelated to the actual duties of school administrators (Elmore, 2000, Levine, 2005; Davis, 2016). Similarly, this finding aligns with that of some professional training for school leaders that have been criticized for its curriculum being overly general and technical in nature (Parylo & Zepeda, 2015; Zhang, 2019; Murphy, 2020). Analytically, the finding of this research could be an indication that the non-clarity and connection between the activity system's object as well as its intended outcome may limit the programme's efficacy and relevance, particularly for participants operating in contexts that differ from those envisaged by the programme designers. In the present study, the data indicate that the programme may not have been primarily designed with Nigerian education leaders in mind, resulting in challenges related to the contextual applicability of certain instructional activities and modules.

This finding has certain ramifications for designers of the programme to accommodate educationally diverse countries such as Nigeria as well as social differences and peculiarities across other participating nations. Programme designers should consider incorporating mechanisms to tailor content to the specific educational, social, and organizational realities of

participants, ensuring that learning activities, modules, and research components are not only theoretically coherent but also practically relevant. By addressing contextual differences and the diversity of participants' professional experiences, programmes can enhance the alignment between learning objectives, activities, and outcomes, thereby maximizing both engagement and impact in heterogeneous learning environments.

Also, it was discovered that some other factors related to the activity system's tools and artefacts constituted barriers to the participants' learning and practice which are the amount of assessment, work and insufficiency of contact time. Some participants reported that the intensity of assessment and the demands of assigned work exceeded the time available, which constrained their ability to engage meaningfully with the programme content. This finding on the amount of assessment and work is in consonance with the finding of Chikoko (2010, p. 45) who report that the intensity of assessment as well as the workload of the students he studied were stumbling blocks to their success. By way of advice, Chikoko (2010, p. 45) continues that the amount of assessment and work given to participants should be directly proportional to the time allotted for such activities. However, this is not the case as discovered from this research data which appears to have limited participants' achievement of the activity system's intended outcome. Similarly, this finding is comparable to that of Naicker, Chikoko and Mthiyane (2014) because some participants felt that time was a constraint in their leadership development.

Also, it was found that although none of the participants reported the absence of feedback, some decry the delay of it by their supervisors. This delayed feedback contradicts the tenets of mastery learning based on humanistic learning theory which stipulate that the pace of learning should be determined by the learners and that they must be given prompt feedback to enable them to measure their learning progress (Schunk, 2012, p. 102; Akpan, 2020; Okur-Berberoglu, 2024; Putri et al., 2024, p. 65). From an analytical perspective, these findings

suggest that the effectiveness of tools and artefacts within leadership development programmes is dependent not only on their content and instructional design but also on their alignment with participants' available time, workload, and opportunities for timely guidance. Excessive assessment, high workloads, and delayed feedback can disrupt the intended learning process, impede participants' mastery of leadership competencies, and limit the achievement of the activity system's objectives. Consequently, programme designers should consider balancing assessment demands, ensuring adequate contact time, and providing prompt, structured feedback to optimize learning outcomes for adult learners.

It was discovered that although many participants lauded the tremendous contributions of ICT to their learning, experience and practice, ICT use was challenging to some other participants. This difficulty was connected to their lack of or in some cases insufficient skills in ICT as well as their illiteracy in computers which brought anxiety upon them. This finding is in accordance with that of Chikoko (2010, p. 44) in that the majority of the participants had computer literacy while the small percentage of them who were only moderately proficient were in danger of finding graduate school demands intolerable. In the same vein, this finding is consistent with the finding of Teng (2017) who noted that sampled teachers in their study lacked proficiency in or familiarity with technology during their training.

Furthermore, this finding aligns with previously conducted studies in Nigeria which highlighted participants' inability to utilize ICT while receiving training (Ololube, 2006). Analytically, these results underscore that access to ICT alone is insufficient. Learners' previous experience, skills, and confidence with technology critically influence how effectively they can engage with ICT-based tools. The implication for leadership development programmes is that incorporating ICT components must be accompanied by targeted support and training to

ensure all participants can leverage digital resources, thereby enhancing both learning experiences and the translation of ICT skills into professional practice.

Summary

This chapter presents results gathered from various data sources and the findings regarding the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers on the MEXT training programme. It began with the credibility and trustworthiness of the study, then a description of the study's research participants as well as the context in which they carried out their responsibilities as leaders in the education field using Engestrom Activity Theory as the framework. The research findings were then presented in relation to the research questions as they emanated from the collected data which is then followed by the discussion and evaluation of the result findings. The next section will deal with the implications and contributions of the research findings, recommendations and then conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE: IMPLICATIONS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS, CONTRIBUTIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

This chapter presents a detailed discussion on the implications and contributions of the research findings. Following the discussion on the findings' implications and contributions, a number of recommendations based on the study's findings would be offered, followed by a discussion of the study's addition to the body of research on educational leadership learning and then finally wrapped up with conclusion.

Before the discussions on the above, it is significant to reiterate that this study's purpose is to assess the aspects of the training program that had the most impact as well as the aspects of it that had the least impact on the participants' practice and leadership positions. The study's problem remains whether or not educational leadership learning programmes are still necessary, given that some academics in the field believe they are ineffective at enhancing leadership practices in institutions of learning. This study is undertaken using qualitative approach from a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm (McMillan and Schumacher, 2014, p. 14) as well as case study design. The study employs a non-probability method (Andrade, 2021; Stratton, 2021) known as purposive sampling (Cohel et al, 2011, p. 156; Obilor, 2023, p. 4) in the selection of its participants. from the MEXT training programme of 2019, 2020 and 2021 classes as well as officials from the Nigerian and Japanese government. The ethical dimensions applied include offering participants the sole authority to decide their participation as well as all pertinent information regarding the research (Gay et al, 2014, p. 21; Resnik, 2020; Ederio et al, 2023). These pertinent information includes the research purpose, the researcher's requirements of the participants if they consent for participation, the potential consequences or benefits of such participation, the freedom to quit at any moment, anonymity, "privacy and confidentiality"

(Creswell, 2014, p. 167) as well as the use of data after completion of the research (Gay et al, 2014, p. 22; Yale University, 2023).

Implications of Research Findings and Its Contributions

The focus of this study is on the perceptions and experiences of the Nigerian teachers regarding their leadership training in Japan. Its implications and contributions will therefore be focused primarily on connecting the findings from the previous chapter to real-world applications, theory and future research. The following section presents the implication of this study.

