Learning environment and education leadership: A comparative study that includes British Columbia, Canada and Saudi Arabia.

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Abstract

This research sheds light on the similarities as well as the differences between the administrative as well as leadership styles in British Columbia (B.C.) and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A). This study was conducted with a total of eight participants (four from British Columbia and four from Saudi Arabia respectively). A narrative inquiry approach was utilized in this research, through which the participants' lived experiences and their impact on the learning environment were examined. Through the stories shared by the participating school leaders from both jurisdictions in the conversational interviews, a candid and clear picture of educational leadership in relation to their lived experience was provided. It was through careful analysis of the administrators' narrative account with respect to their experiences that the researcher recognized the narrative trends in which the administrators' build their stories. This approach revealed the cultural landscapes within the educational leadership in relation to their lived experience in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and British Columbia respectively. This study found that BC school leaders viewed their job as having to do with every aspect of the school administration and leadership with a 'wide spectrum' of tasks, while the principals in Saudi Arabia saw their major responsibility as 'general supervision'. It was also revealed through this research that in spite of their cultural differences, school leaders in these two countries viewed unnecessary bureaucratic hierarchies as a common barrier toward the smooth running of schools within the two cultures. Generally, it was found that irrespective of the well-established cultural and geographical differences between Saudi Arabia and British Columbia, educational leaders in these two countries do share some similarities in their leadership approach and styles.

Table of Contents

List of Tables

List of Figures

Chapter One: Introduction

The importance of a positive learning environment in schools, and all this entails, is of utmost concern for school administrators. While this is the case both in Saudi Arabia and in British Columbia, Canada, the current literature suggests that there exist vastly different cultural perspectives and leadership approaches that affect and impact the way administrators in the two cultures carry out their educational leadership responsibilities. A flow chart on the basic areas of interest in this study is presented in Figure 1 below. This provides an overview of the key concepts considered in this research:
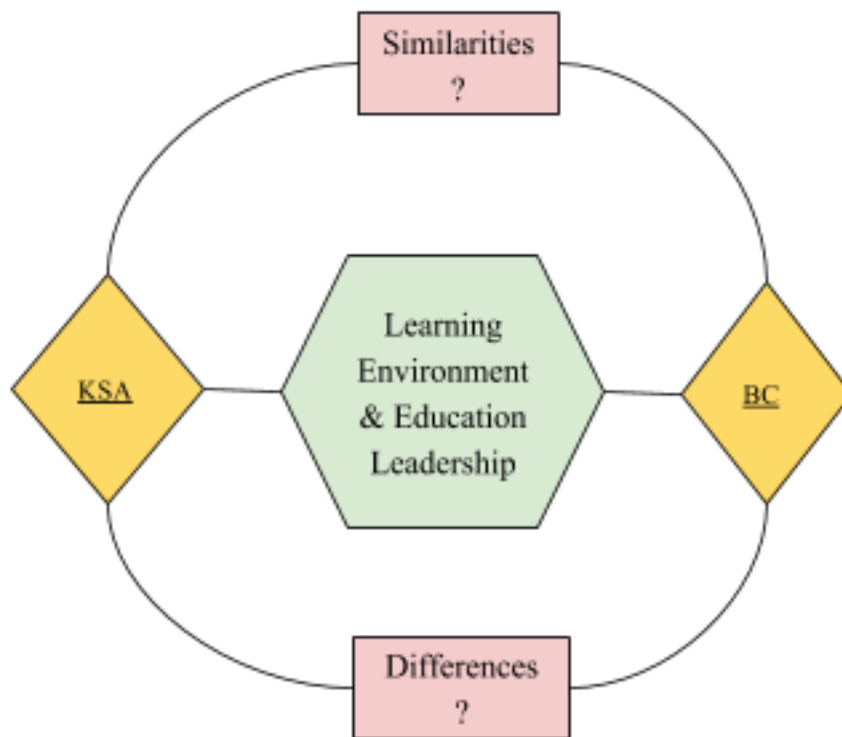
Figure 1: A flow chart on the key concepts in this research

Since this study is focused on comparing education leadership in two different cultures, it is important to look at the definition of culture and then a comparison of the cultures in both the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A) and British Columbia (B.C.).

Culture

In the context of this study, culture is defined as "a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the society" (Barth, 2002, p. 7). Within the educational system culture has been found to have the ability to influence every aspect of the academic environment, including instruction, student achievement, and professional development (Hamilton & Richardson, 1995).

Cultural Differences Between K.S.A and B.C.

The cultural characteristics in Saudi Arabia are closely connected to the Islamic religious norms and values. This implies that every section of Saudi society, including the education sector, must adhere to strict religious rules. For example, the Kingdom operates on a male-dominated culture which forbids a woman or a girl from socializing with an unrelated male. This resulted in schools being either all-male or all-female school at all levels after the kindergarten. Canadian (Western) culture on the other hand is independent of extensive religious influence in public schooling, which means that the Canadian culture is more open and flexible. Hence public schools in Canada are mixed (boys and girls together) with the exception of some independent schools that operate all-male or all-female schools. Therefore, educational leaders in their respective jurisdiction could apply different problem-solving approaches depending on the culturally acceptable practices.

Climate

The term school climate refers to a set of shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions which have been found to influence the way students, teachers, and administrators relate to each other in a learning environment (Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009).. Societal, systemic and governmental factors have been found to influence the climate in any learning environment (Mulford, 2003). Therefore, a school's climate could be "based on patterns of people's experiences of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" (Cohen et al, 2009, p.182).

Interaction Between Culture and Climate

In a report published by the OECD in 2003 it was observed that new types of relationships have evolved among students, teachers and leaders. According to this same report, the relationships were based upon "some reasonably common set of characteristics that include trust as well as having a collaborative educational climate, in addition to having a shared and monitored mission; taking initiatives and risks, and ongoing, relevant professional development" (p.2). This report maintained that school leadership is enshrined in multiple organizational contexts within the school community without being centrally dependent on any individual or a specific office.

In every academic institution, there are a number of constituents that influence the learning environment. The stakeholders who play important roles in influencing the learning environment at the school level include the students, teachers, parents, and principals (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, & Pickeral, 2009). Even though these factors vary within these two cultural jurisdictions they have been found to influence educational outcomes for pupils (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Creating an environment where students feel comfortable

and where these factors work together to create a productive educational environment that is suitable for children is a subject of importance in schools (Bradshaw et al., 2014). Research identified learning environment as being made up of multiple factors such as the school culture, physical locations and contexts where students learn. Bradshaw, et al (2014), found that learning environments are composed of three broad factors in relation to the school itself. These are social, physical and psychological factors (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam, & Lindstrom, 2014).

Social Learning Environment

This thesis engages in a discussion of the social factors that are relevant to the social environment. These social aspects of the learning environment involve relationships that develop in the learning process. This means that the way students and teachers relate; the relationship between the administrators and the teachers; as well as the relationship between the school and the local community evolve throughout the learning process.

Physical Learning Environment

Physical learning environments deal with the places where learning occurs, which includes a great variety of things, such as cleanliness, the school's overall physical structure, where the classroom is situated in relation to the rest of the school, and the classroom's physical structure, to name a few (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam, & Lindstrom, 2014).

Psychological Learning Environment

The psychological environments on the other hand consist of the cognitive environmental factors. Psychological environment deals with the skills and information to be learned as well as the emotional environments such as motivation and emotions (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, Debnam, & Lindstrom, 2014). This implies that the role of the school leader is essential when considering the learning environment of the school itself, since their practices are fundamental to forming the

school's organizational and environmental structure (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008). Now, it is important to understand the contextual meaning of educational leadership as suggested by various scholars. According to Susan & Morgaen (2007), educational leadership is the process of guiding and enlisting the energies and talents of parents, teachers and pupils to achieve common educational goals. Educational leadership is based on interdisciplinary literature and concentrates on human development and pedagogy. It is derived from various fields such as business, political science, sociology, and psychology (Williams-Boyd, 2002).

Interest in this research emerges from the principal researcher's experiential encounters with principals and other administrators in Saudi Arabia. Learning environments in Canada are both similar and different to the learning environment in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, therefore making this area of research relevant, and in fact, important to understand. Canada's different educational leadership methods and styles may account for some of these discrepancies, and increased the researcher's interest into probing the impact of the leadership methods and styles on both Saudi Arabia and BC learning environments.

A good learning environment should incorporate social, architectural and emotional spaces that allow students to explore and express their emotions with guidance from parents, peers, school and community (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2006, *21st Century Learning Environment* p.4). However, these components of the learning environment are to some extent shaped by the cultural values and norms society. Conversely, school leaders influence the emotional context of the school, and with varying degrees of effectiveness, incorporate student socio-emotional needs within the myriad of other components of the school environment (Cohen et al., 2009, p.184), all in the effort of ensuring that all students are in an environment that is conducive to their learning (ibid, 2009). School administrators lead

and work with all members of the community to establish a predictable, safe, warm space that invites and supports all students socially, emotionally, physically and intellectually. In doing so, they create the right environment for students' engagement, where they are challenged to reach higher levels of student achievement (Eric & Banatao, 2011). A good learning environment also allows students to grow in their social skills with regards to relating to others, and understanding themselves (Eric & Banatao, 2011).

Over the years, researchers have documented a correlation between a positive school climate and pro-social motivation, academic motivation, self-esteem, conflict resolution, as well as altruistic behaviour (Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, 2009). These researchers refer to school climate as shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between students, teachers, and administrators and set the parameters of acceptable behavior and norms for the school (ibid, 2009). In recent years, the definition of a positive school climate has been expanded to include safety and the physical environment (Cohen, McCabe, Michelli, &Pickeral, 2009).

Research Focus

This study embraced a qualitative approach. By definition a "qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on distinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem" (Creswell, 1998, p.15). Utilizing the research lens of the Narrative Inquiry approach, the researcher explored the lived experiences of high school administrators in Saudi Arabia and British Columbia, Canada and the impact of their educational leadership on the positive nature of the learning environments in each school. This study offered a deep examination of the threads that make up the lived experiences of the British Columbia (B.C.) and Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (K.S.A) administrators. A probe into the administrators' educational leadership practices and how it affects and influences their respective learning

environments was carried out in this research. This objective was achieved by answering to the following research questions:

A- What similarities and differences in educational leadership exist between the BC and Saudi Arabian jurisdictions?

B- What supports and barriers do the cultural contexts provide to the educational leaders in their respective jurisdictions?

In the next chapter, research literature on the relationship between learning environments and educational leadership will be explored. Examining the literature is necessary to ascertain the extent of what is already known about the correlation between educational leadership and the learning environment and how these factors work together to create a conducive learning environment. This is particularly true, given that research has found that understanding school climate and culture and how they impact the attitudes and behaviors of children plays important roles toward the school's improvement and performance (MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). It is widely acknowledged by successful school principals that focusing on the development of a school's culture and climate is essential to improved student's achievement and teacher's morale (Cheng, 1997, Leithwood, & Riehl, 2003, Eppard, 2004). Even though different definitions have been given to the terms climate and culture (see the definitions of school climate and school culture on page 8 below), there have been no record on the link between the climate and culture in a school environment.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

Background

  The focus of this literature review was to compare and attempt to find a relationship between school culture and its climate in addition to establishing, how a principal may perfect a school's climate and culture. This is considered important in order to influence achieve a positive learning environment. In this thesis school culture and school climate was discussed. Therefore, this study was designed to identify the association among school climate, school culture, educational leadership, and student outcomes.

Definition

  For the purpose of this study the following definitions has been adopted for school culture and school climate respectively:

  School Climate. Even though there is no universal definition for school climate, for the purpose of this study school climate will be defined as shared beliefs, values, and attitudes that shape interactions between students, teachers, and administrators and set the parameters of acceptable behavior and norms for the school as construed by Woolley, Kol, & Bowen, (2009). Therefore, a school's climate could be based on the patterns of people's experiences with regards to school life and reflects the norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures" (Cohen et al, 2009, p.182). Societal, system and governmental factors was found to influence the job of an educational leader (Mulford, 2003).

