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Perceptions of Primary School Principals in Singapore about Their Role as Justice Agents

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The University of San Francisco

PERCEPTIONS OF PRIMARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS IN SINGAPORE
ABOUT THEIR ROLE AS JUSTICE AGENTS

A Dissertation Submitted
to
The Faculty of the School of Education
Department of Leadership Studies
Catholic Educational Leadership Program

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Education

by
Kit Wah Antonia Teng
San Francisco
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THE UNIVERSITY OF SAN FRANCISCO

ABSTRACT

Perceptions of Primary School Principals in Singapore About Their Role as Justice Agents

Justice in school is central to both the Catholic church and the government of Singapore. Both institutions have expectations of principals as justice agents to serve the needs of every student by means of equality and equity in educational provision to all students. There is limited research on how principals of Catholic and government primary schools in Singapore perceive their role as justice agents and how they fulfill this expectation.

This qualitative research examined the experiences of primary school principals in Singapore in their enactment of educational leadership for justice. Of the 10 principals interviewed, 4 were principals of Catholic schools and 6 were principals of government schools. Interviews were conducted according to guided questions focused on participants' perceptions of leadership for justice, the origins of their beliefs about justice, how their beliefs about justice shaped school culture, and ways educational policies, programs, and practices in these schools promoted justice.

The results indicated that participants embraced their responsibilities as citizens and public servants and subscribed to the role of education as a social leveler. As public servants, participants recognized the significance of the mission of the Singapore education service to mold the future of the nation and articulated their commitment to it. Leadership for justice in Singapore entailed serving the holistic development of every student including socioemotional development and character formation. Principals as justice agents strived to provide equal opportunities for all students and intentionally pursued equity to equalize students with higher

needs. Enactment of leadership for justice necessitates questioning the status quo of structures and leading structural change to promote just practices. Justice for teachers is essential to leadership for justice and encompasses respect for teachers as individuals with personal and professional needs. Principals built trusting relationships with teachers to create a culture of care and advanced the professional development and career growth of teachers.

Because the values and beliefs of principals determine their leadership practice, it is essential that the selection process of educators for the principalship is able to provide insights into potential candidates' moral compass, self-awareness, and understanding of their own impact and influence.

This dissertation, written under the direction of the candidate's dissertation committee and approved by the members of the committee, has been presented to and accepted by the Faculty of the School of Education in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education. The content and research methodologies presented in this work represent the work of the candidate alone.

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CHAPTER I

THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

Statement of the Problem

Justice is one of three founding principles of Singapore, the other two being equality and meritocracy (National Heritage Board, Singapore, 2014; Parliament of Singapore, 2009). In the document *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* by the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, the exhortation by the Bishops stated, “Central to our identity as Catholics is that we are called to be leaven for transforming the world, agents for bringing about a kingdom of love and justice” (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998, p. 3). Accordingly, justice is a core value of the Catholic church and the government of Singapore. For this study on the perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about their role as justice agents, justice is defined as equality and equity in educational provision to all students as well as action grounded in a commitment to inclusion.

The Catholic church and the government of Singapore rely on principals to be the justice agents in their schools. As described in *The National Standards and Benchmarks for Effective Catholic Elementary and Secondary Schools* (The Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012), the Catholic church expects Catholic principals to serve their school community and the Catholic church to transform their practice into a full response to the Gospel message of “love of God and neighbor, and service to the world, especially the poor and marginalized” (The Center for Catholic School Effectiveness, 2012, p. 2). For the Ministry of Education, Singapore (MOE), a justice agent or leader in the Singapore education system is one who aspires to have every student achieve the desired outcomes of education (MOE, 2015a). According to MOE, the work toward these outcomes establishes a common purpose for educators, drives Singapore’s

education policies and programs, and enables the MOE to assess the efficacy of the education system. The desired outcomes of education follow:

- a **confident person** who has a strong sense of right and wrong, is adaptable and resilient, knows himself, is discerning in judgment, thinks independently and critically, and communicates effectively;
- a **self-directed learner** who takes responsibility for his own learning, who questions, reflects and perseveres in the pursuit of learning;
- an **active contributor** who is able to work effectively in teams, exercises initiative, takes calculated risks, is innovative and strives for excellence; and,
- a **concerned citizen** who is rooted to Singapore, has a strong civic consciousness, is informed, and takes an active role in bettering the lives of others around him. (MOE, 2015a, para 3)

Because schools are fundamentally places where students learn to be productive citizens, their lived experiences are called to facilitate justice for themselves and others. The principal has the duty to see that the lived experience of justice occurs throughout the school and in every classroom. Little empirical research in Singapore describes the perceptions of principals concerning their role as justice agents as well as the extent to which and the manner in which principals carry out their roles as justice agents. Although the National Institute of Education, Singapore conducted a baseline study on leadership and organizational change (Dimmock, 2011), a study by Dimmock and Tan (2013) noted a scarcity of published empirical studies on the Singapore educational system and its leadership.

Furthermore, although the MOE has articulated the philosophy for educational leadership (MOE, 2007) and developed the leader-growth model (MOE, 2014b), the impact and influence

of these MOE guidelines on the practice of principals in Singapore schools has not been established. The MOE's expectation of educational leaders in Singapore to possess a strong sense of personal identity, self-awareness, and understanding of their own leadership is the impetus for this research to establish the connection between principals' beliefs and their leadership practice. Also, as recognized by the Archdiocesan Commission for Catholic Schools in Singapore (ACCS), research on Catholic schools in Singapore has yet to be launched (ACCS, 2012). The leadership of Catholic schools in Singapore needs to be better understood if Catholic schools in Singapore are to preserve their Catholic character and ethos.

Background and Need for the Study

Students' lived experiences in school will impact their learning about justice in society, and school values and ethos influence the quality of their school experience. The principal as a justice agent establishes the moral and ethical climate of the school. According to Sergiovanni (2009), "the principal assumes the role of 'high priest', seeking to define, strengthen, and articulate those enduring values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its unique identity over time" (p. 137). Hence, an understanding of the call to justice in Catholic social teaching (CST) and education; Singapore's national values of justice, equality, and meritocracy; the Singapore education system; and the expectations of educational leadership in Singapore provided insights into the context of this investigation.

A Call to Justice in Catholic Social Teaching and Education

The call to justice for the principal of a Catholic school in Singapore rests in CST and the pledge of allegiance to Singapore. The teaching of the Catholic Church on justice flows from scripture and, beginning with Pope Leo XIII in 1891, the Church's teaching on justice has been further developed by each subsequent pope. The U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops' statement

of belief, published in 1998, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions*, provides guidance toward the vision of a just society. The seven themes of CST follow:

1. Life and dignity of the human person—the Catholic Church proclaims that human life is sacred and exhorts respect for the dignity of all people. Thus, every Catholic institution is measured by the extent to which it respects the life and dignity of the human person.
2. Call to Family, Community, and Participation—this theme emphasizes the rights of individuals as well as the duty of individuals to seek the common good and well-being of all in society, especially the poor and vulnerable.
3. Rights and responsibilities—Catholic tradition insists that personal rights and responsibilities must conjoin with social responsibilities and protection of the rights of others.
4. Option for the poor and vulnerable—the basic moral test of a society in which there are deep divisions between rich and poor is how the most vulnerable members are coping.
5. Dignity of work and the rights of workers—workers have the right to productive work, to decent and fair wages, to organize and join unions, to private property, and to economic initiative. Respecting these rights of workers ensures an economy that serves people instead of an economy served by people. This theme seeks to advance the well-being of all people.
6. Solidarity—countries need to recognize that their international responsibilities are as significant as their national responsibilities.

7. Care for God’s creation—stewardship of creation and care for the earth is a requirement of the Catholic faith. Thus, the moral and ethical dimensions of the challenges to the environment cannot be disregarded (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998).

Although the Catholic church in Singapore has not issued a similar document on CST to guide Catholic schools, the ACCS (2012) crafted a paper, *Catholic Education, Singapore: Core Values, Common Purpose & Goals*, in consultation with the various supervisory religious authorities, management committees, school leaders and teachers of Catholic schools. The ACCS acknowledged every school’s particular mission and charism while emphasizing facets essential and common to all schools. At the start of each school year in Singapore, the Archbishop of Singapore appoints new principals to lead Catholic schools. As reported by the ACCS, at the commissioning mass on January 23, 2016, Archbishop Goh highlighted the role of principals as ethical leaders and justice agents. Goh likened them to being “bishops” of schools, responsible for the well-being of multiple groups of people including students, parents, and teachers, and emphasized the enduring objective of Catholic schools to serve the “poorest of the poor.” Archbishop Goh identified students who were intellectually, spiritually, and emotionally poor as those who were in need of the most help (ACCS, 2016).

Singapore National Values—Justice, Equality and Meritocracy

Singapore was a British colony, granted internal self-governance in 1959. Singapore joined Malaysia in 1963 and became an autonomous state in the Malaysian federation. On August 9, 1965, Singapore separated from Malaysia and became a sovereign state. One of the urgent priorities of the Singapore government was to create common spaces for the people of different races—Chinese, Eurasian, Indian, and Malay—to live in harmony. During the colonial

era in Singapore, various racial groups were located in separate enclaves to minimize intercommunal interaction (Ho, 2009). The Chinese formed the largest racial group at 75%, with Malays at 13%, Indians at 7%, and Eurasians and others at 5%. As a result of this racial segregation and two episodes of interracial tension in the 1950s and 1960s, “the postcolonial democratically elected government of Singapore has single-mindedly implemented integrative policies toward the different racial groups through major developmental programs such as public housing and national education” (Ho, 2009, p. 288). The Singapore government identified justice and equality as foundational values for nation-building and the development of a Singapore identity among multiracial and multireligious people. Meritocracy was regarded as the national value that would enable various ethnic communities to build trust among themselves and collectively seek harmony in a multiracial and multireligious society.

A Comparison of Catholic Schools in the United States and Singapore

This section compared Catholic parish elementary schools in the United States with Catholic primary schools in Singapore. In the literature on Catholic education in the United States, the term ‘parochial schools’ was used interchangeably with ‘parish elementary schools’. The following paragraphs examined the purpose, finance, administration, and curriculum of the Catholic schools in the two countries.

According to Walch (2016), the two goals of Catholic parochial education in the United States were (a) to preserve the Catholic faith of Catholic children and (b) to prepare these children for productive roles in American society. Catholic parochial schools in the United States were first established more than two hundred years ago. At its peak, in the mid-1960s, the enrolment at Catholic parish elementary schools was more than 4.5 million children or twelve percent of all school going children in the United States then. The core belief of Catholics in the

United States was that the family and the Church were primarily responsible for the education of the children, not the government. The movement to establish Catholic parochial schools was a response to perceptions of Catholic leaders that public schools usurped the role of the Church in the educational process, and curriculum in the public schools was influenced by Protestant teachings and anti-Catholic propaganda.