Implications for Theory, Policy and Practice

This research study found that the context in which education leaders attend an educational leadership program impacts not just their learning perceptions and experiences but also the benefits that such learning brings to their leadership practice. Also, the research participants identified the greatest challenge to their learning experience to be the instructional applications' lack of acknowledgement of their leadership experience and previous knowledge. This is connected to the circumstances and context from which they enrolled into the leadership learning programme under study where the participants from privately-owned schools – which are better funded, have more resources and would therefore be better exposed to management and leadership systems, experiences and processes – experienced and perceived that the instructional applications, in certain situations, failed in differentiating them from those without such experiences. Regarding learning theories, since this study finds andragogy which focuses on adult learning, to be the most applicable to the MEXT leadership training of Nigerian teachers, it is significant to reiterate that one fundamental tenet of andragogy is the intrinsic self-motivation associated with adults (Knowles, 1984, p. 12; Livingston & Cummings-Clay, 2023; Waalkes, Smith & Hall, 2023). In other words, this means that adults have experiences

which they carry along to their situations of learning (Livingston & Cummings-Clay, 2023; Waalkes, Smith & Hall, 2023) and that such experiences are enriched resources that impact their new learning context or situations (Schunk, 2012, p. 245). Furthermore, this study finds contextualized learning – a kind of learning that happens inside the learners’ real world – to be the most efficient learning. Glatter (2009, p. 226) points to this context, experience and personal knowledge that involves “maturity of judgement” as wisdom.

The implication of these findings for theory and practice, with specific regard to NIEPA, is that educational leadership training programme which apply clearly established and suitable tools and artefacts (instructional applications) such as teaching and learning strategies, can satisfy learners’ “need to know” (Knowles, 1984, p. 11; Renger & Macaskill, 2021). Regarding context in particular, the SQH participants cherished the programme’s contents and instructional applications and rated them as having enough flexibility because they satisfied their individual and contextual needs as school leaders (Walker & Dimmock, 2006, p. 125). Also, principals from a training programme in Cyprus reveal that they “prefer specific preparation and training, especially designed for their needs and according to their specific leadership post” (Brauckmann-Sajkiewicz, Pashiardis & Ärlestig, 2020). The link between the experience and previous knowledge of education leaders, the instructional applications and contents of leadership learning programmes as well as the application of learning theory’s tenets is thus important for the effectiveness of such programmes. In as much as this link between previous experience and knowledge, theory of learning as well as education leadership learning is a matter of essence for many of the world’s education system, it is specifically so and much more for Nigeria where there is huge gap, types and levels of leadership experience amongst school leaders due to political, ethnic, geographical, cultural and religious reasons. If, as Dike (2015) and Usman (2016) contend, that Nigeria is not delivering the quality of education desired

by its citizens and the international community due to absence of effective leadership in schools, and if, as Osokoya (2008) contends that future Nigerian educational leaders are expected to develop technical capacities for better educational development and growth, then the implication of this for policy is that developing and establishing programmes of educational leadership training that recognize and sincerely support this link between experience, methodology and content as well as learning theory must be accorded priority by all agencies, departments and ministries of the federal, state and local governments charged with the responsibility of ensuring access to quality education for all her citizens. To buttress, this link is recognized by McCarthy (2015) and Pashiardis and Brauckmann (2019) who report an observable increase in awareness amongst some principal preparation programs in linking the previous knowledge of trainees to the contents of their programmes.

Another interesting finding from this research is that an incidental or secondary curriculum had emerged from the leadership learning programme under study based on the data gathered from the participants. By way of distinguishing, the primary curriculum includes the learning activities, modules and contents linked directly to the outcome of the activity system while the incidental or secondary curriculum includes learning activities and contents that offer support to the primary curriculum but not listed in the purpose, outcome or study guide of the programme. Despite a good number of participants perceiving and experiencing internet use as contributing positively to their practice and learning, such contributions are categorized as incidental because they are not connected directly to the programme's outcomes rather, they happened during the performance of primary learning activities and supported them. Likewise, in as much as many of the participants regarded ICT as a positive contributor to their practice of leadership and their learning of educational leadership, such contribution is regarded as secondary because it is indirectly connected to the programme's outcome in that such learning

happened while performing the primary curriculum's activities – in fact, such practice and exposure to the internet and ICT could indeed be realized in nearly any activity system of learning that utilizes ICT. In spite of this, their perceptions and experiences on ICT directly reflect on school leaders' constantly changing responsibilities and functions (Nadeem, 2024) some of which are “educational visionary, instructional and curriculum leader, assessment expert, disciplinarian, community builder, public relations and communication expert, budget analyst and facilities manager” (Davis et al., 2005, p. 3) with many of these responsibilities needing some level of competence and skills in ICT. The implication of this finding to theory, particularly for the Nigerian Ministry of Education, is that more attention should be accorded to the argument of Turner (2021) that incidental learning should be “given more emphasis and prioritized within teacher educational development and training programmes”.

In addition, the researcher connects that this finding on the emergence of incidental or secondary curriculum not just to the knowledge and experience in leadership amongst school leaders in this activity system's community, but also to the Nigerian education system context. Interestingly, participants who reported ICT as being valuable to their experience are school leaders in Nigerian private schools of average or low standards where resources are meagre while those who felt indifferent about it are those who predominantly work in higher-level private schools where they are presumably used to ICT as an everyday tool for their jobs due to much more funding and availability of learning resources (Bakare & Oredein, 2022; Angwaomaodoko, 2024). Therefore, it would be reasonable to state that such participants who work in higher-level private schools would have more experience with the changing responsibilities of the modern day school leader listed above which in turn illustrates further the wide difference in leadership experience amongst the Nigerian participants of the MEXT training programme as well as the communities', families', parents' and guardians'

expectations of Nigerian school leaders. The implication of this finding to policy, particularly for Nigerian school owners, is that school leadership programmes must recognize and comprehend these diverse subtleties, complexities and nuances in order to incorporate blueprints that cater for such diversities in these programmes, not just in terms of the secondary curriculum, but also of the primary curriculum.

Additionally, this research study found that the participants experienced the transfer of learnt theories to practice which has a significant implication for the educational practices of Nigerian teachers as it is one of the prerequisites for impactful and effective learning (Gurr, 2023). This finding is particularly noteworthy because the common tenet of some theories of learning is the essentiality of experiential learning, that is, a type of learning that happens through active involvement in the community where the learning is taking place (Pont, Nusche & Moorman, 2008; Brauckmann-Sajkiewicz, Pashiardis & Ärlestig, 2020). As an example, the humanistic theories of learning such as Lave's situated theory of learning; Brown, Collins and Duguid's situated cognition theory; andragogy as well as the social development theory by Vygotsky all postulate that knowledge is acquired from personal learning experiences rather than by writing or speaking instructions or words. By way of adding to experiential learning, Schunk (2012, p. 21) states that learners also need opportunities to express their new skills or to practically apply the new knowledge while Knowles (1984, p. 12) postulates that adults more often than not approach learning from a practical angle compared to children and therefore recommended contextualized and hands-on learning that have real life applications. However, this theoretical knowledge transfer to practice is not the only prerequisite for impactful and effective learning. Other prerequisites for impactful learning are the significance of learning in the real life and world of the learner which according to Schunk (2012, p. 22) is the world and life that learners live in or intend to live in. In this research study, it was found that the learners'

contexts are in two aspects. The first being the educational leadership learning programme/activity system (their learning context as well as their community during such learning) and the second being their real life and world (their context of work as well as living). The next prerequisite identified from the interactions of this activity system's subjects with their community is that learning is a collaborative and social process. This process is best harnessed when it happens amongst and between people (Tight, 2002, p. 21; Herrera-Pavo, 2021; Lagat & Concepcion, 2022). This prerequisite aligns with the significance of learning context as well as the suggestion of practical opportunities for what had been learnt.