  School Culture. In this research, school culture will be defined as "a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the school" (Barth, 2002, p. 7) which has the ability to influence every other aspect of the academic environment, including instruction, student achievement, and

professional development as reported by Hamilton & Richardson, (1995).

Difference between School Culture and Climate. Scholars like MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009) offered the differences between climate and culture using two unique perspectives. They highlighted that school climate is viewed from a psychological standpoint, while school culture is viewed from an anthropological perspective. Consequently, the school climate is identifiable from the behaviors of different groups of people while culture is identified as constituting the school norms and values. In addition, MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009) opined that a school's climate is a subset of a school's culture that also influenced other factors of a school including students' performance. However, Gruenert (2008) maintained that climate is the core leverage point for any culture. Thus, if a principal wishes to shape a new culture, then the starting point should be a thorough assessment of climate. Therefore, to effectively improve school performance, understanding the differences between culture and climate is fundamental (see page 8 above).

Bulach and Malone (1994) described climate and culture as an analogy. They illustrated that climate is the part of an iceberg that is visible above the water, while culture was the part that was below the surface of the water. Though culture cannot be detected or seen, it is however a necessary component for climate. These same researchers found that the variables of a school's culture which include collaboration, openness, trust and environment were difficult to synthesize. They insisted that it is difficult to identify whether colleagues trusted, collaborated or cared about each other. Conversely, in their opinion variables that shape climate, including expectations, order, leadership and involvement could readily be observed.

In this study, the focus was on future society members (students) where students could see and feel the care about the school environment relying not only on themselves, but also

others such as principals and teachers who seek to see their success in society. In most countries schools are largely or wholly a government responsibility. Therefore, the factors shaping government priorities could influence the perceived necessity for school reform, the resources available for reform, and the direction of the reforms.

Furthermore, by creating an understanding on how to play the role of educational leaders, the research findings could help students in gaining confidence required to achieve their academic goals. In addition, students will be encouraged to excel based on the amount of support they received from their parents, teachers, and leaders. First, it is pertinent to look separately at the educational systems in these two jurisdictions that are the focus of this research.

Educational System in Canada

Canada is ranked as being among the top ten education systems in the world in the areas of Math and Science (PISA Average Scores, 2015). However, British Columbia is ranked first in Canada when it comes to education in all subjects (Sarah, 2014). Rankings change, of course, and the data used in some or most tests and the ways that data is acquired can be challenged. Probably the safest statement one can make is that Canada ranks near or at the top of the English-speaking world in Kindergarten to Grade12 education. This makes it very worthy of study.

The education system in Canada consists of elementary and secondary education (primary or Kindergarten to Grade 12, and post-secondary or tertiary). Education is governed by each territorial and provincial government, which can lead to some significant variations among the jurisdictions. These variations are usually managed through regular meetings between the Council of Ministers of Education, and legislative authorities so as to mitigate and maintain a uniform standard across the different jurisdictions. For example, the grading system for every level varies across provinces (Lessard & Brassard, 2018). All territories and provinces provide

free and universal elementary and secondary education for a period of 12 years with the exceptions of Quebec, which provides it for 11 years plus CJEP (2 years), and Ontario, which provides schooling for 13 years (Ontario Education Act, 1990). Education is compulsory for those between six and eighteen years in Canada, (but the age brackets in some cases vary across jurisdiction). For example in Ontario, "every person who attains the age of six years after the first school day in September in any year shall attend an elementary or secondary school on every school day from the first school day in September in the next succeeding year until the last school day in June in the year in which the person attains the age of 18 years". (Ontario Education Act, 2006, c.28, s.5(1)) Alternatively, British Columbia's School Act states that children of "school age" must attend school from the age of 5 years until 16 (BC School Act, 1996, s. 3(1) a, b). This same section of the law stipulates that students may enrol in school until Grade 12.

Educational system and leadership in British Columbia (BC)

The teachers in the province are highly skilled. To teach in British Columbia's (BC's) Kindergarten to Grade 12 public education sector, the teacher must take at least a two year Bachelor of Education program and then apply to the Teacher Regulation Branch at the British Columbia Ministry of Education for a teaching certificate. The Teacher Regulation and Qualification Branch BC will evaluate the applicant to see if they qualify for certification in BC. The applicants are assessed based on the following criteria:

1- Academic record, including teacher education training and subject area studies.

2- Teaching experience, and fitness to teach (that is, whether their moral character makes them suitable to work with children) (Website of The Ministry of Education).

There are up-to-date learning facilities and supports for learners, paid for from provincial

taxation. Education in British Columbia consumes the second highest number of tax dollars; only Health consumes more tax revenue (Ivanova & Klein, 2013). The education system has a transfer system for students, where one can move between different qualification levels. It enables individuals to select a study path relevant to his/her educational plans. Transferring between schools in elementary and high school is easy, as the curriculum is standardized across the province. At the new school students do not need to retake courses that they had already completed in their previous schools again. Its system is similar or identical to the rest of the province, and similar to the rest of the country with elementary, secondary and post-secondary schools and a provincial curriculum. The province's education plan ensures a dynamic and flexible educational system for more student engagement. There is an information service where parents can communicate with school staff and teachers privately and students can manage and build their personal work and even submit their assignments online.

Canadian policies and principles towards education differ in comparison to those in Saudi Arabia. For example, while kindergarten is optional in KSA it is compulsory in BC starting from the age of five. These two jurisdictions' educational systems also differ in the compulsory school age which goes from 6 – 17 in KSA but from 5 – 18 in BC. However, the BC educational system holds a two-semester school year as is obtainable in KSA. There also exists a one-week exam period for each semester in the BC school year respectively (Vancouver District #39, 2016-2017).

Educational System in The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA)

Saudi Arabian education system is currently ranked 66th globally and sixth among the Arabic countries. This lowly ranked position alerted experts in educational development in Saudi Arabia and inspired a desire to address the weaknesses that caused this decrease in the

international classification (Mostafa, 2017). On the other hand, Saudi Arabian educational policies are geared toward ensuring that education is efficient and available for all the members of Saudi society. Its goals are to meet the religious, economic and social needs of Saudi society. Furthermore, the education system in Saudi Arabia is primarily under the jurisdictions of the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Higher Education and the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training respectively. Moreover, schools in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) start from Pre-elementary, elementary, middle, secondary school, and post-secondary. Although schools in Saudi Arabia are not co-educational, the two important visions that the Ministry of Education focus on are creating a literate population, which is aimed at giving the citizens the basic knowledge in some vital areas including math, literacy and general knowledge, as well as developing greater gender equality in public education. This objective was highlighted in a document published by World Data on Education in their 2010/11 edition, where it was stated that:

> the goals of education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia are: to have the students understand Islam in a correct and comprehensive manner; …; to equip them with various skills and knowledge; to develop the society economically and culturally; and to prepare the individual to be a useful member in the building of his/her community (World Data on Education, 2010/11, para.1).

Educational Leadership in KSA

Educational leadership is a new field in Saudi Arabia. It is currently referred to as educational supervision which implies that there is a heavy emphasis on educational management and is led by the Ministry of Education (World Data on education, para.10). This definition of leadership duties differs from Saudi Arabia to British Columbia, but there seems to

be similarities in terms of functionality and implementation within these two systems. The leadership in KSA's educational system has its focus on achieving educational goals, as well as providing oversight checks-and-balances on the administrators in the higher levels of education in areas such as planning, organization, implementation and evaluation. The educational supervision on the other hand is responsible for supervising schools and teachers, dealing with issues which cannot be handled by the principal. For instance, principals in KSA are responsible for non-sensitive school organizational issues such as student violations of school conduct. However, they are not permitted to override parental consent in larger issues unlike their counterparts in BC who are given the legislative power to act in place of the parents in certain issues. In BC for example a school principal can make a decision and authorize the medical evacuation of a student in the case of emergency without waiting for parental consent. Conversely, school administrators in KSA are not permitted by law to take such an action, irrespective of the situation. According to Almannie (2015), "An education supervisor is defined by the Ministry of Education as an expert in his/her field of study who helps teachers develop professional skills and solve educational problems they face, in addition to improving teaching methods to guide the educational process in the right direction" (p.7). Parental consent is required in any situation that is not clearly outlined in cases such as the aftermath of student injury, for example, if they wish their child to be moved to the hospital or not. Furthermore, cases that cannot be resolved by educational supervision will be referred to the Ministry of Education before they go to the court. Hence, school leaders' authorities are limited implying that they are usually in charge of educational supervision as well as having to deal with the directives of the ministry of education.

It is not mandatory for children in Saudi Arabia to attend kindergarten; it is usually the

discretion of the parents to decide whether to enrol their kids in the kindergarten program or not. Parents. However, the nation has a pre-school system that caters to pre-school aged children although this is not part of the official ladder of the education system. Because of this unofficial status, it does not qualify the child to enrol in grade one of elementary school. In the pre-school level of the educational system, a child may enrol as an infant which is under the age of four. Those between three and four years can enrol for nursery school while children between ages five and six are eligible for preliminary school. In this five and six-year-old level, both sexes are allowed to mix in classes though their teachers must be strictly female (UNESCO, 2011).

The school year in Saudi Arabia starts in September and ends in June. From the principal researcher's personal experience, elementary and intermediate academic years consist of 153 working days that are normally divided into two semesters though there are an extra 14 days for examinations. However, secondary schools have 266 days. Primary education begins at the age of six, when children enrol in elementary school which runs for five years until the child is 11. During the primary level, pupils attend classes according to their sexes and are taught by teachers of the same sex. After this period, they then qualify and enrol for intermediate school which lasts for three years until the age of 14 is reached. Secondary education then follows for a similar three years until the age of 17. Often, this is the last stage of general education for a child. During the first year of secondary education, all children study a general curriculum. Students are then allowed to choose from three selective majors comprising: administration and social science; natural science or Shariah; and Arabic studies. A secondary school certificate is then issued upon completion.

Qualifications for the teachers in Saudi Arabia are of critical importance. Therefore, the teaching staff are prepared and trained in the Kingdom's higher education institutions. The

faculties of education in various Saudi Arabian Universities are responsible for training teachers. These include graduating qualified teachers and upgrading professional and educational standards of existing general education administrators, and teachers. This is achieved by offering a variety of professional development programs. This training consists of approved and developed courses that are accredited by the Ministry of Education. Teachers are trained in numerous specialties and training sessions created for elementary and intermediate levels. Teachers who do not have appropriate qualifications also get trained either by redoing their courses or finding employment in a private school and attaining a certain number of hours to gain adequate experience (UNESCO, 2011). A four-year bachelor's degree is the minimum qualification for all education levels. Students are required to major in one specialty in the departments of mathematics, biology, physics, Arabic or Islamic studies as well as taking courses in education that offer the in-depth knowledge of a particular subject. Generally, a female kindergarten teacher completes three years of study and earns a Secondary Institute Diploma. In elementary, intermediate, and secondary education teachers are required to have a general Bachelor's degree which is awarded after four years of training.

Education in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is financed by the state budget, and it is under the administration of four authorities. These are the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Higher Education; the President General for Girl's Education; and the General Organization for Technical Education and Vocational Training. Since the awareness of the importance of education has been gradually improving in the Kingdom, the government has ensured uninterrupted funding of the education system so as to keep up the enrolment.

The Kingdom is devoted to funding its education system because of the demand for progress in the societies. It endeavors to match this progress by inventing new projects or

developing ideas that will ensure a long period of prosperity for the Kingdom and its citizens. The proposed goals of the Saudi education system entail: understanding Islam in a manner that is correct and comprehensive; having the Islamic creed implanted and spread; as well as inculcating in the students, the Islamic values and ideals (VII ED, 2010\11).