Furthermore, Walch (2016) argued that public schools were regarded as a tool to preserve social order when the arrival of millions of immigrants from Ireland and Germany generated fear of social and political unrest among many Americans. Community leaders who advocated for public schools contended that the state had the right and responsibility to provide education to preserve social order. To do so, public schools were expected to ensure mixing of children from different social classes, nationalities and faiths, and to produce good, law-abiding and patriotic citizens. Thus, the opposition among Catholic leaders to public schools was to prevent loss of religious faith among Catholic children. Currently, there are more than 5,000 Catholic elementary schools serving over 1.3 million students (U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2018).

The first Catholic school in Singapore was established in 1852. Currently, there are more than 57 Catholic schools from kindergarten to junior college. After Singapore achieved independence in 1965, education was regarded as the tool for socialization and nation-building among a multiracial and multireligious people. Like public schools in the United States, schools in Singapore were common spaces for social mixing of all children regardless of race, language, religion, or socioeconomic status. According to the ACCS (2012), since the 1980s Catholic schools in Singapore were not permitted to conduct religious education lessons during curriculum time but were free to conduct religious activities before or after school hours.

Furthermore, schools had to ensure that religious activities were not imposed on non-Catholic students, teachers or staff. Catholic churches in Singapore took on the responsibility of conducting religious education lessons for Catholic children. However, the termination of religious lessons in Catholic schools, together with new policies governing admission to Primary One and Secondary One, may have given rise to perception among Catholic parents that Catholic schools were not much different from their government counterparts (ACCS, 2012).

In his book, *Parish School: A History of American Catholic Parochial Education from Colonial Times to the Present*, Walch (2016) traced the changes that had taken place in educational models of Catholic parish schools in the United States. He first described three early models: the publicly-supported parochial school, the Americanized Catholic school, and the ethnic Catholic school. Next, he presented new Catholic educational models that arose in response to a decline in the number of Catholic schools in the country.

In the early model of publicly-supported Catholic school, in operation from 1831 to 1916, the school board leased a school from the local parish and paid the salaries of the teachers. The school board and the pastor jointly selected teachers. The school board determined curriculum, schoolbooks, and examinations but the pastor ensured that the curriculum was acceptable to the Catholic Church. However, no religious instruction was permitted during curriculum time. The second early model was the Americanized Catholic school. Although this model was utilized in the last quarter of the nineteenth century, contemporary parochial schools were based on this model. The goal of these parochial schools was to compete with public schools by outperforming them in the delivery of superior secular and religious education. Additional curricular features of these schools, aimed at encouraging Catholic parents to choose Catholic schools, were patriotism, civics and citizenship education. The third early model was the ethnic parish school

which operated until the 1930s. This model emphasized literacy, religious faith, foreign languages and cultures. The model appealed mostly to German Catholics. Walch (2016) emphasized that in the United States, public aid could not be used to support or promote a religious denomination because the state was not involved in regulation of religion. However, states were permitted to provide schoolbooks and transportation for parochial school students.

According to Walch (2016), new models of parish schools arose in the twenty-first century. The new models included public aid for private schools using vouchers, Catholic charter schools, and schools built by private philanthropy and professional initiative. Like the early models, there was much experimentation in each new model of parish schools. Walch opined that schools developed on the voucher model produced mixed results, and were not widely adopted because most states did not support the use of public funds for private schools. However, an article *Voucher, Tax Credit Programs Maintain Momentum* (Voucher, 2013) asserted that school-choice programs had continued to grow since 1990s. School-choice in the form of vouchers and tax credit scholarships had improved educational access for low-income Catholic families. Although the number of states which had approved school-choice programs remained small, an increasing number of states using vouchers and tax credits improved the probabilities of other states adopting them. The article also reported an observation by Sister John Mary Fleming, O.P., executive director of the U.S. Bishops' Secretariat of Catholic Education that when bishops were actively involved in promoting school-choice legislation, it often found success. However, Sister John Mary Fleming also cautioned that even as bishops promoted school-choice legislation, they needed to avoid complications between school and government as well as intrusion of federal and state officials into Catholic education (Voucher, 2013).

Furthermore, Kaufman (2017) stated that voucher programs that used government funds to support students attending private schools was gaining popularity among religiously affiliated schools around the United States. Kaufman reported research findings by Hungerman, Rinz, and Frymark that vouchers provided churches that operated voucher-accepting schools with more revenue than even worshippers, but the voucher programs did not result in any increase in religious activity. Instead, the voucher programs caused declines in church donations. Kaufman cautioned that church-state issues could be problematic, and implications of the voucher program needed to be examined.

The second model described by Walch (2016) comprised publicly funded Catholic charter schools where Catholic cultural artifacts, prayers and liturgies were disallowed. Furthermore, religious education activities were optional and conducted after school. Although Catholic leaders did not consider this model ideal, they accepted that these schools provided safety, good curriculum, competent teachers and sound values in the education of low-income, non-Catholic children. The third model sought synergy from leadership of bishops and pastors, collective responsibility of the parish community to provide tuition free Catholic education, and donations from the business community. The Jubilee Catholic Schools which exemplified this model of parish schools achieved extraordinary success (Walch, 2016).

Walch (2016) also described new Catholic educational models developed in the last decade for middle, high school and universities. The NativityMiguel network of middle schools and the Cristo Rey network for high schools were distinctive new models propelled by leadership and mission, and championed by venture philanthropy. They were established by the Christian Brothers and Jesuits for service to non-Catholic, underprivileged families in American inner

cities. A distinctive feature of the Cristo Rey schools was the work-study program which nurtured lifeskills and provided students with revenue for their education.

Another new model that had the potential to make a powerful impact on Catholic schools was the “University Consortium for Catholic Education” (UCCE). The UCCE model was a collaboration among Catholic universities across the United States in the professional development of highly qualified teachers for Catholic schools. Essential features of the UCCE program were academic preparation, community living, and spiritual formation.

In contrast, the Singapore government was almost entirely responsible for the finance of education in both government schools (state schools) and government aided schools (state-supported schools). Government aided schools, such as Catholic schools, were established by clans or religious groups but were funded and supervised by the government. Primary education was free in both government and government aided schools. MOE was responsible for the operating budgets of all schools, based on student enrolment. Furthermore, MOE trained all teachers, key personnel and principals at the National Institute of Education and paid the salaries of teaching and administrative staff in primary schools. Additionally, MOE provides development funds for school-based curriculum innovation. Additionally, MOE supported the entire cost of the physical upgrading of government school sites, and subsidized government-aided schools up to 95% of the cost of their upgrading. Hence, ACCS (2012), having considered that Catholic education was not subsidized in many other countries, stated that “We have a very good situation and should work pro-actively to keep our Catholic identity and ethos strong in our changing environment.” (p. 2).

According to the U. S. Conference of Catholic Bishops (2014), Catholic schools in the United States were established as diocesan, parish, regional and private schools. The diocesan

bishop had the right and responsibility to oversee the Catholic schools, and Catholic doctrine must be the foundation of education in Catholic schools. The Office of Catholic Education in the diocese issued curriculum guidelines and standards for Catholic schools. Superintendents or Directors of Catholic schools ensured balance of mission of the Catholic school with parents' expectations of superior academic standards. Although Catholic schools, by their private school status, were not required to use the Common Core State Standards, they were advised to consider local, state, and national educational requirements, and ensure that their students were not disadvantaged in their post-secondary education.

Walch (2016) noted that in response to changes in the public-school systems and aspirations of Catholic parents, parish schools in the United States had in recent years revised their curriculum and incorporated many elements of public schooling. However, he argued that changes in the parish school system had already begun since the second Vatican Council in the 1960s and now the distinction between Catholic schools and non-Catholic schools had been blurred, giving rise to questions about the need to maintain a separate and costly school system. Nevertheless, the success of new Catholic educational models in the last decade had generated hope and inspiration for the future of Catholic schools in the United States.

Conversely, a single education system in Singapore incorporated both government and government-aided schools. Catholic schools in Singapore were supervised by MOE through Cluster Superintendents, and Catholic school boards comprising the religious order, alumni and members of the community. The influence of Catholic school boards on daily operations of Catholic schools varied. Furthermore, Cluster Superintendents managed the performance appraisal of Catholic school principals and vice principals. Validation of schools' self-appraisal was also the purview of MOE. Additionally, all primary schools in Singapore implemented a

common curriculum designed by MOE. At the end of six years, students in Catholic primary schools, like students in all other primary schools in Singapore, sit the national examination. Although Catholic schools were supervised by MOE, the mission, vision, and values of Catholic schools in Singapore were aligned with Catholic values or the charism of the Founder. Furthermore, the mission, vision, and values of Catholic schools guided the customisation of MOE curriculum to meet specific needs of students. Like publicly-funded Catholic schools in the United States, religious education in Singapore Catholic schools was conducted outside of curriculum hours. Still, principals of Catholic schools recognized their responsibility to preserve the schools' Catholic identity and ethos.

An Overview of the Singapore Education System

The government of Singapore regards the education of the citizens of Singapore to be of strategic national significance. Singapore is a small city-state with no natural resources. Singapore's only resource is her people. The MOE believes that how Singaporeans bring up their children at home and teach them in school will shape Singapore in the next generation. Hence, the mission of the education service in Singapore is to mold the future of the nation by molding the people who will determine the future of the nation. Prime Minister Goh announced MOE's vision of "Thinking Schools, Learning Nation" in 1997. This vision describes a nation of thinking and committed citizens capable of meeting future challenges, and an education system geared to the needs of the 21st century. The MOE designs a standardized curriculum for all schools and conducts national examinations for graduating classes at the primary and secondary levels of education. The MOE implements subject-based banding at the end of Primary Grade 4 and at entry to Secondary Grade 1 to recognize the different abilities of students (MOE, 2017b).

Bilingualism has been a key feature of the Singapore education system since 1959. The English language is the language of instruction for all subjects and the working language in Singapore. In addition, students in Singapore learn a mother-tongue language: Malay, Mandarin, or Tamil. The mother-tongue language serves to strengthen an individual's values and sense of cultural belonging (National Library Board, Singapore, 2016). Students learn the English language and the mother-tongue language throughout their primary and secondary school years. The School Readiness Test, taken by all students in Primary Grade 1, identifies those who are weak in English-language or literacy skills. Students who do not have the necessary English-language or literacy skills are supported through an early literacy-intervention program called the Learning Support Programme (LSP). The LSP is a specialized program that equips students with basic literacy skills so they can access learning in the regular classroom. All primary schools have Learning Support Coordinators who are given additional training by the MOE to equip them with specialized knowledge and skills to implement the program. Students in the LSP are supported daily for half an hour each day in groups of eight to 10 students. This support continues in Primary Grade 2 for students who need additional support (MOE, 2015b).

The MOE has also developed an early numeracy intervention program called Learning Support for Mathematics (LSM). The LSM provides additional support to students who do not have the foundational numeracy skills and knowledge to access the Primary Grade 1 Mathematics curriculum. A screening program at the beginning of Primary Grade 1 identifies pupils for the intervention. An LSM teacher supplies support for 2 to 4 hours each week. The MOE provides training as well as teaching materials to LSM teachers to support their students. Since 2006, schools have been given additional teacher posts so they can allocate resources to meet the needs of students (MOE, 2015b).