The implication of these findings to policy is that educational leadership learning programmes whose aim is the effectiveness of its participants must ensure the provision of these conditions or requirements for effective learning in order to avoid failure of such programmes. It is important to reiterate at this juncture that Nigeria has no national leadership training for its teeming school leaders except for an irregular handful of workshops and seminars (National Institute for Educational Planning and Administration, 2008; 2021; 2023). This led to the adoption of the MEXT training programme as the study's activity system because it is the closest to an educational leadership training which is accessible to active Nigerian teachers most of whom are leaders in their schools or aspiring school leaders. The programme's main objective is to produce and develop human resources who, by studying in Japan, would become connecting bridges between their countries and the host country, and who would contribute to the growth and progress of these countries and the wider globe (MEXT, 2021a). Mainichi Japan (2022), one of the main national dailies of Japan, reports that administrative authorities have continued to advocate for foreign teachers to work in Japanese schools in order to engender a "multicultural and inclusive society". Also, in the book "*Koritsu gakko no gaikokuseki kyoin - Foreign Teachers at Public schools*", it is documented that the Japanese government "relies on

foreigners for internationalization and globalization of education as necessary” and that “it should be only natural for schools to have teachers with various backgrounds” (Akashi, 2021). This explains the sustained invitation of qualified foreign teachers to Japan, including Nigerians, who are then trained before possible recruitment into the Japanese educational system.

In the case of Nigeria however, where everybody wants to be in a position of leadership whether or not they have the required knowledge and skills (Dike, 2015) and thus is not delivering the quality of education desired by its citizens and the international community (Usman, 2016; Mezieobi et al., 2021), where schools have insufficient structural, human and material resources (Ikegbusi, Chigbo-Okeke & Modebelu, 2016; Abershi, Mikky & Ogunode, 2022) and school leaders lack training (Bush & Oduro, 2006; p. 364; Olujuwon, 2017; Myende, Blose & Adebisi, 2021), the main emphasis of educational leadership learning programmes when eventually established should be to improve knowledge, skills, values and attitudes of school leaders to effectively pilot the affairs of their schools (Mestry & Grobler, 2003, p. 127; UNESCO, 2021a). With this study focusing on investigating the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian participants’ learning, what its findings depict are the essential requirements for an effective leadership training in conventional formal educational leadership programmes of learning. The implication of this finding to theory and practice is that these requirements can be achieved optimally through a professional degree instead of an academic one which are mostly theoretical in nature (New York State Education, 2007; Ashwin & Rosewell, 2018). The researcher makes this assertion considering the focus of such professional degree in South Africa whose aim is “the education and training of graduates who can contribute to the development of knowledge at an advanced level such that they are prepared for advanced and specialized employment” (Government Gazette No. 36797, August 2013, p. 72). This aim

resounds the professional degree definition that “emphasizes on the mastery of the practices and contents related to a specific discipline” (University of California, Berkeley, 2015). In the educational leadership field specifically, this aim translates to producing graduates who are extensively knowledgeable in educational leadership, can contribute significantly to the field and is ready for advanced-level work as specialized educational leaders.

Furthermore, this research study found that the participants were empowered with skills and knowledge that improved their teaching and leadership practices such as responsibility, time consciousness, management and organization amongst others. The implication of this finding for Nigerian students is that these practices would shape the quality of learning they receive and provide a learning environment that supports achievement. For parents, these practices would improve communication with school leaders thereby ensuring stronger school-parent partnership in education.

Recommendations for Application

Some recommendations have been suggested based on the findings of this research, especially for the design of educational leadership learning programmes in general as well as for their implementation. Also, several recommendations have been made from these research findings, particularly for the diverse and varied educational leadership environment in Nigeria. These recommendations are presented as follows:

The Intentional Integration of Theories of Learning into the Design of Educational Leadership Programmes

The participants ascribed value to the activity system’s community by way of their interactions due to the provision and availability of opportunities for collaborations and networking. The researcher therefore recommends that educational leadership learning programmes’ developers intentionally and carefully incorporate suitable theories of learning

with their accompanying teaching and learning strategies into the development and design of such programmes for:

- (i) Better acknowledgement of the social essence of learning activity,
- (ii) Better acknowledgement that learning is dependent on context and
- (iii) Ensuring that ample cooperation and collaboration opportunities are created which would facilitate the best adult learning methods.

Adopting the Approach of Case Study and Problem Solving to Learning

Based on some participants' experience that the modules did not acknowledge their previous knowledge and experience on an individual basis, the researcher therefore recommends that educational leadership learning be approached from a problem solving and case study angle. This involves disposing of the conventional model of using modules to using case studies, a number of which would be selected purposefully and carefully by the academic staff while several others would be evoked from the students within their own context of educational leadership. These cases and contexts would subsequently be analysed and discussed with the aim of solving any problem associated with them. These cases and context would also serve the purpose of providing room for students with various degrees of leadership and previous knowledge, in collaboration with other school leaders within the programme, to construct their own new knowledge under the support and guidance of the experienced facilitators of the programme. While exploiting and acknowledging the students' diverse leadership and previous knowledge, this approach would provide an environment and scenario that suits adult learning.

Employing the Inverted Classroom Approach

Based on the participants' experience that the employed strategies and instructional applications such as self-study, research, presentations, and class discussions, were appropriate

for their learning, the researcher therefore recommends the inverted classroom approach to learning. Here, the contents and materials for problem solving and case study learning – which are presented conventionally during lecture sessions to students – are electronically provided to students before the lecture session to afford them ample time for preparation. Through classroom inversion, the facilitators are freed from the huge responsibility of offering contents and instead establishing meaningful opportunities for support and guidance for students' learning by way of analyzing cases and solving the associated problems. By doing so, the trainees construct their contextual and new knowledge of leadership. It is therefore important that these contents and materials of learning:

- (i) Be rooted strongly in current educational leadership research,
- (ii) Be chosen and/or designed to supplement the theoretical knowledge that students may have acquired from their previous studies or other learning opportunities,
- (iii) Support and sustain the theory of educational leadership that such programme's philosophy and foundation is based on,
- (iv) Incorporate fundamental tools, for instance, strategies and skills for solving problems and also topical readings on effective educational leadership.