The private education system in Saudi Arabia is supported by the government. This system exists on all levels of education also receives funding as well as administrative support from the government as is also obtainable in British Columbia. Licences are however only granted to Saudi Arabian citizens who wish to operate these institutions. These educational facilities do not have a right to award educational degrees at any stage of education. The state also supervises these schools to ensure that the students who chose for this system get the same level of education as is the case with the students in public schools.

Students in Saudi Arabia prefer the private system when it comes to higher education because it provides quality education not offered by public schools (Badry & Willoughby, 2016). The relatively high-quality offered by these institutions in terms of learning, teaching, and extracurricular activities are what most students appear to prefer. Furthermore, there is a high demand for higher education that the public sector is not able to handle on its own. Thus, private education offers students better chances of gaining laudable employment due to its emphasis on practical-based teachings as well as offering internships placements for its students. This system also grants chances to students who are not able to join public universities.

Schools for students with special needs are identified as Special Education Schools. They are considered a private school in Saudi Arabia. However, most of them are free of cost, in line with the Saudi Arabian government's goal to make education free for all its citizens. The Ministry of Education started a special education program in 1960. It opened the Al-Noor

Institute in Riyadh, the first training institution for blind male students that was governmentally supported. In 1964, the first school for blind girls was founded (SAC, 2006). In the same year, the Amal Institute in Riyadh opened as the first school for the hearing impaired. The Amal Institute was opened to provide education, training and care for deaf children. Within this period, resources for blind students had expanded to five institutes (SAC Mission, 2006).

> *"The first specialized institute for children with mental disabilities, Al-Tarbiyah Al Fikriyah Institute for boys and girls in Riyadh, was opened in 1971.There has been a steady expansion of resources for disabled students as new institutions are founded in different geographic locations according to the needs of each province. Schools for the handicapped have increased from one school in 1960 to 27 schools in 1987, and most recently to 54. Presently there are 10 schools for the blind, 28 schools for the deaf and 16 schools for the mentally challenged" (SAC Mission, 2006, p.4).*

Generally, religious affiliation and school gender separation are the two major elements that differentiate the Canadian and Saudi Arabian education systems. The education system in Saudi Arabia is built around the religious belief. Thus, being an Islamic country, the religious curricula (Sharia) is the dominant curriculum and must therefore be applied in every school (both private and public). Gender separation is required by the Islamic religion, whereby females and males are separated in all institutions. Females have their own educational governing authority which is being overseen by the General Presidency for Girls' Education (GPGE) and males also have their own as well. The main reason why the government insists on this is because of the need for every citizen to understand Islam in a manner that is correct and comprehensive. The application of Islamic religion in the Saudi Arabian Educational system is meant to ensure that every student understands the religion in terms of the Shariah law. The Ministry of Education

also mandates the study of Arabic language at all levels in both public and private schools.

Religious education is written into the law of the Kingdom. Furthermore, the education system in

Saudi Arabia is free for all Saudi citizens from Kindergarten to Grade 12. However, private

schools are run by their respective owners, but remain under the supervision of the Ministry of

Education. (UNESCO, 2011).

Conversely, in BC, Canada, the case is very different as religious education is not taught

in public schools, although private religious schools are available, however, they do receive

partial funding from the government. In Canada, the teaching and practice of religion is

guaranteed in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms and students with religious requirements are

treated equally under the law. The education system in Canada allows the right to religious

schools in several provinces (Ontario and Quebec among others, enshrined in the British North

America Act of 1867) and is protected under the constitution (Canadian Charter of Rights and

Freedoms, s. 29). In addition, the system is different from province to province and under the

governance of the Ministry of Education in respective provinces. Students in Canada, unlike in

Saudi Arabia, have a choice of what to study as the years' progress, and are given no restriction

with regards to choosing their majors in high school.

Psychological/Emotional Learning Environment

Even though school culture can be shaped and nurtured by the leadership styles of the

administrator (Martin, 2009), the school climate on the other hand was found to be directly

related to the academic achievement of students at many levels and is considered as being more

than an individual experience. It has been construed as a group phenomenon that is larger than

any one person's experience (Cohen et al, 2009). Cohen and his team of researchers maintained

that "School climate, or the character of the school, refers to spheres of school life (e.g., safety,

relationships, teaching and learning, the environment) and larger organizational patterns"
(p.182). Consequently, the Saudi Arabian Ministry of Education has sought to introduce modern
educational trends to develop schools and improve learning environments as well as providing
the material and requirements that help students. Despite these efforts, research has found that
most educators still lack the necessary skills needed to promote the highest learning outcomes
and have noted that:

> "Since school culture can affect student achievement, it is imperative that
> principals are aware of the level of influence that they have in shaping the culture of the
> school so they can be more equipped to lead their schools to becoming thriving and
> productive organizations" (Martin, 2009, p.18).

The Saudi Arabian school system promotes poor social skills, due to the lack of interaction
between the school administration, teachers, and students (Hindi, 2011). In general, the school
environment does not give students a chance to participate, cooperate and innovate in order to
feel a sense of belonging to the school (Hassan, 1999). The result of this lack of engagement is
sometimes seen in behavioural problems. For instance, when students, especially in the high
school grades (eighth to tenth grade), are not able to solve basic academic or social issues, there
is a tendency to withdraw from academic engagement (Eric & Banatao, 2011). These
disengagement tendencies are usually demonstrated through behaviours such as absenteeism,
smoking, and assault. Conversely, E'oissat's study of factors influencing the learning
environment, found that the overall environment is a general atmosphere that inspires an
employee's feeling of belonging to it with the presence of competition, initiative and motivation
(2006).

In British Columbia, Canada, the psychological learning environment includes classroom and school contexts and identifies various aspects which are dependent on each other. Classroom life quality is important to the students. Creation of an atmosphere where diversity and individual differences are embraced will contribute to the resilience and success of the students. A good emotional environment will promote academic learning. Positive relationships in the classroom will contribute to better results among students. It is believed that students will find it challenging to get involved in activities within the classroom if they are isolated. Behaviors like praising a student will encourage other students to participate in classroom activities and this will in the long-run lead to improved academic performance (Baranek, 1996). Such interactions will also ensure close relationships between teachers and students, However classrooms that have a poor relationship between teachers and students will lead to bullying and teasing of the praised student.

Teacher communities are important in the composition of the psychological environment. The practices and norms found in a particular professional community will enable teachers to share teaching strategies (Graetz, 2006. p. 66).Within the learning community teachers assume that knowledge is gained through critical reflection with others with the same experience (Watkins, 2005). The way in which teachers talk together about the capacities and abilities of students to learn will determine how teachers will teach in the classrooms (Marble, Finley, & Ferguson, 2000). Additionally, Leithwood and McAdie identified that "working conditions for the teachers relates directly to the learning conditions for students" (2007, p.43). Furthermore, the context of school is another important component of the emotional environment. This is where students' learning abilities are shaped by messages they received from authority structures and values stressed in everyday operations in the school. Such messages will make students

aware of what is valued in the school. It was also found that feeling safe physically in school is also part of the emotional environment and will support successful learning outcomes among students (Bascia, 2014). School leaders and the entire school staff could also contribute to a maintaining a safe learning environment by communicating the behavioural rules clearly and responding to cases of violence and bullying in a timely, consistent and clear manner. Bascia (2014) also found that feeling emotionally safe is important and usually depends on the school's vision to care for the members and appreciate individual differences and diversity.

Students sometimes have to deal with behavioural and emotional challenges which impact the success in their academics and social lives. These emotional problems can be solved by implementing a good emotional learning environment. Bottery (2004) found that by the time a student is in grade 10, 24% of girls and 38% of boys had reported being depressed at least one day in a week (Bottery, 2004). When students are emotionally distressed because they are upset, sad or anxious they will often have problems staying on task in the classroom or even being able to remember what they are taught. (Banatao, 2011). According to Banatao, a good emotional environment should therefore include the following components; self-awareness and self-management. With these components students will be able to recognize their thoughts and emotions and they will be able to assess their limitations and strengths with optimism and confidence. Through self-management they are able to regulate their behaviours, thoughts and emotions effectively, and with this they will work to achieve academic and personal goals (Banatao, 2011).

A good emotional environment for learning can be achieved through good leadership and in the long run ensures a better academic achievement (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008). School leadership will achieve this through its contribution to a school environment that is

positive. A leader would therefore be responsible for articulating and identifying a vision that will inspire students and staff to attain ambitious goals and ultimately pursue learning. It will also ensure that teachers have sufficient resources to help ensure emotional stability when teaching which promote academic achievement. School principals can therefore promote a climate in school that will be favourable to both teachers and students psychologically (Pont, Nusche, & Moorman, 2008).

Physical Learning Environment

The leadership style of school principals was found to positively correlate with the school culture (Martin, 2009; Piotrowsky, 2016; Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). Furthermore, in their study conducted in the United States of America, Cohen et al (2009) reported that strong, clearly defined leadership roles are important considerations toward an effective school climate, policy design, implementation, and evaluation. The importance of the physical environment for learning in regards to learning outcomes has had little research and most of the studies have focused on the learning of young people and children. However, the physical learning environment was found to greatly influence the learning outcomes (Brooks, 2010). This was established by a study conducted by Brooks in 2010, which compared the learning outcomes of students in a learning environment that was active and those who studied in a learning environment that was conventional. For the students who were in the learning environment that was active, there was an improvement of learning results beyond even their capabilities. There are various constituents of a physical environment in learning and each of them has significant impact. They include size of room either small or large, shape of the classroom, seating in regards to whether students sit close or far away from the teacher, the furniture, technology, lighting in the classroom whether it is of low or high intensity, thermal conditions, colors and noise levels (Brooks, 2010).

The furniture and room shape have an impact on the way students can experience the relationship with teachers (Lei, 2010). For instance, in classrooms that are long, teachers have to stand in front of the class. This distance can create classroom management and relationship issues between the teacher and the students. For example, having eye contact with the students may result in students feeling a distant relationship with the teacher. The reverse may also be true, that teachers feel more distant from students. The visual environment will influence how visual stimuli are perceived and the learning that results. Lighting that is dim will relax and calm down the learner while bright lights will promote an approach that is active. Therefore, lights have to be adjusted in accordance with the needs of different teaching methods. It has been determined that colors improve learning efficiency. This is accomplished through its effect on emotions, as well as having a calming effect and increasing interest. Noise levels are also a significant factor in learning. Loud sounds interrupt the ability of students to concentrate and more noise will impede interaction by preventing communication (Lei, 2010). A study was done to evaluate the effect of a sonic environment in learning by comparing a classroom environment that was in a normal school and another one having a public address system (where it has an advance technology and high security system). The regular environment affected listening comprehension and processing speed of information positively. In the favourable environment, students gave more correct answers in response to teacher's questions.

The physical learning environment also impacts the teaching experience of students. In cases where there is a poor physical environment, students tend to be dissatisfied with the teaching quality. There should be more focus on developing better physical environments for learning for better academic achievement. In regards to technology, the technical environment should be developed towards user-friendliness and pedagogy. Teachers and students should be

able to master the technology for it to be effective. New technology can address some of the challenges in learning and teaching activities (Sackney, 2007). The schools physical structure also has to be well maintained and clean as this has been associated with better achievement scores, better attendance, lower disciplinary incidents and a positive attitude among students towards learning.

A school's leadership is responsible for shaping the school structure and conditions of the classroom. This is where school heads play an important role in implementing reforms such as the size of the classroom, technological components, and cleanliness of the physical structures in school among other conditions. By ensuring that the physical environment is appropriate, the school leadership will ensure better academic achievement in schools. This is because it has been proved that a proper physical process in learning is very important in ensuring academic success (Blackmore, Manninen, Cresswell, Fisher, & Ahlefeld, 2013).