The MOE provides funds for the operating budgets of all government schools as well as government-aided schools, such as Catholic schools, based on student enrollment. The MOE is responsible for salaries of all teachers and administrative staff. Education at the primary level is free but parents pay a small amount (SGD 6.5 to SGD 13.00) every month for miscellaneous fees. The MOE provides financial assistance to needy students so that all Singaporeans, regardless of their financial circumstances, can benefit from the best opportunities in education (MOE, 2016d). Additionally, to ensure all students have access to facilities that can support a wide range of educational program, in 1999 the MOE launched a major program called PRIME to rebuild and improve existing schools. New and upgraded facilities include computer laboratories, media-resource libraries, IT learning-resource rooms, pastoral-care rooms, and health and fitness rooms. Schools also get bigger classrooms and staff-rooms and more interaction areas. Depending on the state of existing facilities, schools constructed before 1997 will either be upgraded or rebuilt. The MOE bears the entire cost of PRIME for government schools, and subsidizes government-aided schools up to 95% of the cost of PRIME (MOE, 2015c).

Special-education schools and mainstream schools collectively cater to the educational needs of students of school-going age who have a range of special learning needs. A declaration made by Prime Minister of Singapore Lee in 2004 explicitly stated, “We will look after the less educated and the elderly who have helped build Singapore. And we must also have a place in our hearts and our lives for the disabled, who are our brothers and sisters too” (Lee, 2004, ¶ 17). The Prime Minister added, “Ours must be an open and inclusive Singapore” (Lee, 2004, ¶ 26). Wong, Ng, and Poon (2015) perceived the declaration as a watershed that led to the introduction of two key initiatives that include and support students with mild disabilities in mainstream schools.

To date, all primary schools and 92 secondary schools have at least one allied educator, trained to meet the learning and behavioral needs of students with disabilities through the provision of in-class support, individual or small-group intervention (e.g., literacy skills, social skills, and study skills), transition support, and case management (MOE, 2017a). In addition, 10% to 20% of teachers in each primary and secondary school received in-service training in special needs. Teachers provide individual or small-group support in classrooms, monitor the academic progress of students with disabilities, and share expertise and resources with other teachers and parents (MOE, 2017a). Additionally, a number of schools have facilities or programs to support their students with respective special needs such as integration programs for students with hearing loss who use Total Communication or Natural Auditory Oral Approach, integration programs for students with visual impairment, and full handicapped facilities for students with physical impairment (MOE, 2017a).

Wong et al. (2015) asserted that following the introduction of these support structures, a greater presence has emerged of students with disabilities in mainstream schools. Students with disabilities who are cognitively able to access mainstream curriculum are part of the general-education system, supported mainly by the allied educator and teachers trained in special needs. Wong et al. estimated 2.5% of school-going children (about 13,000), aged between 7 and 18 years, have disabilities. Of these, about 7,600 are in mainstream schools and 5,400 in special schools.

Singapore implemented compulsory education in 2003 to ensure all children of compulsory school age born after January 1, 1996, and who are citizens of Singapore residing in Singapore, attend a national primary school regularly, unless they have been exempted from compulsory education. Exemptions include children attending a designated religious school or

children receiving homeschooling. Currently, almost the entire cohort attends the 6 years of primary education, with less than 1% of each cohort dropping out in the secondary education school years, compared to 5% 10 years ago. More than 95% of each cohort progresses to postsecondary education, compared to about 85% a decade ago (MOE, 2014a). Furthermore, MOE statistics showed that Singapore has ensured gender equality in education. Enrollment indicators disaggregated by gender indicate comparable enrolment of male and female students at all levels of education. Additionally, international benchmarking studies such as the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study, Progress in International Reading Literacy Study, and Programme for International Student Assessment have also consistently demonstrated that female students in Singapore are able to outperform male students in certain learning domains (MOE, 2014a).

The MOE seeks to ensure that every child is given equal opportunity to access education and to pursue personal goals in the education system, based on the principle of meritocracy. At the end of Primary Grade 6, students take the national examination called the Primary School Leaving Examination (PSLE) in English, their mother-tongue language, mathematics, and science. Based on their performance at the PSLE, students are placed in the express, normal (academic), or normal (technical) course in secondary schools. The aim is to match different curricular emphases to the learning abilities and interests of the students. Students can opt to transfer laterally between express, N (academic) and N (technical), if they are assessed to be more suitable for these courses (MOE, 2016b).

In addition, various other programs at the secondary level seek to provide students with multiple pathways to success: (a) The General Certificate of Education Ordinary-level or Normal-level examinations at the end of secondary school allow students to proceed to

Advanced-level examinations at junior colleges or centralized institutes, or to courses at the polytechnics and Institute of Technical Education. (b) Selected specialized schools offer customized programs for students who are inclined toward hands-on and practical learning. Some of these schools offer the Normal Technical-level examinations. (c) Specialized independent schools offer customized education catering to students with talents and strong interests in specific fields, such as the arts, sports, mathematics and science, and applied learning. These students progress to universities, polytechnics, or arts institutions. (d) The Integrated Programme (IP) offered by high-performing independent secondary schools or junior colleges allow secondary school students to proceed to junior colleges without taking the General Certification of Education Ordinary-level examinations. Some of these schools offer the international baccalaureate. Students admitted to the Integrated Programme are considered to be university-bound (MOE, 2016b).

Postsecondary options available to students include junior colleges, centralized institutes, polytechnics, the Institute of Technical Education, arts institutions, or universities. Some pathways allow student movement between postsecondary institutions. Beyond postsecondary education, adults and working professionals are encouraged to upskill and reskill through quality learning options in lifelong learning provided by institutes of higher learning as well as Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications training, with providers accredited by the Singapore Workforce Development Agency (MOE, 2016b).

Although students in Singapore have achieved a high level of educational attainment over the years, educational outcomes of Chinese, Malay, and Indian students vary (MOE, 2016a). Assessed in the same examinations, Chinese students perform better than their Malay and Indian counterparts even though they are given equal educational opportunities. A study conducted by

Kang (2005) examined the way ethnicity, in partnership with various social institutions such as the family, affects the educational outcomes of students. A study of students' postsecondary aspirations and perceptions of educational possibilities showed that although ethnicity did influence students' education-related behaviors, streaming in the Singapore educational system had produced unintended consequences that shaped the postsecondary educational outcomes of the students.

The impact of meritocracy in the Singapore education system has also been the subject of a study by Lim (2016), who opined that since Singapore's independence in 1965, the logic and practice of meritocracy in the country has developed an elitist class. Lim viewed the Integrated Programme and the Independent School scheme as expressions of the education system's elitist orientation. Lim cautioned that the current practice in Singapore of applying meritocracy to the identification and nurture of a small group of academically talented individuals to be leaders who determine policies for achieving success and well-being of the entire population could result in the diminishing ability of these leaders to represent the perspectives of the people in Singapore.

Furthermore, I. Y. H. Ng (2014) suggested that certain characteristics of the Singapore education system may contribute to a decrease in intergenerational mobility in Singapore. I. Y. H. Ng (2014) identified these characteristics as ability-based and school-based streaming, privatization of basic and tertiary education, expansion of tertiary education while increasing fees, and possibly regressive public expenditure on education. I. Y. H. Ng (2014) argued that although the Singapore education system seeks to develop a globally competitive workforce by offering multiple pathways for success, educators should rethink the Singapore educational model. Education in Singapore should seek to achieve greater equity and mobility without

compromising students' performance and the nation's economic competitiveness (I. Y. H. Ng, 2014).

Political leaders in Singapore recognized that although meritocracy has worked for Singaporeans thus far, elitism is a threat to the inclusive society that Singapore aims to build, and the concept of meritocracy must broaden for Singapore to become a society where people recognize one another's strengths and treat one another as equals, regardless of education or job (Goh, 2013; Tharman, 2013). The Singapore government is investing significantly in preschool education to provide opportunities and enhance social mobility for all Singaporeans, particularly for those in lower income groups who may need more support initially. The current priority is to raise the quality of programs while keeping fees affordable. Moving forward, the MOE specified the government will aim for every student to complete secondary education and continue to pursue a postsecondary qualification (MOE, 2014a).

In 2016, the Institute of Policy Studies conducted a survey on parental perceptions of primary school education with 1,500 parents who are Singapore citizens or permanent residents. This study, carried out in all primary schools in Singapore, showed that 90.4% of Singaporean parents think most primary schools in Singapore provide high-quality education, 81.8% agreed that Singapore's education system provides equal opportunity for children from different socioeconomic backgrounds, 81.8% perceived Singapore's education system as able to nurture socially responsible citizens, and 80.9% had confidence in Singapore's education system to cater to students of different styles and paces of learning. Parents were content with the education system's structure, processes, and outcomes, and largely satisfied with the facilities, support network, and other features of the school their child was attending. Many parents, across school types, supported the MOE's focus on character and values education, and suggested the

emphasis could be strengthened. They also suggested a reduction in the amount of homework (Mathews, Lim, & Teng, 2017).

Expectations of Educational Leadership in Singapore

Given that the government of Singapore, the MOE and the people of Singapore have placed a very high value on equality and equity in education; the expectations of school principals in Singapore to deliver the promise is correspondingly high. The MOE has articulated a set of beliefs and guiding principles for school principals. The document, *Anchored in Values and Purpose: Philosophy for Educational Leadership in Singapore* (MOE, 2007), guides principals at the individual level as they reflect on their practices, as well as provides directions for MOE's policy formulation and leadership-development efforts. School principals in Singapore are expected to inspire their school community toward a desired future and take action to turn vision into reality. Because of the connection between principals' leadership practices and students' learning and lived experiences, what principals believe about justice and how their beliefs influence their leadership practice will illuminate the linkages between leadership and the quality of the school experience. No research existed on this topic in Singapore and this dissertation sought to fill that void.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine how principals' perceptions about leadership for justice influence their practice as (a) an ethical leader, (b) culture builder, and (c) educational leader of curriculum and instruction. In this study, I also elucidated the factors concerning the principal as a justice agent: (a) what principals of primary schools in Singapore believe about justice, as it relates to primary education in Singapore; (b) the origins of principals' beliefs about justice in school; (c) how principals' beliefs about justice shape the school culture, and (d) the

ways educational policies, programs, and practices in these schools promote justice. This study sought to fill the gap in educational research in Singapore regarding the perceptions of principals about their role as justice agents as well as the extent to which and ways in which principals carry out their roles as justice agents.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are the perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about leadership for justice?
2. What are the origins of principals' beliefs about justice in school?
3. How do principals' beliefs about justice shape school culture?
4. In what ways do the educational policies, programs, and practices in these schools promote justice?

Conceptual Framework

At the heart of educational leadership in Singapore is the ethical leader. On the personal level, influences on the beliefs of principals about justice in school include their personal background, individual formation, and Singapore's national values. On a professional level, principals are guided by their philosophy of educational leadership and the leader-growth model developed by the MOE. Principals, as ethical leaders, impact the school culture and curriculum when they enact the roles of culture builder and leader of curriculum and instruction.