Inclusion of ICT Training and Skill Assessment as Outcomes of Training Programmes

The diversity and variety of leadership experience and contexts of the participants as obtained from this research findings, particularly, the finding that ICT exposure brought a positive shift in the educational leadership learning perceptions and experiences of many participants as well as its contributions to their leadership practice authenticate the significance attached to learning context (Alshumaimeri, 2023). In view of the above finding, together with the finding that a few participants perceived the lack of ICT skills to be a challenge to their

learning, the researcher therefore recommends the inclusion of ICT training and skill assessment as one of the outcomes of educational leadership training programmes. The employment of the above approach presumes that every student on the programme has (i) internet access and (ii) a set minimum proficiency in computer and ICT. To be meaningfully implemented, the researcher recommends that such programmes that would employ this approach must ensure adequate training for admitted students who meet the set minimum standard of proficiency but still lack some required skills for excellence.

Inclusion of Experiential Learning Opportunities

Going by the significant values attached to the learning gathered from sharing of experiences by the community members of the activity system, the researcher therefore recommends including experiential learning opportunities as an essential part of activities of a leadership learning programme. This kind of learning would be facilitated by academics and/or practitioners in the leadership field and would include activities such as internship – students shadowing experienced leaders during visits to schools with varying degrees of contexts like public, private, rural, urban, dysfunctional as well as effective schools over a certain time period. The placement of trainees for such internships would be based on their job positions, levels of leadership experience and school contexts, amongst other considerations.

Effective Integration of Applications

It is factual that educational leadership learning always involves adults. However, there is no gainsaying learning is not always an exciting exercise and can be boring at times even for adults. In addition, in many parts of the world, school leaders combine their hectic work schedules with excessive demands of training which can lead to burnout. With the integration of suitably customized applications into programs of educational leadership, trainees can learn in an engaging, relaxed and fun way. This is because these edutainment applications would

provide resources and tools that enable a stimulating environment, ranging from hands on challenges on school matters to interactive games. When effectively implemented, trainees can explore real life scenarios and simulations, gain access to digital textbooks, tutorials, practical activities and other learning resources easily as well as field trips using virtual reality. With virtual reality, trainees can experience various perspectives and cultures through traveling the world at the comfort of their homes or classrooms. The opportunities offered by these applications would enable the trainees to positively connect and compare the stories and contexts of other people with theirs with the aim of developing some critical skills such as teamwork, resilience, problem solving amongst other competences and values. This is especially true bearing in mind the consequences of the corona virus pandemic in 2020 that brought the entire world to a standstill. In these kinds of situations, effective applications would make these consequences more bearable while at the same time learning without interruptions caused by travel restrictions. It is crucial to note that when choosing such applications, considerations must be made to ensure that they support the pedagogical and critical aspects of the curriculum of such an educational leadership training program, so as to achieve its expected goals.

Ensuring Availability of Statistical Data

In an era of shrinking resources, providers of educational leadership training must carefully put into consideration a number of variables during their decision-making process. Models based on data driven decision making remains promising at a time when educational leadership training providers must make important choices and decisions due to a lack of resources. These models should be based on relevant data in order to help in the development and promotion of the vision of such programmes by attending to concerning issues based on priority. Also, it would be useful in monitoring the progress of such educational leadership

training programmes, evaluating their impacts as well as in the adjustment of actions as necessary. Of particular importance are data related to demographics, perceptions and trainees' learning as well as clear guidelines on how and when to use such. The emphasis on data availability is because of its usefulness in domains such as data-based goal setting and building a data-wise culture while moving towards more effective use of these data in decision making to improve the achievement of trainees. The researcher recommends that it is not enough to just provide statistical data, training providers must also provide training on data analysis. This is to enable their trainees make better sense of these data and to also be able to apply their knowledge on data analysis to improve their own effectiveness – through improvement of teaching and learning process, evaluation of teachers and other staff, as well as the analysis and interpretation of learners' performances. With relevant statistical data, measurable and realistic indicators and objectives can be set, effective strategies and interventions can be planned and implemented, and then achievements can be assessed and celebrated while learning from difficulties and challenges. All in all, statistical data would be useful in planning training programmes in a strategic way, in ensuring proper management of meagre budget as well as in allocating resources properly.

Use of Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Leadership Training Programmes

The intentional employment of artificial intelligence in educational leadership training programmes would help providers, educational systems and jurisdictions in the navigation of fast developments happening within the field. The use of AI in these programmes should not be for the replacement of teachers and facilitators since education is a social activity involving human interactions, but rather to complement them. It is important that at the designing and development stage of such AI to be employed in training programmes, trainees, trainers, teachers, facilitators and every other end user must be involved as co-designers to ensure its

suitability for use. The development and application of AI technology must put trainers and trainees' mental health and wellbeing at the forefront using data analytics on socio-economic learning and must be guided by ethics on digital communications. AI technology can be used in diagnosing trainers and participants who are at risk and may have need for support both clinically and/or emotionally. These providers, educational systems and jurisdictions must pilot and experiment the tools within these technologies and also ensure continuous improvement to drive innovation. In addition, they must ensure equitable access to these technologies irrespective of the socioeconomic status of participants in order to address digital divide and prevent the widening of achievement gaps.

Promoting and Prioritising Sustainable Professional Growth and Development

Rather than treat the training of school leaders and teachers in positions of leadership as a one-off activity, educational systems and jurisdictions around the world must encourage and promote the continuous development of these leaders both personally and most importantly professionally. This is because since education is a social activity and is constantly evolving, school leaders must grow and develop professionally to meet up with the huge demands of this sector. The researcher suggests that in addition to the usual global practice of leadership training programmes, school leaders must be encouraged to attend seminars, in-house lectures and trainings on educational leadership, conferences, workshops, and other activities or events involving peer education and networking, especially for leaders from developing countries such as Nigeria. As part of their learning during these activities, these leaders must be trained on how to effectively communicate and engage with other school stakeholders such as parents/guardians, staff (both teaching and non-teaching), students as well as the surrounding community to foster a healthy working relationship. Most importantly, due to proliferation of political instability, communal crisis, ethnic and religious conflicts, as well as increase in

digitization of education, school leaders must be exposed to training on emotional intelligence, resolution and management of crisis and conflicts, as well as the use of social media platforms in the dissemination of information as the situation requires.