Social Learning Environment

The most important component in the social environment of learning is the relationship between students and teachers. A significant amount of literature indicated that a supportive and strong relationship between teachers and students is important for student's development in schools (Leithwood, Louis, Anderson, & Wahlstrom, 2004). Apart from teachers, it has been evident that positive relationships with other stakeholders positively contributed towards the overall success. It is therefore clear that both parental and teacher's support are important in ensuring good academic achievement (Zins, 2000). The basic components in the relationship between students and teachers include; individual features, process of information exchange between the parties and external influences to the relationship. It is necessary to recognize that teachers and students are not isolated in their interaction since they are part of the school

community that can constrain or support positive relationship development. According to Student-Teacher Relationships research, it is evident that there is an association between the quality of the relationship between students and teachers and school climate (Hamre, Pianta, George, &Minke, 2006). Interactions between teachers and students that result in a feeling among students of support from teachers enhance emotional well-being and motivation among them.

Relationships between students and teachers can frequently be enhanced by teachers engaging students in social conversations. Talking to them concerning life outside school is one means where teachers display appreciation and interest for students. To achieve this, teachers can ask them about their experience in the other classes, as well as activities that they do after school. An indication of interest by the teachers is important which can be accomplished by asking questions and listening to students. The conversations are most effective when done in fun activities like playing during recess. The relationship can be promoted by being there for those students experiencing a hard time. By having time for them, such students will be open to talk about their challenges. Showing consideration to ideas and perspectives of the students is also important as this will make curriculum meaningful for the students since their concepts are acknowledged. Application of management strategies that reflect caring and expectations for behavior is important for fostering better relationships by providing limits that will regulate the behavior of students, will promote the idea that the response by teachers will be fair, and there will be creation of opportunity to give positive feedback to students in regards to their behaviour.

Schools should offer caring relationships to the students. This will ensure provision of constructive feedback to the students and this will promote healthy growth socially, intellectually and psychologically. This can be ensured by having peer support, collaborative learning and peer

helping in classroom practices. Communities, schools and families can ensure that students are productive, healthy and happy by exhibiting resilience and acquiring personal strengths. Resilient students will be able to appreciate learning, notice encouragement and care by the teachers and other adults and will have better relationships with the ones around them (Cefai, 2008). A good social environment in learning will be able to instil such values as social awareness which is the ability to empathize and take perspective for those from diverse cultures and backgrounds as well as an understanding of ethical and social norms in regards to behaviour. It will also promote relationship skills where one can establish and maintain a rewarding and healthy relationship with diverse groups and individuals. Decision-making that is responsible will be enhanced where one can make respectful and constructive choices concerning social interactions and personal behaviour.

School leadership also, is important in ensuring a good social environment in learning by empowering other stakeholders to make decisions that are significant like giving more opportunity to community stakeholders. It also provides guidance so as to improve learning among students by bringing a sense of community to the school climate. The bonds between teachers and students will be important in motivating and engaging students. The outcome is better academic achievement among students.

In both educational and organizational studies, consistent studies highlighted that a successful and thriving institution can only be sustainable in a positive work climate. MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009) had reiterated the powerful impacts of a school's climate on student performance. They argue that since the principal of a school directly impacts the climate and culture of a school, it is therefore logical to assess the specific characteristics of a school climate that the principal should focus on to improve student performance. Thus, in measuring the

organizational health of an institution, climate has proven to be the most preferable construct. Research undertaken by Peterson (2002) also found out that schools with the best climate out-performed others. In addition, they established that the transformation normally developed in a top down manner underscoring the role of the principal in influencing positive student performance in such schools.

There is an evident relationship between the role of a principal in influencing a positive relationship with a school's employees, a positive school climate and student's performance. Hsin-Hsiange and Mao-neng (2015) illustrated that this correlation is as a result of adaptation, which is another dimension of a school's climate. They defined adaptation as the ability to tolerate stress and also ensure stability, while also being responsive to the demands arising from the environment. Consequently, school principals should strive to become caretakers of the environment and encourage the spirit of working together to lessen a school's tasks. Furthermore, principals should enable students view themselves as the real citizens of the institution and the ones more susceptible to suffer in a negative climate. Consequently, this leads to the development of a positive school climate that encourages student performance.

Collaboration among staff members has also been identified to encourage a positive climate and thus translating into higher student achievement. In a study to establish how existence of a positive school climate influenced the achievements of a student, Velasco, Edmonson and Slate (2012) reported that one of the evident characteristic in a school was collaboration. The more collaborative the school employees were the better the climate, which consequently translated into higher student performance. Collaborations have been identified as great mechanisms for instructional improvement based on their ability to produce positive relationships, high levels of achievements and psychologically healthy individuals. Cobb (2014)

identified that in institutions where teachers worked collaboratively, students may be able to sense the coherence of the program and the expectations required of them.

Additionally, Spicer (2016) found that collaborative approaches ensured access to relevant information, allowed development of alternative perspectives, facilitated growth and led to the development of a culture that supported growth. Consistent results were also reflected in a study conducted by Tatlah, Amin and Quraishi (2014) where the scholars concluded that in schools that fostered collaboration, teachers got smarter through formal and informal training; the faculty became more adaptable and teachers increased their pool of ideas from working together. This led to the development of a climate that was conducive for learning and one that instilled a sense of oneness among students, thus translating to improved student performance.

Spicer (2016) and Tatlah, Amin and Quraishi (2014) however advised that a school's focus should be on building a collaborative and positive climate and not student performance. By focusing on student's achievement in test scores, and ignoring the development of a positive climate, student performance is prone to suffer. School employees that share the same beliefs and values are able to strengthen their collaborations, and consequently enhance their teaching strategies and job satisfaction. In retrospect, this allows students to experience greater levels of success.

According to Peterson (2002), school culture comprised of the set of rituals, symbols, stories, norms, beliefs and values that make up the "persona" of the school. Historically, organizational culture has been defined and influenced by symbols like history, heroes, stories, rituals, traditions and different ceremonies. The cultural network, therefore, is the informal and primary means of communication within an organization that ensures things get done and individuals are able to comprehend what is going on. It provides opportunities for the

organization to show that they care, henceforth creating a spirit of cooperation.

As postulated by Velasco, Edmonson and Slate (2012), culture can be viewed from two broad categories that include content and form. The content of the teacher's culture can be observed from what they do, say and think based on their shared values, assumptions and beliefs. Conversely, the form of a teacher's culture deals with his pattern of relationships among different members of the academic community. Between the two forms of culture, Vislocky (2005) believed that the latter is the more relevant because it is associated with changes in relationships which could influence the beliefs, assumptions and values in an educational environment.

Spicer (2016) differentiates between strong and weak school cultures. He states that in weak school cultures, loyalties are often divided; with employees devising ever evolving ways to resist the implementation of new ideas. Pessimistic storytellers can dampen enthusiasm, with most staff members being unaware of the school's overall goals (p. 10). Since staff employees were not open to professional learning opportunities, the chances of student learning were decreased substantially (p. 11). Furthermore, studies from a number of scholars have evidenced that healthy and sound school cultures correlated highly with increased student performance when coupled with teacher satisfaction (Peterson, 2002; Spicer, 2016; Tatlah, Amin, & Quraishi, 2014). These scholars consistently reiterated that strong cultures are able to guide the behaviors of school members through providing informal rules that identify and define how members should behave. In addition, MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009) underlined that strong cultures also bind members to the institution by enabling them to feel better about what they have contributed. Therefore, it is evident that a school's culture plays a monumental role in influencing the performance of both students and teachers.

In a survey conducted by Leslie and Martin (1990) five dimensions of school cultures

were considered, including the school community, recognition for achievement, academic challenges, comparative advantage and perception of school goals. In another study by Jerry and William (1992) they identified that creating a new mission statement as well as alignment of goals toward student outcomes and improved performance resulted in significant improvement in student achievement. The professional development of staff was essential in achieving this outcome.

Mission and purpose of a school have also been identified as being at the center of a school's culture. According to Stolp (1994), a mission instills intangible forces throughout the school that motivates students to learn, teachers to teach and leaders to lead. Further, the environment that a school operates under also influences its culture. Values and beliefs, which are the basic concepts that are held by an institution and transmitted through stories, represent foundational understandings of the school (Snowden & Gorton, 2002).

Heroes and heroic stories that are part of a school also personify its cultural values, in addition to providing role models that employees and students could follow. Vislocky (2005) identified that organizations with many heroes, either born or "made up," had a strong culture that reverberated throughout the school environment. Success stories from such employee and student heroes act as sources for motivation, positively reinforcing the types of accomplishments that the school would wish all staff and students alike to aim for (Gruenert, 2008). Such heroic stories, therefore, reinforce culture and deeply communicate the values that are held by students, teachers and the school's management.

Further, ceremonies and rituals also shape a school's culture. According to Leithwood and Riehl, (2003) such rituals are the programmed routines of everyday life that show students and employees the type of behavior that was expected of them. Further, the author highlighted

that such ceremonies also provided visible illustrations of what builds ties and aid groups to stay connected to their key values. Symbols, comprised of events, art or objects, are also fundamental in a school through conveying meaning and representing something else. Examples of artifacts found in a school include mission statement, banners that convey values and display past achievements like trophies. As observed by Spicer (2016), symbols are integral in reinforcing culture through signaling what is important, forging pride in schools and providing messages that have deeper purposes.

The Link Between School Culture and Climate

The Culture of a school can be defined as "a complex pattern of norms, attitudes, beliefs, behaviors, values, ceremonies, traditions, and myths that are deeply ingrained in the very core of the organization" (Barth, 2002, p. 7) which has the ability to influence every other aspect of the academic environment, including instruction, student achievement, and professional development as reported by Hamilton & Richardson, (1995). Conversely, Spiro (2013) believed that a good school leader should be focused on how to build, maintain and nurture a positive school so as to accomplish the school's vision. It is therefore expected that school principals work within the confines of the unique culture and values of their schools. This on the other hand implied that greater emphasis should be placed on building relationships with all the stakeholders of the school (Sergiovanni, 2000).

Fyans and Martin (1990) have reiterated that the difference between school culture and climate is small, and therefore does not require further scholarly inquiry. However, other scholars like MacNeil, Prater and Busch (2009) and Gruenert (2008) pointed out that even though the distinction between the two concepts is small, it is nonetheless meaningful and critical. This is because shared perceptions of behavior can be readily measured efficiently compared to shared

values. Furthermore, since culture is more descriptive, less symbolic and therefore has more abstractions, climate was observed to present fewer problems in relation to empirical measurements.

Principal's Influence on the Climate and Culture

In her dissertation presented in the Spring of 2016, Felicia Spicer noted that the administrator of a school is responsible for developing a positive school climate. She went further to state in the findings of her research that "both District A and District B also believe that the principal of a school has a prominent impact on the development of a positive school climate" (Spicer, 2016, p.84). These findings showed that it has been well established by scholars that leadership plays a significant part in the creation of effective schools (Snowden & Gorton, 2002; Hsin-Hsiange & Mao-neng, 2015; MacNeil, Prater, & Busch, 2009). A good principal should aim to shape the school's climate in a manner that the vision of the school can be achieved. In addition, such successful school leaders are also able to create a culture that encourages and promotes learning, which is essential in improving student outcomes. They should always strive to develop a shared vision that is founded on history, beliefs and values of what the school ought to be. Gruenert (2008) further stressed the indirect effects of principal leadership on student performance. This scholar highlighted that educational leadership is congruent to the culture and organization of a school, which consequently is related to student performance.