Consequently, Starratt's (2009) five levels of ethical enactment served as a relevant theoretical foundation for the analyses of principals' leadership practices in this study. Theories that guide the examination of culture-building practices in this study included Burns's (1978) transforming leadership, and Spillane's (2006) distributed leadership. I investigated curriculum-leadership

practices based on the roles of the leader in curriculum and instruction articulated by the MOE (2014b). Figure 1 presents the proposed conceptual framework in this study.

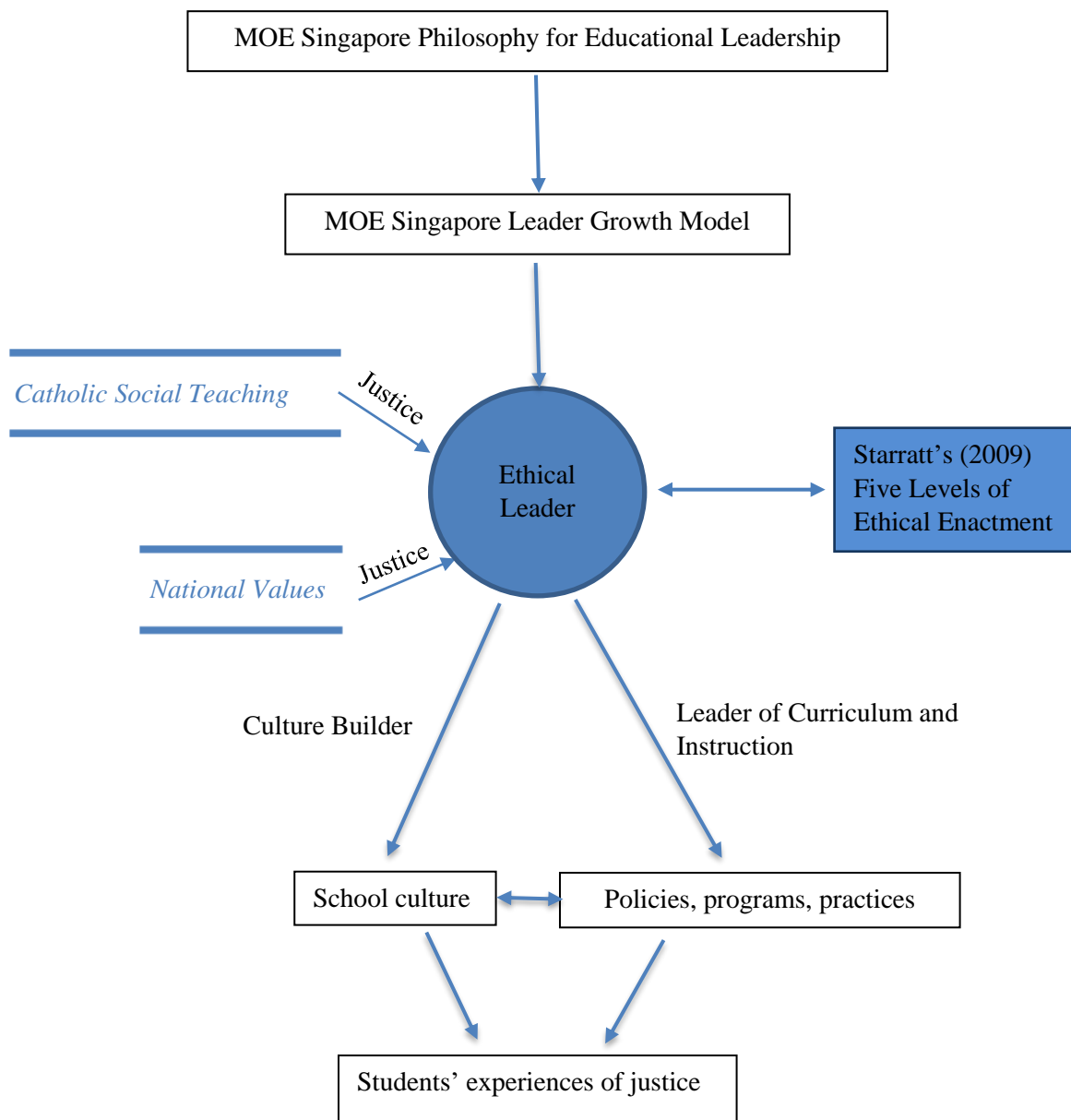


Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

The MOE accepts as true that “leadership starts from within” (2007, p. 9). Principals’ self-awareness of their strengths and weaknesses enables them to appreciate that who they are as

people determines their leadership. Thus, four principles guide educational leadership in Singapore, articulated in the philosophy for educational leadership (MOE, 2007):

- Educational leadership is anchored in values and purpose.

The values of principalship serve as a moral compass for principals while the purpose of principalship provides the motivation for principals as they seek to influence their community to effect positive change. Principals are guided by the MOE Corporate Values in their actions and decisions. These values (Integrity the Foundation, People our Focus, Learning our Passion, and Excellence our Pursuit) are upheld in their lives and work. Principals find their purpose in the belief that all students can learn. (MOE, 2007, p. 9)

- Educational leadership inspires all toward a shared vision.

Principals provide clear direction for the school and its partners, and inspire them to contribute towards a common goal. Principals champion the vision of the school, enthusing and motivating the school community to embrace the vision. This vision focuses on student learning and development, preparing our students today for tomorrow's world, taking into account the collective needs of the student, school, community and nation as well as the students' roles as global citizens. (MOE, 2007, p. 11)

- Educational leadership is committed to growing people.

Principals value their staff as individuals and as professionals. They respect their staff for who they are and provide opportunities for them to excel in positions where they can contribute best. They also recognize staff for their contributions and lead them by

building trusting relationships within a learning and caring school culture. Principals role-model development for the entire school community. (MOE, 2007, p. 13)

- Educational leadership leads and manages change.

Principals appreciate that leadership and management are distinctive yet complementary systems of action. Leadership sets the direction while management provides the systems, structures and processes the school needs to achieve its goals. Principals recognize that the change process is about innovativeness and establishing the conditions for continuous improvement. They appreciate that making change work requires the ideas, commitment and ownership of the school community. Principals therefore lead change for the benefit of the school community by creating energizing environments in their schools. (MOE, 2007, p. 15)

Following the development of the philosophy for educational leadership, the MOE created the education *leader growth model* (LGM) shown in Figure 2. The LGM emphasizes that ethical leadership is central to educational leadership in Singapore.

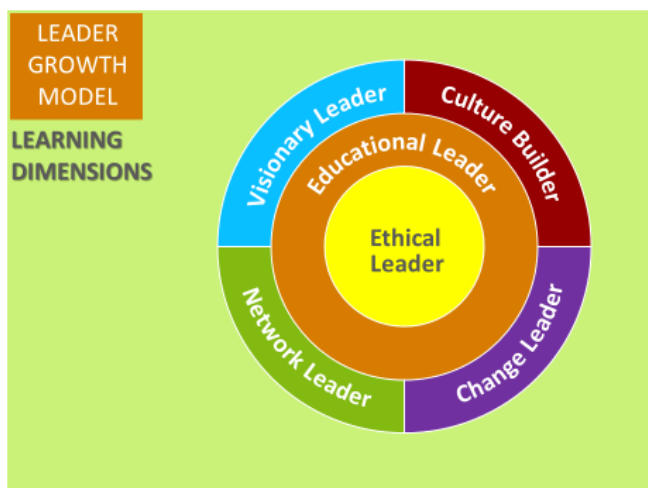


Figure 2. Education leader growth model.

In the LGM, the ethical leader is one who possesses a reflective spirit, operates from a values-driven core, undergirded by the ethos of the teaching profession and the philosophy for educational leadership, crafted by the MOE to guide educational practice in Singapore. The ethical leader possesses a strong sense of personal identity, self-awareness, and understanding of his or her own leadership (MOE, 2014b).

In addition to the national values of justice and equality that influence the school leader in Singapore, the ACCS (2012) provides guidance to Catholic school principals on CST through their statement of core values and purpose:

1. Core values: We believe
 - a. that each person /child, created in the image and likeness of God, is a precious gift and sacred responsibility.
 - b. that good Catholic education includes spiritual growth and fulfillment of potential.
 - c. in building Christ-centered communities for service to one another.
 - d. parents have a primary role in Catholic education which is a shared responsibility.(ACCS, 2012, p.5)
2. Common purpose: We believe in God's abiding love for human kind. Therefore, we want
 - a. to give our students a sense of God;
 - b. to uphold a view of the human person as made in the image and likeness of God;
 - c. to provide young people with a view of life that is positive - based on faith, hope and love expressed in selfless service;
 - d. to provide a holistic education which integrates the spiritual;

- e. to work with parents to build up citizens for society who embody compassion, justice and joy;
- f. to set the benchmark for good education;
- g. to bring the Gospel to life and bring Christ to a needy world;
- h. to provide a Catholic education for Catholic students (ACCS, 2012, p.6).

The practice of ethical leadership in this study was examined through Starratt's (2009) five levels of ethical enactment:

- Level 1—As a human being. Humans deserve to be treated with a basic level of respect and sacredness. To violate that respect, to deny them their sacredness, is to violate their humanity; as such it is an ethical violation.
- Level 2—As a citizen-public servant. The principal is viewed as the state in action. The role of the principal is to see that democracy works and to further the democracy of the people. If principals violate the rights and the trust of the people in the school, they are not only breaking the law, they are acting unethically in their role of citizen-public servant.
- Level 3—As an educator. The activity of educating has intrinsic value, connected to the ethic of learning itself. Therefore, in the hiring, evaluation, and professional-development processes, the principal must ensure teachers are conversant with the curriculum, have strong grounding in subject mastery and pedagogy, are able to connect learning with meaning and application to life, and have knowledge of students to personalize learning.
- Level 4—As an educational administrator. Principals must question and critique the status quo of structures that create injustices and take action to address the injustices.

- Level 5—As an educational leader. The principal, as a transformational leader, inspires staff and students to go beyond their self-interests to strive for higher ideals.

Starratt's (2009) five levels of ethical enactment and the LGM developed by the MOE have points of alignment (see Figure 2); the association between the two appears in Table 1.

Table 1

Starratt's (2009) Five Levels of Ethical Enactment and the MOE's Leader Growth Model

Starratt's levels of ethical enactment	Learning dimensions in the leader growth model
Level 1: As a human being	Ethical leader
Level 2: As a citizen-public servant	Ethical leader
Level 3: As an educator	Educational leader of curriculum and instruction
Level 4: As an educational administrator	Visionary leader, change leader
Level 5: As an educational leader	Culture builder, network leader

The domain of ethical leader in the LGM aligns with Starratt's Level 1 (as a human being) and Level 2 (as a citizen-public servant) of ethical enactment. The ethical leadership in the LGM is values-driven and undergirded by the ethos of the teaching profession and the philosophy for educational leadership (MOE, 2014b). The enactment of ethical leadership envisioned in Starratt's Level 1 is also values-driven, as the principal is expected to possess respect for others as well as recognition of the sacredness with which others deserve to be treated. As a citizen-public servant in Starratt's Level 2, the principal is a representative of the state. Similarly, principals in Singapore schools are considered public servants who serve the nation. If principals violate the rights and the trust of the people in the school, they are not only breaking the law, they are acting unethically in their role of citizen-public servant (Starratt, 2009).