Although the very essence of case study does not allow generalization to a wider population or group (Bennett, 2022), this research made some recommendations to the phenomenon of educational leadership training as supported by Levitt (2021) who argues in favour of “generalization not to the population but to the phenomenon.” Bearing the above in mind, the researcher recommends that the following inclusive framework for educational leadership learning that is contextualized be implemented in Nigeria. Its implementation should be done at a postgraduate level, which is the same level at which the MEXT educational leadership training was offered to these participants. This has also been highlighted by other researchers who opined that programmes of educational leadership learning should be offered ideally at postgraduate level (Bush & Moorosi, 2011; Drysdale & Gurr, 2021). However, such programmes should take the nature of a professional degree with a strong research foundation rather than a purely academic one in order to provide the link for “theory-research-practice” (Brundrett, Fitzgerald & Sommefeldt, 2006, p. 100). This proposed professional aspect of the degree, in addition to focusing on a subject matter mastery for distinguished practical performance (University of California, Berkeley, 2015), would also decrease to a large extent, the conformity of leadership. More so, it would reduce the influence of one-size-fits-all leadership approach (Bondie, Dahnke & Zusho, 2019; Yang et al., 2022) while at the same time equipping leaders for their distinct social, school and national contexts.

This framework is recommended with the aim that it would address the weaknesses and build on the strength of educational leadership training as uncovered by this research and includes the characteristics of exemplary leadership learning as the literature review revealed.

The researcher acknowledges that the findings of this research are not simply generalizable outside the activity system investigated. However, these findings serve as solid base for developing a framework suitable for the distinct Nigerian educational leadership environment and context. The researcher therefore acknowledges Walker and Quong (2005, p. 97) wise practice concept as a suggested alternative to the best practice concept in educational leadership learning. They postulated that the improvement of leadership practice is not dependent on a set of best practices but on a leadership learning model or design that is adaptable and flexible to situations and the individuals involved. The researcher recommends that in order to apply this framework to training programmes, it should be based on the common characteristics of exemplary educational leadership learning programmes as postulated by Orr (2011, p. 120). These characteristics include a logical and consistent curriculum, a well-defined leadership theory, the utilization of active teaching and learning methodologies or instructional applications that combine practice and theory. Other characteristics include support systems within the programme such as the use of cohorts, excellent internships that allow educational leadership trainees to put their newly acquired skills and knowledge to good use, skilled presenters and lastly, the use of programme and students' feedback to aid improvement of the programme continuously.

In summary, this framework provides for a degree which is professional in nature with a solid research base. Furthermore, it is built on a logical curriculum, suitable leadership theory and instructional applications for adult learners. As a part of the logical and consistent curriculum, leadership topics and contents would be chosen from contemporary research in both learning and leadership fields. Also, the curriculum should include the participants as part of its learning resources in order to cater for their leadership needs and acknowledge their previous knowledge and experience. This framework recommends that educational leadership training

should support the distributed (Bush, 2023; Nadeem, 2024) and instructional (Munna, 2022; Gurr, 2023; Bush, 2024) leadership theories that guide the programme. At the same time, its instructional applications for adult learners should involve internships, shadowing, observation, inverted classroom approach as well as problem solving and case study approach to learning. It is the belief of the researcher that this framework meets the requirements for adaptability and flexibility set by circumstances and contexts (Walker & Quong, 2005, p. 115) based on its objective to satisfy the learning and leadership needs of the tremendously diverse population of Nigerian educational leader. Future researchers should therefore investigate whether this framework indeed meets and satisfies these needs and contexts of Nigerian educational leaders.

Recommendations for Future Studies

It is important to reiterate that the aim of this research is to describe and comprehend the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers regarding their MEXT training on educational leadership in Japan. Throughout the duration of their training, these Nigerian teachers utilized digital tools such as computers, smartphones, presentation slides, online learning platforms amongst other tools. Given that education is becoming more digital, it would be necessary for future research to focus on how digital technologies that are relatively new could be formally and fully fused into programmes of educational leadership training. This research should ensure that benefits of these new technologies are fully maximized while mitigating their disadvantages. This research is essential to add to both the academic and administrative proficiency of school leaders as well as to drive innovations during their training and in their places of work.

More often than not, school leaders combine the demands of their job with that of training which could be overwhelming for some of them and could possibly lead to stress; creating pressure for them which ultimately causes mental issues that affect their well-being.

Thus, further studies should be conducted on how mental health issues can be addressed within educational leadership training programmes.

More so, future studies in the area of incorporation of strategies for management of traumatized students, schools and communities as well as management of crisis and peaceful resolutions into programmes of educational leadership training should be accorded the utmost priority. This is because school leaders ought to be ready to tackle difficulties associated with increase in natural and man-made disasters, the effects of climate change and global warming as well as the negative impacts of globalization. With specific reference to climate change and global warming, future research can also focus on integrating programmes of environmental sustainability into its courses and modules to help school leaders prepare for initiatives that promote greenery and thus protect the environment.

This research found that the experiences of some participants were not acknowledged by the teaching and learning methods used during their training. This finding is linked to the context from which they enrolled into the MEXT educational leadership training programme where participants have jobs at private schools which are more funded, equipped with more resources and technology and have more exposure to workshops and seminars on leadership. With specific regard to the sample of this research, the researcher recommends an ethnographic and longitudinal study on the sampled teachers of this research. Ethnographic study is necessary for greater insights into their behavioural, cultural, social and professional contexts in their natural environments and would help in determining the influence of these contexts on the effective discharge of their duties of educational leadership. Besides, the longitudinal study would be significant in determining the manner in which their learning and/or practice of educational leadership are impacted by their behaviours, values, and predisposition over a period of time.

Furthermore, given that out of the numerous teachers and school leaders in Nigeria, only 27 of them had been selected for the MEXT educational leadership training programme in three years, the researcher therefore recommends that future research looks into feasibility of virtual professional development in Nigeria to bridge this gap. This would offer flexibility, continuous support and education to school leaders as well as opportunities for professional growth free from the limitation of geographical constraints. Also, this research limited its samples to the 2019, 2020 and 2021 cohort studies of the MEXT educational leadership training programme who were the most recent graduate as at the time of data collection. The researcher therefore recommends further studies on more recent graduates of the programme so as to cater for recent developments within the field of educational leadership training. In view of the above, future studies can also look into how programmes of educational leadership training could organize for a robust alumni association for its graduates in order to encourage continuous support, collaboration and mentorship.

Also, the researcher recommends that a similar study on examination of perceptions and experiences on educational leadership training be extended to Nigerian public school teachers since a greater number of Nigerian children attend this kind of school. In addition, the researcher recommends that the documents used in the intermittent presentation of seminars and workshops to teachers in Nigeria be studied to determine areas that need to be strengthened pending the establishment of a national programme of educational leadership training in Nigeria. More so, further research should be conducted with the purpose of documenting and evaluating the outcomes of a formal national educational leadership training programme when eventually established in Nigeria so as to assess its effectiveness.