Understand and Strengthen School Culture

The ability of a school principal to diagnose a school's climate in order to maximize current leadership strengths and identify areas of improvements is also paramount in perfecting a positive learning environment. As noted by MacNeil, Prater, and Busch (2009), a symbolic

leader is one who is able to comprehend and shape the school's culture. Such a leader also creates a culture that encourages and influences learning with the final goal of improving the performances of students. By adopting a holistic perspective when viewing the school's environment, such principals are able to develop a broader framework for comprehending the complex relationships and most pressing challenges within the school (Snowden & Gorton, 2002). Furthermore, Fullan (2001) asserted that deepening their understanding of the school's climate and culture enables principals to be better equipped in shaping the attitudes and beliefs critical for improving student performance.

Building Relationships

According to Peterson (2002), an aspect of the school climate that principals should focus on is the power of the relationships between students and staff. This was found to have contributed towards influencing the character of an institution and enhancing the quality of school life. Peterson argued that school leaders who are able to build relationships with teachers and also interact with other employees possess the core elements for developing a positive school culture. They should lead by example and strive to build trust, shared values and a shared vision, which allows relationships among teachers to improve. Consequently, teachers become more satisfied with their jobs and are more willing to create a positive working environment (Kosciw, Palmer, & Greytak, 2013). Further, by encouraging the development of relationships, teachers are able to acquire numerous opportunities to know each other, which then allow the creation of open and trusting environments.

Acting as Role Models

Spicer (2016) in his research found that effective school leaders are the ones that served as role models. Such leaders are those that were able to symbolize a group's unity and its unique

identity through retelling stories that advocated a shared meaning. Further, they also spent a majority of their time communicating the school's philosophy to staff and faculty members, in addition to maintaining autonomy and control. Velasco, Edmonson, and Slate (2012) tabled their research findings which underlined that good school principals should be able to recognize the achievements of their staff members regularly, thereby enabling the creation of strong bonds among members. Consequently, the development of such bonds between different groups in the school community increased the level of productivity, which translated to increased student performances.

Shared Governance

Transformational school principals have also been evidenced to influence the development of a culture that promotes shared governance (Hsin-Hsiange & Mao-neng, 2015). This kind of leadership has been found to be correlated to the leader's efficiency and employee satisfaction (Deluga, 1988) as well as being directly linked to the culture and staff commitment of any organization (Piotrowsky, M. J, 2016). Through sharing governance, such leaders allowed professional autonomy, utilized proactive strategies, demonstrated integrity, created opportunities for professional development and involved all groups in school-wide decision-making. Hence, transformational leaders have been portrayed as possessing the potential to influence their employees' perceptions through their involvement in the construction of the organizational culture as well as encouraging communication among employees (Birasnav, Rangnekar, and Dalpati, 2011). Such actions were evidenced to make teachers feel more satisfied, confident and instilled a level of motivation (Leithwood, Louis, & Knapp, 2012).

Consequently, teachers and other faculty members felt the urge to work harder and thus influence a positive working climate and school culture. Furthermore, Tatlah, Amin, and

Quraishi (2014) found out that by utilizing a shared form of governance, school leaders first considered themselves academic leaders, invested heavily in instructional matters and saw teachers also as leaders.

Symbolic Leadership

Educational research has also strongly supported the notion that the leadership style of a school leader directly impacts the culture of a school (Leithwood & Beatty, 2008). The leadership style of a school principal is an important factor in the team success, due to its positive or negative impact on teachers' satisfaction, commitment, motivation, quality and level of performance which indirectly affects students' achievements (Fullan, 2001). The study found that the administrators' behavior acted as symbols which were vital in influencing and shaping the culture of the school. Hsin-Hsiange and Mao-neng (2015) found that a principal aided the culture of the school institution with eight key symbolic roles that include: Symbol; visionary; historian; poet; anthropological sleuth; healer; potter and actor. As a historian, the leader must seek to comprehend the school's normative and social past. This was achieved through keeping track of significant events in the past and present and the construction of a timeline of key players and events. This was necessary as glancing back at the institutional tragedies and triumphs enabled them to have a clear vision of the future. As an anthropological sleuth, the leader analyzed current sets of norms, beliefs and values that defined the existing culture (Fyans & Martin, 1990). This could be achieved through listening to daily conversations throughout the school and being able to interpret the daily activities.

As a visionary leader, the principal defined the systems of language and beliefs that provided the organization with focus. This was achieved by constantly refocusing and refining the school's mission and purpose statement, shared hope, goals and expectations of the

institution. A shared vision among the school motivated students, the community and staff at large (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). As potters, the principals were able to shape the culture of the school by infusing shared beliefs and values into the school's culture, observing rituals as a mechanism to construct and maintain the spirit of the community and celebrating heroes through recognizing outstanding service. As poets, principals communicated with languages and words that conveyed powerful meaning. Such leaders perceived schools as theatres and themselves as actors. Therefore, the school community expected the theatre to be entertaining, expressing appropriate values and be meaningfully challenging. As a healer, the principal eased transitions, managed changes and helped the school community adapt to the environment (Spicer, 2016).

Rewards

Research has shown that a school principal's value system which is defined by his beliefs and rules used in making decisions and resolving conflicts (Sahm, 2004) affects his leadership styles (Abu-Hussain, 2014). Studies also suggested that values influenced both realistic and hypothetical behaviors (Sergiovanni, 2002; Feather, 1995). Additionally, consistent findings from Spicer (2016) and Hsin-Hsiange and Mao-neng (2015) underlined that successful principals also utilized rewards to influence a positive learning environment. Through rewards, school principals facilitated the empowerment of teachers, which led to higher levels of satisfaction and motivated teachers to work harder. The most common rewards that good leaders utilized included positive comments, awards, written notes and certificates. Furthermore, Peterson (2002) documented that good principals acknowledged special successes, acknowledged work done beyond one's duties also recognized the day-to-day challenges. Teachers also reported that such praises and rewards acts as motivational factors and boasts their self-esteem. However, Kosciw, Palmer and Greytak (2013) warned that rewards that were accompanied by increased professional expectations were

harmful to developing a positive learning environment. The author recommends that in order to maximize the benefits arising from rewards, principals should only relate rewards to professional achievement, use numerous avenues of rewards and recognize such works frequently.

Innovation and Autonomy

Another foundational characteristic of successful school leaders is their ability to encourage innovation and autonomy among the teachers. Leadership style was reported to impact the ability of the school to cope with changes happening around the school environment (Southworth, 2004). The leadership style of a school leader is also found to affect teacher satisfaction both directly and indirectly through their perceptions of their role (Bogler, 2001). It is equally thought that school leaders influence the nature of thought and teachers' feelings regarding the extent of autonomy they feel in their work. A study conducted among Israeli teachers in Israeli public schools (Rasha, 2008) showed that the support which the teachers receive from the principal and their (teachers') participation in decision-making and in determining school policy contributed to a sense of more freedom and initiative in their work.

According to Velasco, Edmonson, and Slate (2012), autonomy refers to the level of freedom that teachers have in relation to determining their work process, while innovation refers to the implementation of experimental or new content in classrooms. By developing a shared governance approach, principals are able to encourage the use of new teaching programs, and thus display learning as a priority. This also encouraged the development of an innovative school culture that enhances creativity and the ability to reflect. In addition, Snowden and Gorton (2002) identified that autonomy and innovativeness could be promoted through setting higher expectation, use of proactive strategies and demonstrating dedication to improvement.

Community Participation

Successful leaders are also able to involve parents and the entire school community in order to enhance a school's climate. According to Cobb (2014) important learning occurred within the school as well as within the school community. A good principal should aim to build a positive school climate by capturing various opportunities for innovations, and allowing the school to play a key role in the improvement of the community. By building a community, parents, students and teachers acquire a sense of pride and ownership in the institution. As a result, this builds an open mind and empathy which allows principals to make efficient choices for the school at large. Furthermore, Gruenert (2008) opined that good school principals should engage other representatives from the school's environment, including government and business liaisons. According to him, these stakeholders will then be able to pursue positive interactions with the goal of establishing healthy inter-organizational relationships, fostering shared meanings and for garnering support and resources. Consequently, this will effectively position the school within the environment also ensure that legitimate concerns from parents are responded to efficiently (Bulach & Malone, 1994; Tatlah, Amin, & Quraishi, 2014).

Professional Development

Another powerful element for successful school leadership which has been well recognized in perfecting a school's climate and culture for a positive learning environment is encouraging professional development. Snowden and Gorton (2002) reiterated that professional development is a critical element for a successful school reform process. They argued that staff development would improve both classroom instruction and influence the growth of teachers. The scholars recommended that school principals should adopt a culture-centered approach towards professional development at the expense of individual growth. Hsin-Hsiange and Mao-

neng (2015) also reiterated that a culture-centered professional growth encourages teamwork, which allows the development of a collaborative community, a sense of fulfillment and greater productivity levels.

As has been noted, it is evident that student achievement, which is the ultimate goal of every academic institution, is directly related to the school's climate and culture. Consequently, it should be the priority of every school principal to ensure the development of a positive school climate and culture that is able to influence positive student performance. Among the various elements of leadership that principals should adopt include understanding and strengthening the current culture, building strong relationships among different groups, acting as good role models, encouraging professional development and engaging the community. By adopting a holistic perspective when viewing the school's environment, good administrators are able to develop a broader framework for comprehending the complex relationships and solve the most pressing challenges within the school. Such form of leadership would create a culture that encourages learning with the final goal of improving students' performance.

Chapter Three: Methodology

Research Methodology

A Narrative Inquiry Approach to research was utilized in this study. According to Clandinin and Connelly in their book "*Narrative Inquiry: Experience and Story in Qualitative Research*", narrative inquiry was described as a term that captured personal and human dimensions of experience over time. The authors opined that it takes account of the relationship between individual experience and cultural context (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000). This approach was applied because it builds on the structure of narrative knowing so that the "stories" of the administrators lived experiences, not merely a collection and gathering of data, looked closely at the essence of the administrator's professional school life, locating the themes that point in the direction of their pedagogic practice of leadership toward a positive learning environment. "Narrative inquiry is a means by which we systematically gather, analyze, and represent people's stories as told by them, which challenges traditional and modernist views of truth, reality, knowledge and personhood." (ibid, 2000, p.3)

This research methodology is framed by "storying" described by Dr. Janette Margaret Vallance in her Introduction to Lim- Alparaque's (2013) book "Storying: A child's articulation of experience through imagination" as something of a "double story" (p.3)...Vallance observes: "On the wider context, Lim – Alparaque told us something of a "double story" that is her story of the child telling the story". Her story gave us a view from the perspective inspired by a phenomenological – pedagogic approach to research so that a rendering of methodology is not described in a "how to" prescriptive manual.

Thus, as Clandinin and Connelly (2000) pointedly described we gather and listen to the co researcher participants because their stories brought forward:

a) "Subjective meanings and sense of self and identity are negotiated as the stories unfold

b) ...bearing in mind that stories are reconstructions of the person's experiences

c) … remembered and told at a particular point in their lives, to a particular researcher/audience and for a particular purpose.

d) This all has a bearing on how the stories are told, which stories are told and how they are presented/interpreted.

e) They do not represent 'life as lived' but our re-presentations of those lives as told to us." (p.43)

Being focused on the "stories" of Saudi administrators and BC administrators these co-research participants participated in conversational interviews with the researcher, as together they explored and probed deeper into the essence of the lived experience of educational leadership and its impact on the learning environment. Our conversational interviews were open ended "story-telling and listening.

Evoking the meanings from the "stories" of the administrators, the researcher helped to reconstruct their experiences and weaved a text of their narrative knowledge and understandings, of their sense – making of episodes, encounters, and experiences with students, teachers, parents and other significant partners participating in the learning environment. These "storying" moments gave shape and structure to the administrators' lived – experience revealing the perspectives, the intentions, patterns, themes, cultural contexts that guide them in their leadership working for the well-being of their respective learning environment.