The domain of educational leader for curriculum and instruction in the LGM aligns with Starratt's Level 3 (as an educator). In the LGM and Starratt's Level 3 of ethical enactment, the principal should possess a firm understanding of the learning process and be able to lead staff in developing professional knowledge in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, psychology of learning, and global issues, contexts, and trends, to personalize learning for students and achieve desired learning outcomes (MOE, 2014b; Starratt, 2009).

The domains of visionary leader and change leader in the LGM align with Starratt's Level 4 (as an educational administrator). In Starratt's (2009) Level 4, principals must question and critique the status quo of structures that create injustices, and take action to address those injustices. To do so, the principal must have a vision of a just school and lead the change to achieve that vision. Thus, Starratt's Level 4 expectations of the principal are similar to the expectations of the LGM, where, as a visionary leader, the principal must have clarity on the school's strengths and a firm grasp of the areas for development; thus, the principal should be able to articulate a compelling vision, and set and sustain a sense of shared purpose and goals. Furthermore, to lead the change to achieve the vision, the principal, as a change leader, needs to be mindful of the present context, be respectful of the school's journey, tap into available strategic resources, and provide supportive structures for the change process (MOE, 2014b).

Finally, the domains of culture builder and network leader in the LGM align with Starratt's Level 5 (as an educational leader). Starratt (2009) argued that the principal, as a transformational leader, inspires staff and students to go beyond their self-interests to strive for higher ideals. In the LGM, the principal, as a culture builder, inspires the commitment of the staff toward a shared vision and shared values, and enables all staff to understand how their contribution fits into the organisational strategy. Moreover, as a network leader, the principal

understands the multiplier effect that comes through unity of purpose and collective sharing of ideas and recognizes that leadership is a distributed process to which all can contribute. In addition, the network leader plans for sustainability when creating purposeful collaborations with partners locally and overseas (MOE, 2014b).

In a seminal work on leadership, Burns (1978) distinguished between transactional leadership and transforming leadership. In transactional leadership, leaders and followers exchange one thing for another, for example, rewards for effort. Although transactional leadership is the more common form of leadership in organizations, transforming leadership is the more powerful in achieving strategic goals because the leader recognizes and appeals to followers' needs and wants. The transforming leader understands the potential motives of followers and engages the full person of followers. Burns trusted that "the result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents" (p. 4). Burns's concept of the transforming leader presumes the leader is an ethical person who seeks the common good, not a self-serving one who exploits followers' needs.

Sergiovanni's (2009) description of the main leadership activities carried out by principals in culture building provides insights into how Burns's (1978) transforming leadership can translate into leadership for cultural change. Sergiovanni (2009) listed the main leadership activities by principals as (a) articulating the school purposes and mission, (b) engaging in legacy building, (c) telling stories that reinforce beliefs and traditions, and (d) explaining the accepted ways things are done in the school. Schein (2010) added to the idea of culture building by presenting six mechanisms for the cultural-embedding process:

1. What leaders pay attention to, measure, and control on a regular basis;

2. How leaders react to critical incidents and organizational crises;
3. How leaders allocate scarce resources by observed criteria;
4. Leaders' deliberate role modeling, teaching, and coaching;
5. How leaders allocate rewards and status by observed criteria; and
6. How leaders recruit, select, promote, retire and excommunicate organizational members by observed criteria (Adapted from Schein, 2010, Exhibit 14.1, p. 236).

Spillane (2006) maintained that complexity in leadership rests on the fact that leaders rely on those led to implement a vision, achieve a goal, or complete a task. Distributed leadership recognizes that leading schools require multiple leaders. Distributed leadership goes beyond the heroic leadership of a charismatic individual to the collective practice of leadership by members of the school community who formally or informally lead in their areas of expertise, for example, by improving instruction, changing expectations of staff about students, or transforming culture. However, distributed leadership is not merely delegation; others, such as teachers or parents, take on leadership responsibility in the school on their own initiative. Thus, the distribution of leadership entails a shift in thinking from the structure, roles, and functions of leadership (the *what*) to the practice of leadership (the *how*). The practice of school leadership surpasses the actions of the principal, taking into consideration the interactions among members of the school community—the principal, teachers, parents, and others in the school—and their situations. Spillane suggested the situation defines leadership practice and is defined through leadership practice.

The roles of the leader in curriculum and instruction articulated by the MOE follow:

1. Creating a vision for quality teaching and learning. Leaders develop and communicate a shared vision and educational goals for the school that reflects a

- strong understanding of the school culture and the learning needs of staff and students; foster shared ownership for a holistic, balanced, rigorous and engaging curriculum, in line with the vision, that is relevant to national and individual needs; and align curriculum to educational philosophy, vision and mission.
2. Promoting a culture of learning. Leaders raise positive expectations of excellence for themselves, students, and staff; cultivate innovation and develop a community of learners by encouraging curricular innovation; create a climate of inquiry and continuous improvement through reflective practice and teacher-driven inquiry; participate actively in learning with the school and models continuous learning; and nurture a positive climate of integrity, professionalism, and well-being.
 3. Improving student learning and outcomes. Leaders establish change-management processes for the school and support the continuous professional learning and development of all teachers with an effective professional-development framework; establish an effective framework for the monitoring and evaluation of student performance and learning so that all curriculum decisions build on a variety of information sources including research; establish an effective framework for the monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice and instructional programs so teachers receive constructive feedback for improvement; ensure a physically, emotionally, and psychologically safe and supportive learning environment; align school resource management with student- and teacher-learning needs; and engage stakeholders and industry to enhance support for student learning (MOE, 2014b).

Significance of the Study

This study aims to contribute to the field of research on educational leadership for justice. Numerous studies have focused on educational leadership for justice in the United States and other countries, but a dearth of research exists on this topic in Singapore. This study adds to a limited body of research on educational leadership in Singapore. Furthermore, almost no research describes the beliefs and practices of Catholic primary school principals in Singapore, so this study significantly adds to the literature in the field.

The intent of this study was to provide the MOE and the ACCS with a comprehensive and deep understanding of the beliefs and practices of primary school principals as justice agents. The study sought to portray the impact of the beliefs and practices of primary school principals on their students' lived experiences of justice in school through the ways principals shape school culture, transform teaching and learning, and lead the change in their schools.

Finally, the study aimed to provide an awareness of the extent to which the MOE's philosophy for educational leadership and the LGM have influenced the practice of primary school principals in Singapore. Insights from this study can inform the design of educational-leadership-preparation programs, the selection of principals by school boards, and the leadership development and formation of Catholic school principals.

Limitations and Delimitations of the Study

This study was limited to primary school principals in Singapore, due to the researcher's experience in the Singapore education system. Principals in Catholic primary schools and government primary schools in Singapore were included. Principals' perceptions of their role as justice agents in education were gathered. Because this study was limited to schools in Singapore, it will be difficult to generalize the findings to other countries that may have different

historical, cultural, religious, political, and economic backgrounds from Singapore. Although some findings could be relevant to secondary schools in Singapore, one should not assume that the findings can be applied to secondary schools in Singapore. Permission from the MOE was obtained before principals were able to participate in this study.

This study on the perception of principals about their role as justice agents did not include investigation into the perception of teachers and students about how their principals had enacted their role as justice agents. My experience as a principal in the Singapore education system for more than 10 years required that bracketing be a rigorous process in this phenomenological study to reduce bias. Additionally, I am professionally and personally familiar with many of the participants in this study.

Definition of Terms

The following terms have been operationalized for this study:

Beliefs: A set of conceptual representations that signify to its holder a reality or given state of affairs of sufficient validity, truth, or trustworthiness to warrant reliance on it as a guide to personal thought and action (Richardson, Anders, Tidwell, & Lloyd, 1991)

Catholic school culture: A school's way of life rooted in Christ, a Gospel-based creed and code, and a Catholic vision that provides the inspiration and identity and includes the school's history, traditions, symbols, relationships, norms, and educational programs (Cook, 2015).

Culture builder: A principal who inspires commitment from the staff toward a shared vision and shared values; enables all staff to understand how their contribution fits into organization strategy; promotes a learning culture in their community; and develops staff,

continually strengthens professional expertise, and cares for the career development of the staff (MOE, 2014b).

Educational leader of curriculum and instruction: A principal who has an informed understanding of the learning process and is able to lead staff to achieve the shared goal of developing the desired student outcomes. Educational leaders of curriculum and instruction avail themselves of professional knowledge in curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, psychology of learning, and global issues, contexts, and trends (MOE, 2014b).

Ethical leader: A principal whose leadership is values-driven and undergirded by the Singapore education system's ethos of the teaching profession and philosophy for educational leadership. Ethical leaders possess a strong sense of personal identity, self-awareness, and understanding of their own leadership (MOE, 2014b).

Justice in school: The two components of justice in school are (a) Equality and equity in educational provision, requiring that the same resources are made available to all students and schools, and more resources are intentionally provided to better serve the students with the highest need (Bates, 2006; Larson & Barton, 2013). (b) Action grounded in a commitment to inclusion, valuing Singapore's sociocultural diversity, and promoting social cohesion and harmony (MOE, 2012).

School culture: The ways the school seeks to define, strengthen, and articulate those enduring values, beliefs, and cultural strands that give the school its unique identity over time (Sergiovanni, 2009).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Restatement of the Problem

Justice in school is central to the Catholic church and the government of Singapore. Both institutions have expectations of principals to serve the needs of every student through equality and equity in educational provision to all students, and a commitment to inclusion. However, limited research described how principals of Catholic and government primary schools in Singapore perceive their role as justice agents and how they fulfill this expectation.

Overview of the Literature

The literature that informs this investigation into principals' perceptions about their role as justice agents, and how their beliefs about justice influence their leadership practice focused on two main areas: (a) the concept of justice in CST, and in Singapore's national values, and (b) theories and empirical studies on leadership. Theories and research on leadership include ethical leadership, educational leadership for justice, the impact of transformational and shared leadership on school culture, and educational leadership in curriculum and instruction.

Justice in Catholic Social Teaching and Singapore National Values

With reference to the conceptual framework of this study shown in Figure 1, I envisaged that the sources of influence on the beliefs of principals about justice would be their personal formation and life experiences or the national values of the country. As the scope of this study was limited to principals of Catholic schools and government schools in Singapore, this literature review similarly focused on CST about justice and the conception of justice as a national value in Singapore.

It is relevant to examine how the concept of justice has developed over time. For centuries the concept of justice has been explored and analyzed, beginning with *The Republic* in which Plato wrote that justice was the requirement of the state (Duffy, 2005). The centrality of justice in society envisioned by Plato established the philosophical foundation for the pursuit of justice throughout history. According to Aristotle (334–323BC/1980), to be fair, justice must involve equality and equity. To Aristotle, the terms *equitable* and *morally good* were equivalent (Chroust & Osborn, 1942). The term justice has many definitions: in the Catholic Church documents the terms *justice* and *social justice* have been used interchangeably (Duffy, 2005).