This research focused on examining the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers regarding their educational leadership training under MEXT in Japan but did not delve

into its comparison with programmes of educational leadership training from other countries. Based on this, the researcher recommends for future studies to focus on comparison of the MEXT educational leadership training programme with other similar programmes from developed nations. This study should be conducted in order to assess the specific leadership practices that promote development and innovation most effectively within the education sectors of these countries. As an extension to this, further research would be useful in investigating the ways in which different styles of leadership in these developed countries could be modified to fit diverse economic, institutional and cultural environments, particularly in developing countries, in order to maximize their impacts.

This research found the presence of an incidental curriculum in that the use of ICT and internet did not have a direct connection to the primary curriculum of the MEXT training programme. They, however, contributed tremendously in achieving the goals of the primary curriculum. In view of this, the researcher recommends further studies on the impact of educational leadership trainees' capability to learn incidental skills, for instance effective ICT skills, on the success and effectiveness of these programmes.

Future research should be focused on the effective application of digital tools and artificial intelligence technology within the field of educational leadership training, especially those involving practice-engaged projects that permit innovation from both trainers and trainees alike. Also, research should be focused on documenting and evaluating the conditions under which these technologies were developed in order to ensure its effective use and improvement of the outcomes of a training programme. Furthermore, research into the equity, efficacy and safety of artificial intelligence technology in the field of educational leadership training should be prioritized. These studies are necessary in that artificial intelligence remains

promising because of its capability to reimagine the field of educational management and leadership (Marrone et al., 2024; Arar et al., 2025; Polat, Karataş & Varol, 2025).

Additionally, this research found that the participants of the MEXT training programme had opportunities to put into practice the theories learnt from the modules. However, it did not delve into the extent of transfer of this theoretical knowledge into practice. This finding aligns with the positions of Crawford and Earley (2011, p. 108) as well as Osman and Miller (2022) that one of the difficulties in developing educational leadership learning programmes has been the inability to achieve an equilibrium between theory and practice, that is, how to give leaders of schools both the theoretical understanding of leadership that are necessary and the chance to equally apply their newly acquired understanding practically.

Furthermore, one of the findings of this research is on the significant values attached to the learning gathered from sharing of experiences by the participants. The implication of this finding is the inclusion of experiential learning opportunities – internships in different schools with varying leadership contexts based on the participants' jobs, contexts and leadership experience – as an essential part of activities of a leadership learning programme. This finding agrees with the findings from literature that one of the features of an ideal educational leadership training involves internship activities (Ballenger et al., 2009, p. 533), and that educational leadership training should be contextualized using necessary instructional applications such as internships. Given that both the findings of this research as well as the findings of many other research on the phenomenon of educational leadership training are usually specific to contexts and are not easily generalizable, quantitative research would be useful in experimentally assessing various educational leadership training programmes such as private, urban, public, rural, international and local programmes so as to evaluate generalizability.

The impacts of the MEXT educational leadership training programme are felt by both the teachers and the students alike (MEXT, 2020). These impacts are evident both from the results of this research as well as from literature. On the part of the teachers, there have been some noticeable changes in their morale and motivation towards leading the instructional activities for students as well as for the improvement of their students' learning. Also, it has been noted that because of increased professionalism as a result of their training, teachers are more skilled at classroom management and are becoming more confident in making appropriate decisions for their classrooms without relying on the principal due to their high self-efficacy. In addition to these, increased professionalism has led to widespread acknowledgement of their roles as exemplary models for their students which positively influences the behavior of their students. On the part of students, the MEXT educational leadership training programme has fostered improvements in school culture thus enabling an inclusive, supportive, positive and conducive environment for academic activities. As a result, there are some records of increased motivation for learning resulting in more attention and participation during lessons and other learning activities which in turn affect academic performance positively. In view of the above observations, it would therefore be necessary that highly advanced statistical data analytical methods such as predictive modelling be used in future research to offer a comprehensive examination and thorough analysis of the connections between trainings of educational leadership and educational outcomes such as performance of teachers, learners achievement and school improvement. This research is necessary in order to determine the impacts of leadership intervention initiatives, both directly and indirectly. It would also be significant in predicting future trends (Kishorchandra & Rajnikant, 2025) that allow the implementation of data-based decisions in advance (Shobhit, 2025) and the refinement of training programmes (Almalawi et al., 2024).

Given that the implementation of the findings of this research is dependent on the policy context of the government in power and their willingness to adopt and implement these findings, future studies should be focused on how school leaders can be equipped to influence legislations related to education in order to engender the necessary changes needed in their schools, districts and communities. These studies can be taken a step further to include inquiries into how educational leaders inside and outside the formal school system collaborate to improve equity, inclusiveness and learning within the schools under their jurisdiction. This is essential given the diverseness of learners such as special needs students, learners with disabilities, students with learning disorders as well as learners from different economic, financial and social status amongst others (Department of Education, United States of America, 2025).

Conclusion

The aim of this research is to probe the perceptions and experiences of Nigerian teachers on their MEXT educational leadership training in Japan. The findings of this research indicated that the tools and artefacts of the MEXT training programme contributed to the leadership practice of the participants through research empowerment, gaining leadership identity and confidence, practical application of learnt theories as well as introduction to instructional leadership. The findings also showed that in addition to the modules and other instructional tools being appropriate for their educational leadership learning, they served as useful resources for reference even after graduation, highlighting their sustained utility.

The study also underscores the critical roles of the MEXT programme's rules and the community in that while the former engendered the learning of valuable skills such as hard work, organization, dedication and time management, the latter broadened their perspectives on diversity and leadership contexts, provided opportunities for networking and served as

source of motivation and support, In the same vein, the various responsibilities divided amongst the members of the community such as fellow students, lecturers, thesis supervisors and administrator, contributed in a positive learning experience, emphasizing the importance of structured, interactive, and collaborative engagement in leadership development.

On the other hand, some aspects of the tools and artefacts hindered the learning experience of these Nigerian teachers such as their inability to acknowledge previous experiences and knowledge, indirect applicability to educational leadership, disproportionate amount of assessment and contact time as well as the challenge of ICT use. Also, the strained relationships with their thesis supervisors as well as their delayed feedback impacted their learning experiences negatively, demonstrating how relational and structural factors within an activity system can constrain learning outcomes.

Theoretically, this research contributes to the body of literature on educational leadership by highlighting the interplay between activity system components – community, rules, division of labour as well as tools and artefacts – and adult learning outcomes. It reinforces the applicability of andragogic and constructivist principles in designing leadership programmes, emphasizing the need to tailor learning experiences to participants' previous knowledge, contextual realities, and professional diversity.