This research followed a communicative pattern that illustrates the multifarious paths of their storying – thereby highlighting a clear view onto a realistic perspective (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000).

This research was quite challenging. The researcher worked closely with the research participants and checked back with them to analyse the veracity of the transcripts on the reflective analysis. The researcher also did a critical analysis of their stories, making sure that the narratives of their experiences are communicated clearly and with integrity. The integrity of the researchers' narrative analyses demands "…a sense of experience in its depth, messiness, richness and texture, by using the actual words spoken." (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p. 45) and describing in her own words the wider layer of the dialogue and conversation that shaped the administrators' stories.

The Narrative Inquiry approach required "Trust and openness, high levels of ethical and critical engagement; mutual and sincere collaboration, over time among the research participants in their relationship" (Clandinin and Connelly, 2000, p.46). This narrative inquiry approach offered a strong methodological structure from which the researcher examined and explored the narrative lives of the KSA and Canadian B.C administrators and their impact on the well-being of their learning environment. It is a firm framework that rigorously draws attention to the multiple realties of the administrators' terrain of leadership influenced by their cultural ways, their pursuits of teaching – learning goals for their students, teachers and significant community connections.

The utmost interest was in probing in depth the nature of the lived experience of administrators from the cultural contexts of the KSA administrator and the Canadian (BC) school principals so that we may find insights into its impact on the well-being of learning environments. The co - research participants invited to my research study are:

- KSA1 - School Principal of a High School from Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

- KSA2 – Principal of a High School, Jeddah, Saudi Arabia

- KSA3 – Principal of a Secondary School in Riyadh Saudi Arabia

- KSA4 – Principal of a High School in Saudi Arabia

- BC1- High School Principal, Vancouver, BC

- BC2 – Secondary School Principal, Vancouver, BC

- BC3 – Secondary School Principal, Vancouver, BC

- BC4 – High School Principal, Vancouver, BC

(Where SD1 represents Saudi Principal number one and BC1 stands for BC principal number one respectively). The name of their school is also not indicated for privacy reasons.

Dialogic and conversational Interviews

This cyclical stage of the research study is the point at which the researcher invited the administrator to share her/his story of the lived experience of educational leadership. It requires at first a "listening" to the administrator as she shares her story and the researcher's gathering of the data needs a dynamic participant observation component.

Discerning the Data

The researcher looked for patterns and / or themes that emerged from the data. "Theme analyses refers to the process of recovering the theme or themes that are embodied and dramatized in the evolving meanings and imagery of the work … phenomenological themes may be understood as structures of experiences" (Van Manen, p78-79, 2016).

There are three areas of the lived – experience that lend itself to a thematic analysis that is reflected by examining critically: Lived – space in how school leaders adjust their own time to know how to create a positive school environment, lived – body where principals could deal with every situations without any distractions, and lived – time when a principals could handle his\her own time to manage inside and outside a school.

Digestion of the narrative themes

This is the culminating expression of the research study. The researcher creates the larger layer of the storying moments of the research participants. At vantage points in the researcher's story at times the spoken stories are quoted so that thematic analyses may be aptly articulated. Insights gleaned from the stories by the administrators offered tentative conclusions with regard to the lived – experience of educational leadership and its impact on two learning environments, the KSA and BC Canada.

The next section of this paper will analyse the data collected, present the results and findings in different formats (including tables and figures) and then discuss the implications of the results in order to draw reasonable conclusion in the subsequent chapter.

Chapter Four: Results and Discussion

Results and Findings

Data analysis. This section of the paper is a presentation of the results obtained from the structured analysis of the responses from individual participants with respect to the interview questions as contained in Appendix A. The data analysis begins with the transcription of the interview responses from the participants. While the responses in Arabic language were transcribed and translated into English by the principal researcher herself, the BC responses were transcribed by a research assistant and cross-checked by the principal researcher.

Generally, the BC administrators who participated in this study reported a wide spectrum (BC4) of day to day responsibilities, implying that no two days are the same (BC2) in their jobs as school leaders. They indicated being responsible for things no one else could do in the school since he/she will bear the blame if it is not done or not done properly:

> *"umm, umm, ok, so basically am responsible for everything, but I do everything, the things that no one else wants to do…" (BC1).*

Furthermore, one of the BC school leaders, gave a very elaborate description of the multifaceted responsibilities of administrators in BC, he stated that:

> *the two things that happen in school, one is the leadership piece and one is the management piece. The management piece I'll start with first, because you have a team of the principal, vice principal, you have the office administration team, you have the department heads who are responsible for each, so from a management perspective, the organization aspect of the school, you oversee those, making sure all little things are in place from finance, you have a finance committee, from the timetable, you have a team that make the timetable, you have the department heads. From a discipline piece, you have vice principal and the principal are responsible for each of different cases, it's a behavioral issue you manage that on that basis. Student safety is a very big part of our job. So making sure that the building is safe, making sure that the practices, the protocols that are in place are both for safety of the students in their operation. Because parents send them to us and during the day, we are the parents, there's a term called in parentis loci (in place of the parents) , so we have to act just as the parents would act in taking*

care of the kids during the day. So it includes, wellbeing, mental wellbeing, physical health wellbeing, so we have supports that do those things and making sure that all the different programs we offer are functioning the way they need to, in terms of the support, the resources that they get, so all the management pieces that make, what we say , how , we say to make, keep the trains running on time, right? If those things don't happen, then the system falls apart, so you have to do the management piece. So that's the one portion, the other portion is the leadership piece, where you are dealing with mentorship, you're mentoring the vice principal, you're supervising the staff in the office. You're observing teachers in their instructional practices, you're coaching, you're developing initiatives, you are doing outreach to the community, to engage the community to try and bring resources into the school, so a lot of those things in terms of intangible. (BC2)

Most of the Saudi Arabian school leaders on the other hand, indicated that their main day to day job as school administrators focused on general supervision of everything and everyone in the school (KSA1, KSA2, KSA3 and KSA4):

"Hum, my duty on a day-to-day basis as a principal include daily supervision of all school staff, preparation of absent and present teachers, supervision of female students, and follow the daily emergency, delay and future instructors" (KSA2).

See Table 1 below for a summary of the day to day duties of the administrators in both BC and KSA.

Table 1: *Day to day duties*

KSA			BC		
KSA1	-	My duty differs on a day-to-day basis. - What I do is a general check	BC1	-	Responsible for everything (everything) that no one else can do) - Like to delegate work to others
KSA2	-	Daily supervision of all school staff	BC2	-	"Management piece" - "Leadership piece"
KSA3	-	Daily supervision and follow-up work	BC3	-	It varies throughout the day
KSA4	-	General supervision	BC4	-	Very wide spectrum of tasks

In terms of supports and barriers for the administrators there were variations on what is

considered supports/barriers along the different jurisdictions. Even though financial support was

a common consideration across the jurisdictional divide, several other factors were noted by

administrators in each country as supports needed to succeed in their duties. While Saudi school

leaders needed more authority to make decisions; adequate tools and technology as well as

having a good physical environment (see Table 3 below); the Canadian principals on the other

hand, needed the support of every stakeholder; good policies and as one principal stated "Time".

This was clearly stated by one of the KSA participants:

> *"The support that I need to as a school leader is the authority to take any decisions that I deems appropriate for the benefit of the school and that these powers are not given to people who do not work in the school and who have no experience of what the school needs or faces, which I think it is unreasonable to give someone an authority to control something that you have no clue about" (KSA2)*

On the other hand, BC2 explained what he considers the greatest support as he stated:

> *"the biggest support is time, there's so many things you need to get done. Resources, you create it, you get resources, that's your job as principal to build collaboration but some things sometimes the time crunch is so challenging"(BC2).*

See Table 2 below for a list of some of the factors reported by the participants as supports

Table 2: *Support needed to succeed as school leaders*

KSA	BC
KSA1: Funds	BC1: Support of every stakeholder
KSA 2: Authority to make decisions	BC2: Time
KSA 3: Power &Authority, Tools and Infrastructure	BC3: Rules
KSA 4: Funds and Authority	BC4: Funds and the Support of all stakeholders

School leaders on both side of the educational aisle acknowledged that the availability or lack

thereof of adequate financial resources could impact their job (see Figure 2 below), money seems

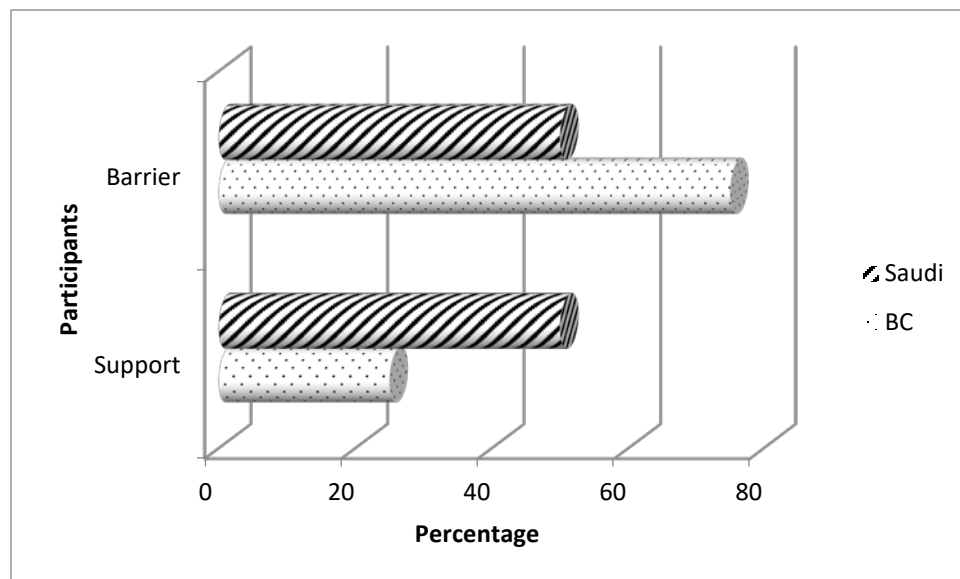to be of more concern to the BC participants than their Saudi Arabian counterparts.

Figure 2: *Percentage of participants who identified availability or lack of funds as a Support or Barrier*

Similarly, there were divergent views from both sides on what could be considered a

barrier toward successful running of schools. British Columbian school leaders identified a lack

of human resources; not having a "*good team*"; politics and bureaucracy as factors that can

impede the discharge of their leadership duties. The Saudis on the other hand looked at poor

infrastructure and unhelpful regulation as factors that hindered their ability to perform their

duties on occasion. For example, KSA4 pointed out clearly what factors she considers as

barriers, when she stated that:

> *"Too many burdens and a few assistants, there are a lot of responsibilities, for example, before the beginning of the academic year. There are 40 items that must be ready and I cannot work on them alone. Also, monthly salary completely equal with some regular teachers and this is not fair, as School leader I deserved to get recompense paid for my work as a school leader in terms of my administration of the school and in terms of the risk I might face" (KSA4).*

For his part BC3 said:

> *"Well there are limited resources, staffing and with money, and so part of it sometimes is a challenge is how to figure out how to make more things work with less resources, but we make it work" (BC3)*

Furthermore, school leaders from both jurisdictions identified that lack of, or inadequate/poor physical space had an impact on the ability to perform (see Table 3).

Table 3: *Barriers*

BC	KSA
Financial resources	Shortage in budget or lack of adequate funds
Lack of Human resources	Lots of responsibilities
Not having a good team	Poor infrastructure
Too many politics involved	Unhelpful regulations
Bureaucratic concerns	Low salary
Poor physical space	Poor physical space

School leaders within these two jurisdictions and within their years of experiences reportedly encountered different kinds of difficulties but interestingly, administrators in both locations identified that dealing with parents could be a difficult undertaking.