Social consciousness, the very essence of Christianity, is rooted in the Scriptures (Klackner, 2006). Klackner (2006) surveyed a compilation of biblical foundations and the writings of the early Fathers of the Church, particularly Aquinas, to better understand the basis of modern Catholic social wisdom and teaching. Additionally, Klackner traced the evolution of CST by examining modern documents on CST, beginning with Leo XIII's (1891) *The Condition of Labour*, and proceeding through to Benedict XIV's 2005 *God is Love*.

Klackner (2006) claimed that the introduction of the term social justice into official CST was attributed to Pius XI (1931) in the document *After Forty Years*. The term social justice described the socioeconomic activity of individuals to create societal institutions that protect the common good while recognizing the individual good of each person. John XXIII (1961, as cited in Klackner, 2006), in *Christianity and Social Progress*, set the Church on the course of obligatory societal reform on behalf of the poor and effective distribution of goods in society. The Second Vatican Council (1965, as cited in Klackner, 2006) in *The Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World* elucidated the five central elements of personalism, social nature of the person, the relation between the Church and the world, justice, and development.

The Council called the faithful of the Church to recognize the centrality of the Church's social mission in the world and to engage in works of charity and justice.

Paul VI (1975), in *Evangelization in the Modern World*, noted that the Church's mission is to promote the kingdom of God (as cited in Klackner, 2006). The message of the Gospel includes rights and duties of human beings, family life, societal life, peace, and justice. The documents of Pope Paul VI and the Synod of Bishops placed social justice at the heart of the mission of the church and brought political action into the realm of Christian discipleship.

Although John Paul II (1981) furthered his predecessors' moral framework concerning the dignity of the human person, the Pope denied that the Church had a role in political institutions, and prohibited clergy from holding political offices (Klackner, 2006). John Paul II separated taking a political stance from taking a political role, positing that lack of societal responsibility for impoverishment is a social sin. From this perspective, to be Christian means one has a personal obligation for justice by working toward the abolition of unjust structures that imprison human beings in poverty. John Paul II accepted the possible need for confrontation if an appeal to authority failed to bring an end to injustice. However, in such situations, the Pope called for decisive nonviolent action in solidarity to confront unjust structures. Benedict XVI (2005, as cited in Klackner, 2006) insisted the Church's role in social activity is that of teacher. The Church presents guidelines, teaches respect for human dignity, and encourages people to work for the common good. Benedict XVI proposed the Church should not take a direct political role on issues of justice.

In response to the Church's teachings, the U.S. Catholic Bishops issued a call to justice in their 1998 document, *Sharing Catholic Social Teaching: Challenges and Directions* (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998). According to the Bishops, justice implies that people

have the obligation to be active and productive participants in the life of society and that society has a duty to enable them to participate in this way. Furthermore, justice involves the embedding of moral ideals in the laws, customs, institutions, and other structures of society and to promote the common good. The Council urged Catholic schools in the United States to strengthen their commitment to sharing CST at every level of Catholic education and faith formation (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998).

Dorr (2014), relying on the Apostolic Exhortation, *Evangelii Gaudium*, stated that Pope Francis' key contribution to CST is his renewed emphasis on all that Vatican II represented, as well as the commitment to apply that teaching to the church itself. Additionally, examination of current church documents shows that Pope Francis has extended the church's teaching on justice by amplifying the relationship between justice and mercy. Francis (2015), in *Misericordiae Vultus*, explained that justice and mercy should be viewed as two dimensions of a single reality instead of two contradictory realities. Francis defined justice as a fundamental concept for civil society, meant to be governed by the rule of law. Francis also understood justice as that which is rightly due to each individual. However, to avoid a legalistic perspective, Francis counseled the faithful to recall that in Sacred Scripture, justice is conceived essentially as the faithful's abandonment of themselves to God's will. Furthermore, Francis emphasized that mercy is a fundamental aspect of Jesus' mission; Jesus taught that mercy must be at the center of the rule of life for the disciples. However, studies have yet to be carried out to investigate how Catholic churches and schools in the United States and in Singapore have incorporated Pope Francis's conception of justice in CST.

In addition to the influence of personal values, formation, and life experiences, national values impact principals' beliefs about justice. A key reason for this study on the principal as a

justice agent arises from the notion that justice, together with equality and meritocracy, are the founding principles of Singapore (National Heritage Board, 2014; Parliament of Singapore, 2009). One significant way schools in Singapore serve the goal of nation-building is through the singing of the national anthem and the recitation of the national pledge by all teachers and students at the start of every school day. The Singapore pledge reads as follows: “We, the citizens of Singapore, pledge ourselves as one united people, regardless of race, language or religion, to build a democratic society based on justice and equality so as to achieve happiness, prosperity and progress for our nation.” Nevertheless, students’ daily experiences in school determine the extent to which students believe the value of justice is indeed in operation in their lives. Consequently, the principal, in shaping school culture, policies, and practices, is in the position to greatly impact the lives of teachers and students and their experience of justice.

Ethical Leadership

Educators and educational researchers have placed increasing attention on ethical educational leadership around the world in response to the impact of globalization, an intensifying climate of accountability, and calls for school reform. Studies on moral or ethical educational leadership have been conducted in the United States, the United Kingdom, Canada, Sweden, Turkey, Australia, and Asia (Cherkowski, Walker, & Kutsyuruba, 2015; Cranston, Ehrich, & Kimber, 2006; Ehrich, Harris, Klenowski, Smeed, & Spina, 2015; Hammersley-Fletcher, 2015; Larson & Barton, 2013; Ming & Walker, 2007; Norberg & Johansson, 2007; Sagnak, 2010; Stevenson, 2007).

Stevenson (2007) found that effective principals in multiethnic schools possessed explicit values, based on commitments to equity and inclusion, and those principals were able to articulate these values in ways that allowed them to shape organizational culture and develop

policies and practices that promote social justice in their schools. These effective principals were not merely passive implementers of national policies; they shaped their school policies in ways that reflect personal and organizational values. However, in research by Hammersley-Fletcher (2015), examining the experiences and perceptions of English headteachers and the tensions they faced when they were required to implement government prescriptions and initiatives that may have conflicted with their educational values and beliefs, ethical positions might be eroded and reoriented simultaneously, and drawing a line was difficult in a climate of accountability and public recrimination if a principal made a mistake. Thus, despite having the best interests of students at heart, headteachers felt pressure to meet external targets set for them.

Greenfield (2004) asserted that in the contemporary educational climate, one can perceive ethical educational leadership as a pathway through which educational leaders can empower themselves and members of their school community in keeping faithful to the moral work of teaching and learning. Greenfield's notion of educational leadership as a moral activity resonates with this study on the principal as a justice agent because the philosophy of educational leadership in Singapore anchors in values and purpose, and emphasizes the centrality of ethical leadership. Thus, it is pertinent to examine the beliefs of educational leaders about justice in school and investigate how those beliefs influence their leadership practice. Furthermore, P. T. Ng (2013), in examining school accountability from the perspective of Singapore school leaders, found a moral basis to accountability such that participants regarded accountability as an "inner compass" instead of conformity to an external structure, which in the case of Singapore is the MOE. Participants in the P. T. Ng study claimed to be accountable to students, parents, the country, citizens, and themselves, despite close alignment with MOE headquarters. Additionally, findings showed an inseparability of the concepts of accountability and responsibility.

Other empirical studies (Cherkowski et al., 2015; Ehrich et al., 2015; Frick, Faircloth, & Little, 2013) on ethical educational leadership had, as their theoretical foundation, a multidimensional ethical paradigm based on work by Starratt (1991) and Shapiro and Stefkovich (2001) that incorporated the ethics of critique, justice, care, and the profession. The ethic of critique requires the educational administrator to examine current structures and processes in the school, question if inherent injustices exist, and take action to redress those injustices. The ethic of justice demands the school serve the common good and the rights of individuals in the school, as well as assesses how frequently rules and procedures are applied evenly. The ethic of care complements the ethic of justice in respecting the intrinsic dignity and worth of individuals, and creates a culture of respect and caring among teachers and students. The ethic of the profession expects school leaders to be able to identify their own professional code of ethics, based on the examination of their individual personal code of ethics as well as professional standards. The ethic of the profession also calls on school leaders to place students at the center of their decision-making process on ethical issues.

Studies by Frick et al. (2013), Cherkowski et al. (2015), and Ehrich et al. (2015), grounded in a multidimensional ethical paradigm, examined principals' practices in leading for equity with regard to race, class, and special education. Cherkowski et al. conducted a descriptive research study on the moral agency of a sample of Canadian principals and the ethical decision-making processes they employed. In the study, the authors defined moral agency as "the ability to make moral judgments based on commonly held notion of right and wrong, to do so on behalf of others, and to be held accountable for these actions (Angus, 2003)" (Cherkowski et al., 2015, p.3). The study used Starratt's (2005) five domains of responsibility in moral educational leadership to view and analyze the data. Starratt's (2005) five domains of

responsibility in moral educational leadership are (a) to engage as an ethical human being, (b) to respect civil rights and to act in the public trust, (c) to understand how to use and know how to appropriately apply curriculum, (d) to develop and manage organizational structures to enable the workings of the school, and (e) to transform the school into an authentic learning community. Starratt's (2005) five domains of responsibility in moral educational leadership evolved into Starratt's (2009) five levels of ethical enactment.

Data collection by Cherkowski et al. (2015) included a request for respondents to provide insights, stories, and experiences on 12 open-ended questions in four categories: (a) inclusion of others in ethical decision making, (b) relationships with others when confronted with an ethical dilemma, (c) personal characteristics for moral agency, and d) the role of influential relationships in decision making. Findings showed that the principals saw themselves as ethically motivated individuals whose personal code of ethics aligned with professional values of school leadership. Principals perceived moral agency as intertwined with the establishment of a culture of trust among their staff, with role-modeling by principals a necessity in establishing a strong ethical culture. Principles were challenged by the need to balance a desire to develop a collaborative decision-making culture with adherence to rules and prescriptions of a public bureaucracy.

Ehrich et al. (2015) explored Australian school principals' perceptions of ethical leadership practices and how they meet systemic demands of accountability and government requirements while leading for high levels of quality and equity. The researchers defined ethical leadership as "a social, relational practice concerned with the moral purpose of education (Angus, 2006)" (Ehrich et al., 2015, p.199); and viewed ethical leaders as those who act fairly and justly. Ehrich et al. used Starratt's (1996) ethical framework, incorporating ethics of critique, ethics of justice, and ethics of care to interpret principals' practices. Four key findings emerged:

(a) principals used data pervasively to inform and direct their practices and conversations with teachers; (b) ethics was central to principals' leadership practices. Nevertheless, ethical leadership practice was complex and challenging in the accountability driven context; (c) Starratt's (1996) ethical framework was relevant in interpreting principals' practices; and (d) principals referred to the dilemmas they encountered as a result of competing priorities, and all the principals used a variety of strategies to address the dilemmas.