Practically, the findings inform the design of leadership training programme for Nigerian contexts. They underscore the importance of aligning programme content with local leadership realities, ensuring differentiated instruction based on participants' previous experience, balancing assessment workloads with contact time, providing timely feedback, and supporting ICT proficiency. Guided by these insights, the researcher proposes a contextually sensitive framework for educational leadership training in Nigeria, aimed at

enhancing leadership capacity while addressing the unique needs, experiences, and constraints of Nigerian school leaders.

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that effective leadership development depends on both well-designed programme components and thoughtful attention to participants' contextual and experiential diversities, offering actionable guidance for both practitioners and researchers in the field of educational leadership.

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Appendix A

Interview Protocol for the Research Study

RESEARCH TITLE: An Examination of the Perceptions and Experiences of Nigerian Teachers on Educational Leadership Training in Japan

INTERVIEWER: Stanley Osita Okonkwo

RESEARCH SUPERVISOR: Dr. Steve Sharra

RESEARCH PURPOSE

The purpose of the research study is to “investigate Nigerian teachers’ perceptions and experiences regarding the contribution of the MEXT programme to their own leadership practices as well as the aspects of the programme that conceivably had the most impact on their leadership learning and the aspects of the programme that were a hindrance to their educational leadership learning”. Also, the research aims to explore the extent to which the training made, or did not make a difference for the cohort studies.

SOURCES OF DATA COLLECTION

The data for this research will be gathered from at least 16 participants and at most 23 participants of the MEXT programme as well as government officials from both Nigeria and Japan using semi-structured interviews.

INFORMED CONSENT

As stated above, the study's purpose provides participants with the knowledge needed to make an informed decision and then give an informed consent. In view of this, all participants are

requested to complete and forward a signed consent letter to the mail address satnosy89@gmail.com

CONFIDENTIALITY ASSURANCE

Every participant is assured that not only will their identity be confidential but their responses as well. In the same vein, participation in this research is absolutely voluntary and participants are entitled to quit the research at any point they deem necessary without any consequences. The researcher pledges to continue taking precautions and measures necessary to ensure that participants are free from any form of harm. Every participant would be given a copy of the transcript for verification of their interview responses.

INTERVIEW DURATION

The interview is expected to conclude in 50 minutes at most. This interview would be recorded, transcribed and every participant given the opportunity to validate the accuracy of the transcript as it relates to their responses.

BIO-DATA OF THE PARTICIPANTS

AGE:

GENDER:

CLASS:

YEAR OF GRADUATION:

CURRENT LEADERSHIP POSITION:

CURRENT PLACE OF WORK:

CURRENT LOCATION OF RESIDENCE:

YEARS OF EXPERIENCE:

ACADEMIC QUALIFICATIONS:

PROFESSIONAL QUALIFICATIONS:

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Element of the Activity Theory: Tools and Artefacts

1. Generally, what were your learning experiences regarding education leadership during your MEXT training programme?
2. What were your educational leadership learning experiences as facilitated by the different offered modules' contents?
 - Educational Administration
 - Educational Methods
 - Specialized Subject Research
 - Observational Practice and Tours
3. Which of these modules, if any, was the most relevant to your educational leadership position and role and why do you believe this/these module(s) is/are relevant to your position and role?
4. What contribution(s) do you think the educational leadership training you received in the module(s) you just discussed had on your practice as an education leader?
5. What particular skills, strategies or values learnt from the modules, do you apply as part of your education leadership practice, if any?
6. In relation to the response you just provided, could you cite any practical instance of when and how you applied the skills, strategies and values in your position and responsibilities as a leader in the education field?
7. Which of the modules, in your opinion, contributed the least in your leadership practice, and why do you say so?
8. What elements or factors do you believe hindered the modules from enhancing your leadership practice?

9. Do you think the leadership training you received while participating in the modules suited your learning requirements as an educational leader?

10. How did you experience the learning resources and materials provided for the modules? How did the learning resources and materials help you in your leadership role in education?

11. How would you describe your experience regarding the delivery modes of the modules? Do you believe the delivery modes of the modules and the teaching strategies contributed in any way to your educational leadership learning and how suitable were they for you as an adult learner?

12. Should the teaching strategies or delivery mode be improved for a better experience of education leadership learning and in what ways?

13. In order to practically measure your experience regarding educational leadership learning, how much time was devoted to these elements of your training?

- Preparation for presentations, tours, assignments and essays
- Preparation for examinations
- Preparation for lectures

14. How did you experience the assessment methods employed in the course modules? What assessment methods were employed and how did they contribute to your learning?

15. What contribution do you think ICT made to your educational leadership learning experience?

Element of the Activity Theory: Community/Division of Labour

16. What was your experience regarding your interaction with fellow students (other cohorts/class apart from yours) in terms of the benefit this engagement provided to your educational leadership learning and practice?

17. How was your experience regarding your interaction with students within your class in terms of the benefit this engagement provided to your educational leadership learning and practice? Cite any significant instances, if any.

18. What particular role(s), in your opinion, did the following people (supervisors, administrative staff, study groups, fellow students and lecturers) play in your educational leadership training throughout your participation in the program?

19. Which of the persons mentioned contributed the most to your learning? Can you give some reasons why you said so?

20. In general terms, please describe your educational leadership learning's contributions to your leadership practice. Can you offer any examples and possibly elaborate?

21. Which of the programme's elements, in your opinion, restricted the programme's contributions to your educational leadership learning and practice? Can you be more specific and elaborative on the elements that contributed the least to your learning?

Element of the Activity Theory: Rules

22. What were the regulations and rules that guided your educational leadership learning regarding these specific areas?

- Attendance at lectures
- Assignment submission
- Communicating with supervisors, lecturers, students or the institution of learning (university)
- Research and practical works
- Presenting and defending your thesis/research report

23. Are there any other applied rules during the programme that you would like to talk about besides the ones already mentioned?
24. What were your experience with these rules and did they, in your opinion, contribute practically to your training?
25. What elements or traditions of the MEXT training programmes's culture were identifiable with those in Nigeria?
26. What elements, traditions and culture of the programme and the country of study resonated with you?
27. How did these traditions and cultures, if at all, in any way, impact your leadership?

Appendix B

Invitation Letter



Invitation Letter

Tuesday 5th March, 2024

Dear

My name is Stanley Osita Okonkwo, a PhD candidate at the Zambia campus of Unicaf University. As an integral aspect of my study, I am executing a research on “An Examination of the Perceptions and Experiences of Nigerian Teachers on Educational Leadership Training in Japan”. As a result, I write to enquire your willingness to be invited as a data source.