"Uh there are so many difficulties. There are some dilemmas in my school regarding lack of staff and administrators, and the large number of students and samples I have 75.5% of foreign students and Saudis approximately 24.5%. Dealing with foreign students is different from dealing with a Saudi student; these are difficulties within the school" *(KSA4).*

On the BC part, here is what one of the participants said about the difficulties faced:

"Sometimes the requirements of working in a large bureaucracy become frustrating in the sense that there's often agreements that are made between governments and unions that don't really make sense, they don't really, the sorts of things they appear to be well intentioned, but when it really comes down to it, it takes common sense away and sometimes what's in the best interest of students is forgotten. That's very frustrating. And I think there's been a download of responsibilities on school based administrators that's quite intense in British Columbia, and Vancouver particularly over the last number of years" *(BC4).*

See Table 4 below for an overview of what the school leaders reported as the difficulties they faced.

Table 4*: Difficulties experienced by the school administrators in British Columbia and Saudi Arabia respectively*

BC	KSA
Lack of funding and inadequate resources	Limited authority
Dealing with unreasonable parents	Dealing with parents and staff
Understanding the local community	
Bureaucratic requirements sometimes being frustrating	Inadequate number of staff
Starting in a new location and having to learn the culture of the new location	Getting new students to be aware of the new educational system introduced in Saudi Arabia
Managing expectations	

Results from the interviews showed that about half of the participants in BC reported that the socio-economic structure of the local environment has an impact on the smooth running of the school. However, the numbers were higher for the Saudis where almost 100% of the participants indicated that the social/societal structures in their country means that both parents and students behave in ways that impede the way they do their duties. For example, some principals from BC have a compressive description of how the socio-economic and environment factors could influence their work:

> *"Yeah… am lucky I had worked in 6 different schools so I see different geographic areas of the city, each one has a culture, each school has a culture by virtue of the teachers there but also by virtue of the socio-economic environment around there. So a school located in (inaudible) with a different kind of family, a different type of social capital and cultural and economic capital would be very different from a school in Windemere or in Eastside or … So the environment in which the families creates homes for the kids detects what the kids bring to school in terms of their emotional or even their social wellbeing, economic wellbeing, detects a lot of, the types of support structure that we may have to put in place. It also dictates how the parents interact with us, parents from a higher social-economic background from more educated family may deal with the school in a very different way than somebody who is coming from the Eastside of Vancouver, who has an average, you know, good blue collared job or not working in a high position but working in a family environment that is very caring, very cultural, vey enriched. Sometimes it depends, you have to understand the demographics of your community and that dictates a lot of how we deal with things, for example in one of my last schools, we had an influx of Syrian refugees and we had to, the school had to figure out, what is it that these kids because only what we see on TV doesn't tell the who story, right? We have to figure out okay, and then the teachers have to come together and say, oh , this is what we're starting to see and this is what we're encountering may be we have to hire the supports in place for that, then we have the kids who are coming from another part of the world as refugees, from Africa, we had kids coming from Vietnam. Each brings cultural baggage with them" (BC2).*

Secondly another BC participant stated:

> *"Oh it's a very inclusive social system and that's the part that's probably the best part, because everyone works hard to build a shared vision where everyone is valued and respected and that they are able to go about their learning, that there's equal opportunity for everyone, which in the best of all worlds, is a mirror of the world at large"(BC3).*

School administrators from Saudi Arabia reported a different perspective with regards to the influence of the social structure on their duties, for example:

> *"Oh there are a lot of embarrassments and compliments. Unfortunately Saudi society measures the diligence of the student to the extent of relations between a student and the teacher, and it is not measured on the general personal diligence of the student in terms of school performance. Some students can get higher grades if there is a good relationship between the student and the teacher. Administrative handling is a bit difficult Suppose that there is a neglected teacher in terms of absence and inefficiency of classroom performance….The problem is that some teachers do not separate their personal relationships from the practical relationships within the school which cause a lot of problems."(KSA4).*

Another participant for Saudi Arabia stated that:

> *"Uh, sometimes yeah, our school is in a neighbourhood of high and middle class, so when a rich student does not like certain rule she might drag her friends not to attend the school or might ask her parents not to and I got questions about that conduct, and it effect the school itself. However, we do make some activities and workshop to spread the awareness about school. Also, as a school principal I have to understand each level in my school and I have to be aware of parents demand and students need as well" (KSA 2).*

Table 5: *Influence of the Social Structure on Educational Leadership*

BC	KSA
	KSA 1: Some families do not really care about their children
BC2: - Culture of the school, socio-economic environment are very important factors	KSA 2: the social structure leads students to behave in ways that affects the smooth running of the school
BC3: - It's an inclusive system where everyone works hard to build a shared vision - Everyone is respected - There's equal opportunity for everyone	KSA3: the outside community still thinks the school should only educate and nothing else
BC4: - The social demographics plays a major role - Different views, different perspectives	KSA4: Some teachers do not separate their personal relationship with the practical relationship

As seen in Table 5 above, relationships with teachers is an area where administrators from both jurisdictions reported that maintaining a positive, respectful relationship with the

teachers was a vital tool towards successful running of schools. All of the participants saw this

as either being very helpful or as a support. To put this in the words of one of the participants:

> "*For me I can describe it as an amazing relationship that's full of respectful and love. I always tell my teachers that we are a family who live in the same house and share everything together, and if there is a teacher who has to take off from one class and there is no one to cover his shift usually I do that myself, to build trust and the spirit of cooperation.*"(KSA1)

On the other hand, when asked by the researcher how his kind of relationship with the teaching

staff supports him in doing his job, here is what one of the participants said;

> "*Oh, that's very important, you can't get people along the pathway if they don't know where the pathway is, they can't go see that pathway unless they walk by your side and you can't get them to walk by your side and hold your hand if there's no trust. Right, so how do you get somebody to hold your hand, figuratively, how do you get that? It's to build that relationship to show that when they want something you're gonna deliver and when you want something they need to deliver, right, so it's mutual*" (BC2).

Table 6: *Relationship between administrators and teachers*

Relationship with teaching staff	
BC	**KSA**
BC1: - Positive - Respectful/professional - Friendly - It is a support	SD1: - An amazing relationship full of respect and love. - This is very helpful
BC2: - Excellent - Respectful - Mutual - Very important - It is a support	SD2: - Respectful - Positive - It is a support
BC3: - Collaborative relationship - Trust - It is a support	SD3: - Respectful and flexibility of common interest - It is helpful - I love it
BC4: - Good - Trust - It is a support	SD4: - Friendly - Positive - It is helpful

Even though educational laws within these two jurisdictions differ, administrators in both sides of the divide reported that they derive some sort of support from the laws that govern their affairs in their respective jurisdiction See Table 7 below:

Table 7: *Aspects of education laws that support school leaders*

Aspects of education law that supports school administrators	
BC	**KSA**
BC1: - The BC School Act - The collective agreement	SD1: - The procedural and Organizational Guide
BC2: - The BC School Act (s.85) - The Ministry of Children and Family Development - The Criminal Code	SD2: - The Behavior and attendance rules
	SD3: - There is no education law that gives me power or authorization
BC4: - The Criminal Justice system	SD4: - The procedural Guide for public schools

What is interesting as seen in Table 7 is one of the Saudi Arabian participants' response

when asked about the support he/she gets from the education law;

"No, there is no education law gives me the authorization to prevent a teachers' negligence

about anything" (KSA3).

The majority of the participants from both sides reported that navigating the bureaucratic

decision-making processes in their countries have negative impacts on their ability to perform to

the optimum (see Figure 3, below). One hundred percent of the Saudi participants showed

negative views about the bureaucratic system in their country with regards to the educational

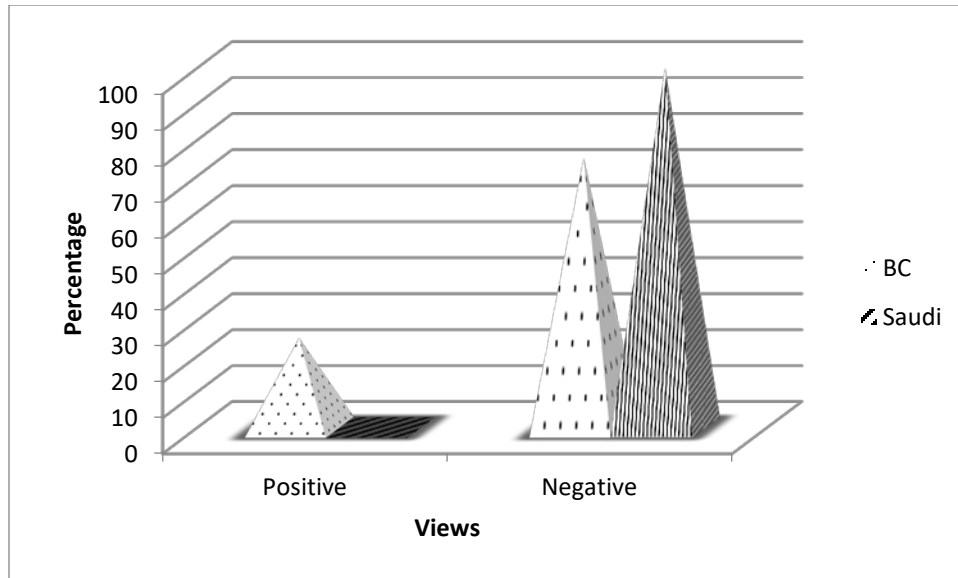sector, while the number was lower for the BC participants at 75%.

Figure 3: Participants' views on how easy it is to navigate bureaucratic decision-making

processes

However, 25% of the participants from BC did express optimism in the bureaucratic

process, pointing out that having been in the system for a longer period of time tends to lessen

the burden in the process. As pointed out by one of the administrators interviewed:

"No, I think part of it is maybe in the beginning when you're new, but after you've done it for a

while you have all kinds of experiences to draw on and like I had said earlier…" (BC3)

Another area of observable difference in styles of leadership among the participants from these

two jurisdictions appears to be the degree to which these administrators involve their teachers in

the decision-making process (see Table 8 below).

Table 8: *Teachers' involvement in the decision-making process*

Teachers involvement in decision-making	
BC	**KSA**
BC1: - A lot of staff committee's involvement in decision-making - It's helpful - It's the culture of the school	SD1: - We do have different committees - It's a good idea
BC2: - Teachers are very much involved in decision-making - It's critical (absolutely a big idea) - It's helpful (positive) - It's a good practice	SD2: - I have a school and guidance committee and teachers who has extensive experience
BC3: - Teachers are involved, all the time - It's positive and helpful - It's a good idea	SD3: - I involve them a lot
BC4: - I involve them heavily - It's not only positive, it is necessary	SD4: - I involve them sometimes - It's very helpful

As shown in Figure 4 below, 50% of the Saudi participants reported a reliance on the committees for their decision-making inputs, while 75% of the BC participants relied on teachers being heavily involved in the decision-making, as one of them stated categorically,

"I involve them 'heavily' to create a consensus on what we wanna do" (BC4).