Frick et al. (2013) examined how elementary school principals in Oklahoma interpreted their experience of leadership decision making as a moral activity in the context of educational administration of students with disabilities. The theoretical framework of the study was Shapiro and Stefkovich's *Ethic of the Profession and its Model for Students' Best Interests* (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001, 2005, 2011; Stefkovich, 2006). The authors sought evidence of principals' moral reasoning about the decisions they had made or how they would have decided in a hypothetical situation given as a dilemma vignette. The purpose of the research was to study deep-seated value orientations, tacit assumptions, and professionally socialized dispositions that inform professional practice of educational administration. The research questions focused on (a) how principals balance the needs of students with disabilities against the needs of all students as a group, (b) whether principals are able to articulate the principles that guide their decision making, and (c) how principals formulate ethical decisions about special-education issues and what constitutes moral action. Findings showed that elementary school principals sharply distinguish between the best interests of one student and the best interests of students as a group, and found the balancing of the two priorities to be difficult. Even though the principals would like to consider the best interests of every student, the best interests of all students were central to their thinking, decisions, and actions.

Serving the best interests of special-education students would be a pertinent dimension of ethical leadership practice in this study. Given that the MOE aims for every student to complete secondary education and go on to pursue a postsecondary qualification, it would be illuminating to examine how elementary school principals in the Singapore context balance the best interests of special-education students with the best interests of students as a group. This study on the principal as a justice agent will also focus on leadership practices aimed at equity with regard to race, class, and special education. In this study, I will employ Starratt's (2009) five levels of ethical enactment as a lens to analyze the ethical leadership practices of principals in Singapore. Starratt (2009) contended that the distinguishing feature of the ethics of educational leadership is its pursuit of transformative ethics throughout the educational enterprise. The ethical educational leader inspires the school community to see learning and teaching as a moral activity and to embrace the intrinsic ethic of teaching and learning. Starratt (2009) suggested that the cultivation of the virtues of responsibility, authenticity, and presence will energize and sustain the transformational ethics of an educational leader.

Educational Leadership for Justice

Kohlberg (1981) claimed that "the central moral value of the school, like that of society, was justice" (p. 39), arguing that "there is great concern not only to make schools more just—that is, to provide equality of educational opportunity and to allow freedom of belief—but also to educate so that free and just people emerge from schools" (p. 74). Yet, Kohlberg's notion of justice is that "justice is not a rule or a set of rules, it is a moral principle ... a mode of choosing that is universal" (p. 39), and that it is adopted by all people in all situations. Developing on Kohlberg's conception of a just school, Sergiovanni (1992) proposed the idea of the school as a moral community bound by a covenant that transforms it from a secular organization into a

sacred organization. Sergiovanni contended that “effective schools have virtuous qualities that account for a large measure of their success” (p. 99).

Starratt (1996) asserted that currently, two schools of thought concern the ethic of justice with regard to educational leadership. In one school of thought, which can be traced to Hobbes and Rawls, the individual, conceived as prior to society, is the primary human reality, independent of social relationships. Self-interest drives the individual, and social life is maintained by social contracts where the individual calculates obligations to social justice based on personal advantage. The second school of thought rests in Aristotle, Rousseau, Hegel, Marx, and Dewey where society is regarded as the prior reality in which the individual develops. Life in society teaches the individuals about morality, and the community practices ethics for the elevation of human dignity and mutual care. Starratt (1996) postulated that, in a school setting, issues of governance could encompass understandings of justice from both general schools of thought, and that the school can promote social order through the school community’s commitment to carry out ongoing critiques of structures that work against justice.

Literature on social justice suggests that the definition of social justice can be problematic because consensus on the meaning of the term is elusive (Bogotch, 2002; Ryan, 2006; Theoharis, 2007). Vincent (2003) stated that social justice has traditionally been discussed in economic terms as distributive justice, but current focus on the politics of recognition directs attention to cultural and relational aspects of social justice. According to Vincent, who referenced the works of Young (1990, 1996, 1997), differentiation by class, gender, age, disability, sexuality, and ethnicity leads to different ways people perceive justice, and that the cultural complexity renders distributive justice alone insufficient. North (2006), on examining the complexity, contradictions, and relational aspects of social-justice theories, argued against a

unified conceptualization of social justice. North suggested sustaining meaningful and plural perspectives of social justice may shift with changing cultural context and conditions. Similarly, Cribb and Gewirtz (2003) developed and refined plural conceptions of social justice. They enlarged the agenda of social justice beyond distribution and recognition to include associational justice, which encompasses opportunities for previously subordinated groups to participate in decision making involving the definition and implementation of the principles of distribution and recognition.

Consequently, Bates (2006) contended that social justice is central to the pursuit of education because at the heart of the educational process is the issue of values. Accordingly, social justice should also be central to educational administration. Drawing on the work of Fraser (1997), Bates maintained that social justice in education demands distributive justice and recognitional justice. Bates understood distributive justice to mean comprising equalization of resources available to all students and schools, as well as equity in resource allocation where “more than equal resources ought to be allocated to those who suffer from greater disadvantages” (p. 150). Fraser (1997) suggested that cultural justice seeks to redress cultural domination, nonrecognition, and disrespect. Thus, Bates advocated for recognition as a foundation of social justice where recognition encompasses concerns that are more cultural than economic, and involves affirmation of the cultural practices of marginalized groups.

Brown (2004) asserted that the call to educational leadership for social justice in the United States stems from evidence that students of different races and socioeconomic status experience gaps in achievement scores, teacher expectations, and allocation of resources. Leadership for social justice requires educational leaders to expand their awareness of those gaps, acknowledge the inequities and inequalities in the system, and take the necessary action. In

addition, Brown, with reference to Daresh (2002), stated that the landscape of educational practice is complex, and to navigate it, a leader's personal formation and integration of personal and professional knowledge can provide the moral compass. Brown proposed developing awareness through critical reflection, which involves the examination of personal assumptions, values, and beliefs, as well as the deliberate consideration of the ethical implications and consequences of school practices on students. Brown suggested that one can acknowledge inequalities and inequities through rational discourse, which involves extended and repeated conversations to better understand personal biases as well as ways each person can differently construct those issues. The aim of rational discourse is not to reach consensus but to grow a culture of careful listening and openness to new perspectives. Brown argued that educators need to act, based on reflection, and those actions in the enactment of social justice should be anchored not merely to the technical aspects of leading a school but to its moral calling.

Ryan (2006) contended that schools will achieve social justice only when they institute systemic change that allows everyone to be included in the social processes common to communities and schools. Central to inclusion is how members of society treat one another. Ryan argued that for leadership in a school to be consistent with inclusive ideals, the enactment of leadership in the school needs to be perceived and practiced as an equitable, collective process. Ryan delineated the practice of inclusive leadership as one that advocates for inclusion, develops critical consciousness, nurtures dialogue, emphasizes student learning, adopts inclusive decision- and policymaking strategies and incorporates a whole-school approach.

In the Theoharis (2007) examination of the practice of educational leadership for social justice, the purposive sample comprised principals who sought to be educational administrators who enact social justice and equity in the schools they led. The empirical study addressed the

ways principals enacted social justice in public schools, the resistance they faced in their justice work, and the strategies they developed to sustain their work. Study findings showed the leaders enacted social justice by (a) raising student achievement, (b) improving school structures, (c) recentering and enhancing staff capacity, and (d) strengthening school culture and community. Although these findings align with the conclusions of other researchers (McKenzie & Locke, 2010; Ryan, 2006) that social justice in school requires whole-school commitment to equity consciousness and high-quality teaching, a study by Taysum and Gunter (2008) indicated that what the school leaders can do in their schools is limited by the national curriculum. The principals in the study perceived the national curriculum as one that reproduced exploitation, economic marginalization and deprivation, and prevented cultural justice.

McKenzie and Locke (2010) proposed that justice in schools can be achieved through collective responsibility for the achievement of equity in educational provision. In a whole-school commitment, all teachers and staff must accept and act on four beliefs: (a) all children are capable of high academic success, (b) high expectations of the children should be regardless of race, social class, gender, sexual orientation, learning differences, culture, language, religion, and so on, (c) adults in the school are primarily responsible for student learning, and (d) elimination of the achievement gap requires a change in teaching practices that do not work for some students. Every teacher should be expected to produce high-quality teaching, which should lead to systemic coherence such that all schools in a school district have high-quality teaching.

However, to engender equity consciousness and high-quality teaching, the principal's focus on instructional leadership should precede the focus on transformational leadership (McKenzie & Locke, 2010). McKenzie and Locke (2010) grounded their study on the meta-analysis conducted by Robinson, Lloyd, and Rowe (2008), which examined the relative impact

of different types of leadership on students' academic and nonacademic outcomes. Robinson et al. found that the average impact of instructional leadership on student outcomes was three to four times that of transformational leadership. The meta-analysis by Robinson et al. identified five sets of leadership practices or dimensions: establishing goals and expectations; resourcing strategically; planning, coordinating, and evaluating teaching and the curriculum; promoting and participating in teacher learning and development; and ensuring an orderly and supportive environment. The meta-analysis revealed that among the five leadership dimensions studied, the leadership dimension involving promoting and participating in teacher learning had the strongest effect.

The emphasis McKenzie and Locke (2010) placed on instructional leadership in the enactment of social justice echoes the recognition that the MOE gives to leadership in curriculum and instruction as a key domain of educational leadership, seeking equality and equity in the provision of educational opportunities to all students. Hence, the MOE engaged Robinson as a consultant in 2007 to enhance the capacity of principals in Singapore as leaders of curriculum and instruction. Furthermore, the MOE defined leadership in curriculum and instruction as the actions the leadership team takes to achieve growth in teaching and student learning. Thus, leadership in curriculum and instruction is the collective responsibility of the members of the leadership team, comprising the principal, vice principals, heads of departments, subject heads, and senior teachers (MOE, 2009).

Empirical studies on the enactment of educational leadership for social justice illustrate the importance of alignment between the ideals of social justice and its practice in schools. Moreover, decision making at the district level impacts sustainable success in leadership for social justice in schools where succession planning is crucial in ensuring the continuing growth

of equity in educational provision. Fullan Kolton (2013) employed a critically oriented qualitative interpretivist approach to understand how principals conceptualize social justice and how their understandings influence the decisions they make when confronting a dilemma. In a large urban center in Western Canada, participants expressed the need to examine and dialogue about their practice. Research literature supported the creation of dialogical spaces to assist school principals to better frame the dilemmas they confront; clarify their underlying values, determine an effective decision-making process, develop new theories and conceptions about their problem solving, and increase metacognitive thinking about their practice. However, Fullan Kolton study showed that metacognitive engagement does not necessarily manifest in a change of practice. Inconsistencies in the research data indicated a potential disconnection between ideals and practice that with social-justice work.