Having obtained ethics approval from the appropriate quarters, this research would employ semi-structured interview to collect data, would begin on the 18th of March, 2024 and is expected to conclude by the end of April (30th), 2024. The aforementioned interview would be done at a venue, time as well as date suitable for participants and is expected to be concluded in 50 minutes. Furthermore, a transcript copy of the interview would be distributed to participants for confirmation of its completeness and content. Upon completing this work, the full report will be made available to participants. It is the belief of the researcher that the research will be a huge addition to existing literature on the topic. In view of the above, I would like to kindly ask about your willingness to be a part of this research and relate your experience to the researcher. Please note that this interview would be recorded for future reference and storage afterwards.

Thank you in anticipation. Should you require more information, please kindly contact me.

Faithfully,

Name: Okonkwo Stanley Osita

E-mail: satnosy89@gmail.com

Student’s Address and Telephone: Room 202, Manshon Aoi 1, Fuchyuu 3-11-10, Echizen Shi, Fukui, Japan. +819082230972

Name of Supervisor: Dr. Steve Sharra – Associate Professor and Dean, School of Education, Social Science and Technology

Supervisor’s E-mail: s.sharra@unicafmalawi.com

Appendix C

Informed Consent Letter



UU_IC - Version 2.1



Informed Consent Form

Part 1: Debriefing of Participants

Student's Name: Stanley Osita Okonkwo
Student's E-mail Address: satnosy89@gmail.com
Student's ID #: R2106D12420208
Supervisor's Name: Dr. Steve Sharra
University Campus: Unicaf University Zambia (UUZ)
Program of Study: PhD Doctorate of Philosophy
Research Project Title: AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIAN TEACHERS ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN JAPAN
Date: 31-Jan-2024

Provide a short description (purpose, aim and significance) of the research project, and explain why and how you have chosen this person to participate in this research (maximum 150 words).

"The purpose of this qualitative study is to investigate the Nigerian teachers' perceptions and experiences regarding the contribution of the MEXT programme to their own leadership practices as well as the aspects of the programme that conceivably had the most impact on their leadership learning and the aspects of the programme that was a hindrance to their educational leadership learning. The completion of this research will help in providing a template for educational leadership training in Nigeria which is currently unavailable, if it is adjudged by the participants that this kind of training is beneficial in carrying out leadership responsibilities in educational settings and would also specifically provide deeper insights into the programme. You have been chosen as a participant because you are one of the most recent graduates of the programme (2019, 2020 and 2021) and are deemed knowledgeable about current developments regarding the topic being investigated. Government officials from both Nigeria and Japan are also included as participants to add a distinct dimension to the project, particularly from a government standpoint".

The above named student is committed to ensuring participant's voluntarily participation in the research project and guaranteeing there are no potential risks and/or harms to the participants.

Participants have the right to withdraw at any stage (prior or post the completion) of the research without any consequences and without providing any explanation. In these cases, data collected will be deleted.

All data and information collected will be coded and will not be accessible to anyone outside this research. Data described and included in dissemination activities will only refer to coded information ensuring beyond the bounds of possibility participant identification.

I, Stanley Osita Okonkwo, **ensure that all information stated above is true and that all conditions have been met.**

Student's Signature: Stanley



Informed Consent Form

Part 2: Certificate of Consent

This section is mandatory and should be signed by the participant(s)

Student's Name: Stanley Osita Okonkwo
Student's E-mail Address: satnosy89@gmail.com
Student's ID #: R2106D12420208
Supervisor's Name: Dr. Steve Sharra
University Campus: Unicaf University Zambia (UUZ)
Program of Study: PhD Doctorate of Philosophy
Research Project Title: AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIAN TEACHERS ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN JAPAN

I have read the foregoing information about the study, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions and discuss about it. I have received satisfactory answers to all my questions and I have received enough information about this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw from this study at any time without giving a reason for withdrawing and without any negative consequences. I consent to the use of multimedia (e.g. audio recordings, video recordings) for the purposes of my participation in this study. I understand that my data will remain anonymous and confidential, unless stated otherwise. I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study.

Participant's Print name:

Participant's Signature: _____

Date:

If the Participant is illiterate:

I have witnessed the accurate reading of the consent form to the potential participant, and the individual has had an opportunity to ask questions. I confirm that the aforementioned individual has given consent freely.

Witness's Print name:

Witness's Signature: _____

Date:

Appendix D

Unicaf University Research Ethics Committee Decision



UREC Decision, Version 2.0

Unicaf University Research Ethics Committee Decision

Student's Name: Stanley Osita Okonkwo

Student's ID #: R2106D12420208

Supervisor's Name: Dr Steve Lawrence Sharra

Program of Study: UU-DOC-900-3-ZM

OfferID / GroupID: O72457G75487

Dissertation stage: DS3

Research Project AN EXAMINATION OF THE PERCEPTIONS AND EXPERIENCES OF NIGERIAN TEACHERS ON EDUCATIONAL LEADERSHIP TRAINING IN JAPAN

Ethical conditions No comments.

Methodological recommendations:

A. Approved without revision or comments

March 4, 2024

All Doctoral students are advised to check the regulations pertaining to research and General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) of the country in which the research will take place as each country may have different restrictions on conducting research.

- i. Approval from a local Research Ethics Committee (REC) or professional regulatory body such as Institutional Review Board (IRB)
- ii. Approval from Ministry or public agency

*Provisional approval provided at the Dissertation Stage 1, whereas the **final** approval is provided at the Dissertation stage 3. The student is allowed to proceed to data collection following the final approval.

Appendix E

Official Letter of Permission

**NIGERIAN MEXT ALUMNI
ASSOCIATION**

1248 AMINU KANO CRESCENT, WUSE, ABUJA

Mohammed Dauda
President
daudamoh53@gmail.com

Chimene Amadi
Secretary
chimadi@gmail.com

30th December, 2024.

Mr. Stanley Osita Okonkwo,
Fukui Ken, Tsuruga Shi,
Fujigaokacho 1-16,
Village House Yoza 1-301,
Japan.
9140017.

Dear Mr. Stanley,

OFFICIAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

Sequel to your email, "Kind Request for Formal Permission Letter" dated 18th December 2024, I hereby write to you to formally express that you have the permission to engage with and involve the members of this honorable association in your PhD research at Unicaf University.

By this letter, you are formally authorized to source any information of the members you may need from the association. Please, be informed that any information obtained from this association should be used for the intended purpose only. I have written to the Secretary to accord you any assistance you may require in this process.

Accept the assurances of my warmest regard.

Dr. Mohammed Dauda.
President
08036467117

Motto: Bridging the Education Gap between Japan and Nigeria