Also, worthy of note is the fact that all the BC participants emphasized the importance of this practice. Conversely, the Saudi principals were not as emphatic on how helpful this practice is to the discharge of their duties. As a participant from Saudi Arabia stated:

"Sometimes for teachers because they are part of the school and they have the right to engage in some school decisions, which make them feel belong to the school but not so much with parents because I do not think it is helpful"(KSA4).
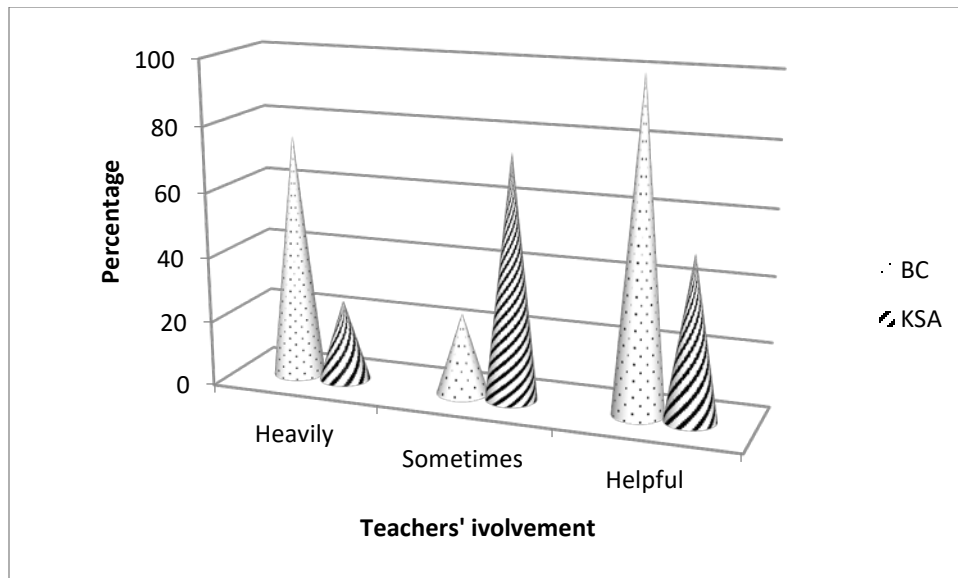
Figure 4: Teachers' involvement in the decision-making process

The results showed that participants from Saudi Arabia relied almost exclusively on their committees to deal with safety and security issues (50%). This is in contrast with their BC counterparts who relied on several strategies such as, teamwork, protocols, a problem-solving approach as well as the Health and Safety committee (see Table 9 below).

Table 9: *Strategies applied in dealing with health and safety issues*

Strategies used in dealing with Safety/Security issues	
BC	**KSA**
BC1: - Staff safety = Health& safety committee's responsibility - Students' safety = Everyone's responsibility	SD1: - I have a committee
BC2: - Follow protocols - Problem-solving approach	SD2: - I do have a committee that deals with Safety issues
BC3: - Put a team in place to look for threats - Figure out the type of response required	
BC4: - Having an active Health & Safety committee - Partnering with the Police - Dealing with safety issues quickly	SD4: - Dealing with safety issues strictly and cautiously

Discussion

  This section of the document considered the results from the analyzed data and drew inferences based on the connections found with regards to the research questions. From the results, there seem to be more differences than similarities on the way administrators from both jurisdictions enact their duties on a daily basis (see Table1). While, KSA administrators tend to see their job as being more of supervisors (75%) based on (World Data on education, para. 10) Educational leadership is a new field in Saudi Arabia. It is currently referred to as educational supervision which implies that there is a heavy emphasis on educational management and is led by the Ministry of Education (see page 13 above), their BC colleagues described their duties as having to do with management and leadership involving a wide spectrum of tasks, and being responsible for everything, with duties varying each work day. Interestingly, this study found that the school leaders in both countries relied on different aspects of relevant education laws in

support of their leadership responsibilities. BC leaders depend mostly on well-defined laws such as the School Act and laws from the Criminal justice system. In the KSA it has to do with procedures, guides and rules specific to public schools. This could be interpreted to mean that school administrators from both jurisdictions rely on their governmental oversight, although this is done to varying degrees within the two Countries. (see Table7). Bulach and Malone (1994) found that in most countries schools are largely or wholly a government responsibility. Therefore, the factors shaping government priorities could influence the perceived necessity for school reform, the resources available for reform, and the direction of the reforms. (see page 10 above)

The availability or lack thereof of sufficient funding is seen across the jurisdictional divide as a key factor toward their success or failure. However, BC principals reported the issue of funding more as a barrier than a support (75%/25%). This is in sharp contrast with the school leaders from KSA who showed a balanced view between the support and barrier designation (50%/50%) as shown in figure 2. Conversely, this study identified some other factors that administrators in these two cultural contexts consider as supports and this appears to highlight their contextual and cultural differences. For example, KSA school leaders needed more authority to make decisions, while on the BC side they saw the support of every stakeholder as one of the key supports needed (see Table2). Despite the acknowledgement of lack of funding as a barrier in their roles as school leaders across the board, participants from either side reported varying factors as hindrances even though, generally some of the factors appears to be similar in both jurisdictions. For instance, while the BC leaders are worried about lack of Human Resources, their friends in the KSA had more concern about poor infrastructure (see Table3). Therefore, in both countries, resources (either human, financial or infrastructure) were seen as a

hindrance.

Similarities were also found on the understanding among the principals in both jurisdictions that the socio-economic situation of their local communities plays a role in the requirements concerning how they do their job. For example, different student populations may demand slightly different skills and tasks. (Cefai, 2008). A good social environment in learning will be able to instil such values as social awareness, which is the ability to empathize and take perspective for those from diverse cultures and backgrounds, as well as an understanding of ethical and social norms in regards to behaviour (see page 27 above). However, the degree to which these effects are perceived differs among the jurisdictions, with almost all the participants from KSA reporting in the affirmative while only 50% concurred from BC. This study also found among other things that, maintaining a positive relationship with their teaching staff is considered a crucial element towards the successful leadership of any school irrespective of the cultural or regional context where the school is located. This view is supported by the findings recorded in Table5. The research showed recognition of teachers' involvement in decision-making as being a crucial factor toward a successful school administration by school principals from both sides. On the other hand, BC school leaders were found to solicit inputs from their teaching staff more in this regard than what is obtainable from the Saudi side as enumerated in Table8. In the same vein, the results showed that BC leaders viewed this to be more helpful than their KSA counterparts as shown in Figure 4.

One of the major findings of this thesis is the overall negative perception of the impact of the burden of navigating the bureaucratic decision-making processes in both countries. This work found that the task of navigating the bureaucracies affect the job of school leaders irrespective of the jurisdictional, cultural or geographical context (see Figure 3). Another conspicuous finding is

the importance of using the committees to solve matters related to safety and security in schools by school leaders. As shown in table1- 9, half of the administrators from both sides stated the importance of the respective committees in keeping everyone safe and secured. This study also found that the social as well as the socio-economic structure within these two academic jurisdictions affected the way school leaders do their job. However, school leaders from Saudi Arabia reported a more negative impact of the social fabrics of their society on their duties, while the BC principals showed a mix of both positive and negative impacts which in most cases was reported to be as a result of BC being a more diverse community.

The next chapter provides, conclusions drawn and answers provided to the research questions in a systematic form based on different themes.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

In this section of the paper, conclusions were drawn with respect to what the study found in relation to the questions which this research was designed to answer. Limitations to this study were also discussed and suggestions will be made pertaining to the ways to mitigate the effects of the perceived limitations in future studies on this subject matter.

What Similarities and Differences in Educational Leadership Exist Between the BC and Saudi Arabian Jurisdictions?

On this question, the study found that, in line with what the literature suggested with regards to educational leadership in Saudi Arabia being referred to as "educational supervision", the day-to-day duties of school administrators in KSA seem to be defined by this name, hence this study found that the principals in Saudi Arabia saw their major responsibility as 'general supervision'. Conversely, BC school leaders viewed their job, as having to do with every aspect of the school administration and leadership, with a 'wide spectrum' of tasks. The study also revealed that the Saudi school leaders lack the legislative 'authority' to make decisions in the cause of running the school. This is in contrast with their BC counterparts who the study has found to have the backing of several legislative powers (i.e. *The BC School Act*) to make valuable decisions in line with their leadership roles. While the literature reported that KSA school leaders do not possess the authority to act in place of the parents, this study found this to be particularly true and in direct contrast with the BC administrators who have the backing of the law to act in place of the parents. These findings represent noticeable differences in educational leadership in these two jurisdictions.

In addition to the similarities in functionalities and implementation strategies within these two educational systems, both systems are controlled by their respective Ministry of Education

as reported by the literature. This study found that educational leadership in both BC and KSA acknowledged the importance of maintaining a positive relationship with the teaching staff in their leadership roles. However, in BC these relationships takes an informal approach while in KSA every dealings has to be strictly formal and work related. Educational leadership in both jurisdictions was also found to apply a similar approach in dealing with Health and Safety issues in schools, through the use of committees, even though these committees are named differently in their respective jurisdictions.

A.   What Supports and Barriers do The Cultural Contexts Provide to Educational Leaders in Their Respective Jurisdictions?

In spite of their cultural differences school leaders in these two countries viewed unnecessary bureaucratic hierarchies as a common barrier toward the smooth running of schools within the two cultures. However, this study found that the context in Saudi Arabia implies that school leaders have little or no decision-making powers. This means that even in emergency situations, the principal of a school has to wait for instructions from higher authorities on whether to evacuate the students or not, hence posing a barrier to the successful running of the school. On the other hand, the multicultural nature of schools in the British Columbian context tend to sometimes pose a barrier to school leaders since the administrator sometimes deal with issues arising from the amalgamation of students and staff from completely different cultural backgrounds.

Validity and Reliability

The results and the subsequent inference drawn from this research could be considered valid since the data was collected through firsthand interview conducted through face-to-face interaction between the principal researcher and the participants. Furthermore, while the data

could be considered reliable, and the entire process of the analysis conducted using well documented and proven methodologies, the results on the other hand may not be seen as reliable due to the homogeneity of the participants (being selected only from public schools in the urban areas of both jurisdictions).

Limitations and Delimitation

In the course of this study the researcher acknowledged the existence of certain limitation that could have influence the results obtained. First among these perceived influential factors is the sample size. This study was conducted with a total of eight participants (four from BC and four from Saudi Arabia respectively). The relatively small sample size could imply that any inference drawn in this research may not be a comprehensive representation of what holds true within the general population, hence posing a reliability question. The researcher believes that a larger sample size will not only add strength to the results and findings of this work, it will ultimately validate the authenticity of the conclusions drawn from the results.

Secondly, the study concentrated on school leaders from only two cities, one from each country (i.e. Vancouver – BC and Riyadh- KSA). This approach may have resulted in responses being that of the urban school leaders only, within these two countries, while neglecting the urban-rural influence in school leadership styles which could have been taking care of by including an equal proportion of urban and rural school leaders in the study. It may have also neglected the demographic differences within different urban areas in each country which could be instrumental in expanding the scope of this study. The researcher opined that school administrators in the rural areas of any country may experience certain challenges different from what their counterparts in the urban cities encounter, even though there are challenges that are commonly shared among the urban-rural divide. This is equally true for supports needed to run a

school which could differ along the urban-rural lines.

Thirdly, the researcher struggled to deal with insufficient financial resources, which was a major reason for choosing a relatively small number of participants. The lack of funds also affected the logistical aspects of this study and thus resulted in some stages not being finished on schedule as proposed.

Conversely, the researcher received tremendous financial support from both the Saudi Arabian Bureau and her immediate family. The research was also able to make use of the research resources at Thompson Rivers University. Above all these was the immense academic support received from the Faculty members at the Faculty of Education.

In line with the aforementioned limitations, the researcher believes that further research will be needed to address the issues raised in the limitations section of this thesis.

Future Research

To address the short-comings or perceived flaws in this study, further research work will be required and should be designed to accommodate the key factors such as, larger sample size, including school leaders from multiple cities and within both the urban and rural areas in both jurisdictions while still maintaining the 50 – 50 male/female ratios of the participants. The researcher is of the view that this will enable the researcher to explore the differences in the demographic composition in each area and therefore be able to proffer suitable solutions to school leadership problems for the future, since this particular factor was not taken into consideration in this study.

Summary

In summary, irrespective of the well-established cultural and geographical differences between Saudi Arabia and British Columbia, educational leaders in these two countries do share

some similarities in their leadership approach and styles. They do face challenges that are similar

in some respects and differ in some aspects due to certain socio-cultural considerations.

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