Another empirical study, conducted by Kuehn-Schettler (2014), was a multicase study of three elementary schools in the United States. The study focus was on the beliefs and corresponding practices implemented by socially just elementary schools and leaders who successfully sustained improvement gains for traditionally marginalized students during leadership transitions. The conceptual framework proposed for this study was an integration of the literature on social-justice leadership, strategic management of human capital, and sustainable leadership, with a focus on events during the succession process. Findings suggested that these leaders embraced specific leadership beliefs that established a core value based on social-justice principles. Leadership practices became an expression of those beliefs. These practices, engaged by district administrators, predecessor principals, and successor principals, sustained equitable improvement efforts over a transition in leadership. The practices included districtwide alignment of a continuous-improvement process, alignment of decision making with

core beliefs and philosophy, and recruitment of principals capable of sustaining current improvement efforts.

It follows that leading for justice requires principals to be clear about how they can operationalize the concept of justice in schools. Larson and Barton (2013) reinforced Bates's (2006) argument that equality emphasizes the provision of the same resources to all students, but in an equity-based model, resources are intentionally adjusted to better serve the highest need students. This view of equality and equity in educational provision dovetails with the practice in the Singapore education system, which provides opportunities for all to succeed and develops the potential of every child through equitably resourced schools (MOE, 2016c). Data on educational equity from the Programme for International Student Assessment 2015 revealed that in Singapore, relatively small proportions of low performers did not attain baseline levels of proficiency. Singapore's proportion of low performers in each of the three domains (science, reading, and mathematics) was among the lowest of all participating education systems. Meanwhile, Singapore's proportion of top performers in each domain is the highest among all participating education systems (MOE, 2016c).

School Culture—Transformational/Transformative and Shared Leadership

Greenfield (2004) maintained that the core of the work in schools by principals and teachers is the relationships among people. Greenfield recognized the seminal work of Burns (1978) in differentiating transactional and transforming leadership as an important contribution to the study of educational leadership. Building on Burns's definition of transactional and transforming leadership, Bass (1985) added that transactional leaders also recognize what followers want, but are responsive to followers' immediate self-interests only if followers can perform effectively. Bass used the term *transformational* to describe the type of leadership that

Burns calls *transforming*. Bass described the transformational leader as one who, through articulation and role-modeling, raises consciousness about higher considerations and moves those influenced to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group, organization, or country. The transcendence of self-interests can produce extraordinary effort that exceeds expectations. The transformational leader's high standards of performance and accomplishment serve as the inspiration for others to reach those standards.

Shields (2004) examined the application of the concept of transformational leadership to educational leadership. Shields proposed the use of the term *transformative* rather than transformational to signify that leadership that transforms a school into a just educational institution requires more than leading organizational change. Shields claimed that the facilitation of moral dialogue is a vital element of educational leadership for social justice. Shields perceived transformative leadership as "deeply rooted in moral and ethical values in a social context" (2004, p. 113). Shields's contention was that strong relationships with all children are at the heart of educational equity. Therefore, it is essential for educators to acknowledge differences in children's ethnicity, social class, and lived experiences, and engage in dialogue about how the needs of all students can be served. Shields asserted that transformative leaders assess whether their policies and practices are socially just by examining the extent to which educational decisions are just, democratic, empathetic, and optimistic.

One can infer from empirical studies (Jenlink & Jenlink, 2012; Kose, 2009; Marks & Printy, 2003; Scanlan, 2012) that principals who lead for justice are transformational/transformative leaders, capable of generating collective responsibility among the stakeholders of their schools to achieve equitable practices. Transformational or transformative school leaders intentionally and frequently communicate their school values in

the process of community building, and thereby, motivate teachers, students, and parents to go beyond self-interest to strive for a higher calling.

Kose (2009) investigated how principals promote professional development for social justice in their schools. An additional aim of the study was to offer an empirically based framework for professional development in education for social justice. Findings supported five principal roles which, in conjunction, optimize professional learning: transformative visionary, transformative learning leader, transformative structural leader, transformative cultural leader, and transformative political leader. Findings suggested that when principals enact the five transformative leadership roles, they create conditions for professional development in subject-matter expertise as well as student identity development, both of which promote socially just student learning, teaching, and organizational learning.

Scanlan (2012) reasoned that promoting educational equity in schools presumes a process for educators to learn about social justice. In a study of how communities of practice impacted the learning among educators in an aspiring socially just school, Scanlan sought to increase understanding of how sociocultural learning promotes changes in practice. Findings indicated that school leaders can design for just schooling by cultivating communities of practice as spaces for transformative learning. Transformative learning is a generative process that leads to a shift in mindsets, a necessary dimension of social-justice leadership. Thus, an implication is that transformational school leaders create opportunities for educators to engage in communities of practice concerned with social justice.

Marks and Printy (2003) added another dimension to the understanding of transformational leadership in school by proposing the connectedness of transformational leadership and shared leadership. Marks and Printy examined the effect of transformational and

shared instructional leadership on school performance, measured by the quality of pedagogy and achievement of students. Where transformational leadership coupled with shared instructional leadership, high-quality pedagogy emerged among the teachers, and students performed at high levels on authentic measures of achievement. However, shared leadership was absent in schools that lacked transformational leadership. Marks and Printy recognized that their study supported the observations of Hallinger and Leithwood (1998) that transformational leadership does not imply instructional leadership. For instructional leadership to develop, schools must intentionally seek and foster it.

Marks and Printy (2003) further suggested that teachers have the desire and expertise to lead; hence, strong transformational leadership by the principal is essential in supporting teachers' commitment to participate in shared instructional leadership. In the Singapore context, educators use the term *distributed leadership* instead of shared leadership. Distributed leadership in curriculum and instruction involves the actions the school leadership team takes to achieve growth in teaching and student learning. The leadership team in a Singapore school comprises the principal, vice principals, heads of departments, subject and level heads, as well as master and senior teachers. However, the distributed perspective of leadership focuses not on roles and positions but on leadership practices generated in the interactions of leaders, followers, and their situation, a view promulgated by Spillane (2006).

In addition, Jenlink and Jenlink (2012) proposed that transformational school leaders who seek to shape a school culture that promotes justice need to be clear about their personal stance on social justice, and be skillful in generating a common vision and collective responsibility among school stakeholders to achieve just practices. In another study on shared leadership, Leithwood and Mascall (2008) found that higher achieving schools awarded leadership influence

to all school members and other stakeholders to a greater degree than that do lower achieving schools. These differences were most significant in the leadership exercised by school teams, parents, and students. However, Leithwood and Mascall cautioned that some schools were more concerned with the appearance of change than with the substance of change in the distribution of leadership. Their findings reinforced the importance of establishing a common understanding of school values and goals among stakeholders as well as the necessity for schoolwide implementation of desired practices.

Educational Leadership in Curriculum and Instruction

Scanlan's (2012) study on how communities of practice in schools can serve educators' learning about social justice strengthened the study by Sanzo, Sherman, and Clayton (2011) on the importance of developing and sustaining a community of professionals that share responsibility for the school. Principals in the study described how the organization of their schools as a professional learning community (PLC) promoted shared leadership, which empowered staff members (Sanzo et al., 2011). Moreover, Seashore Louis, Dretzke, and Wahlstrom (2010) suggested that shared leadership and instructional leadership are complementary approaches, and both are necessary. Thus, school leaders and teachers need to acknowledge and act on the increased importance of collective and shared work around instruction.

Hairon and Dimmock (2012) described the introduction of PLCs into the Singapore education system, outlining the evolution of education policy in Singapore from 1997, leading to the call by the MOE for every school to be organized as a PLC. In designing an education that enables its citizens to thrive in a knowledge-based economy, the Singapore education system seeks to provide students with a curriculum that develops 21st-century work skills, and,

simultaneously, maintains a high level of academic achievement. Consequently, the MOE envisioned the need for new curricular and pedagogical models. Such reconstructed curricular models necessitate that teachers actively engage in curriculum development and innovation, and PLCs are the means to build capacity of school leaders and teachers to initiate school-based curricular changes. The concept of PLC envisaged by the MOE built on the work of Dufour, Dufour, and Eaker (2008): when a school functions as a PLC, the school ensures students learn, the school leader and teachers build a culture of collaboration, and the school focuses on student outcomes.

Although education systems in the United States, Singapore, and other countries embrace the concept of the PLC, Leithwood, Patten, and Jantzi (2010) alerted school leaders to further assess the effectiveness of the PLC in improving student learning. Leithwood et al. (2010) tested a conception of how school leadership influences student learning in Ontario, Canada. The authors proposed that leadership influence affects student learning through four paths: rational, emotional, organizational, and family. Multiple variables along each path impact student learning to varying degrees. To improve student learning, leaders must improve the conditions of selected variables on the paths. Variables of the rational path, comprising academic press and disciplinary climate, significantly impacted student achievement. Of the two variables on the emotions path, collective teacher efficacy had a more significant effect than teacher trust. The organizational path, instructional time, and PLC made no significant contributions to student learning. On the family path, computers in the home made a significant contribution, but adult help had negative effects. The paths markedly interacted, but only three of the paths had similar sized, significant, and positive contributions. The organizational path had no significant effect. The implication is that school leaders should focus on the leadership practices that are most likely to improve the

conditions of variables in schools for which there is already considerable evidence of impact on student learning.

Summary

Educational leadership for justice engenders critical consciousness of the impact of school structures, policies, and processes on the well-being and success of every student. Educational leadership for justice involves equality and equity in the provision of educational opportunities as well as the development of an inclusive school culture. Leadership requires a whole-school approach toward growth in student learning and community building. Hence, principals' roles as leaders of curriculum and instruction, as well as culture builders, will be significant. Moreover, principals' capacity for leading change will determine their success.

Therefore, this study on the principal as a justice agent sought to examine the influences of beliefs about justice of principals in Singapore schools. In this study, I sought to identify the links between the transformational and distributed instructional-leadership practices of these principals, and their establishment of school culture and policies that promote justice. I elucidated how principals in Singapore nurtured the leadership capacity of teachers for justice, and cultivated collective responsibility among members of the school community to improve the learning of every student.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Restatement of the Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore the perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about their role as justice agents. Although justice in school, defined as equality and equity in educational provision to all students, is central to the Catholic church and the government of Singapore, a paucity of research described how principals of Catholic and government primary schools in Singapore perceive their role as justice agents and fulfill this expectation. This study sought to bridge the gap in the research on educational leadership in Singapore by examining how principals' beliefs about justice influence their practice as (a) an ethical leader, (b) culture builder, and (c) educational leader of curriculum and instruction. The study elucidated the factors concerning the principal as a justice agent: (a) the perceptions of principals of primary schools in Singapore about leadership for justice as it relates to primary education in Singapore, (b) the origins of principals' beliefs about justice in school, (c) how principals' beliefs about justice shaped the school culture, and (d) ways educational policies, programs, and practices in these schools promoted justice.

Research Design

Research on educational leadership is complex because it addresses human behavior and development. Each individual is unique in thinking, emotional behavior, personality, and social interactions. Furthermore, the behavior of people in groups and the influence of group members on a person's behavior increases the complexity of research on educational leadership. The epistemological position in this study is that knowledge can develop through the interpretation of the social reality experienced by participants in the research. In this qualitative inquiry, a

phenomenological approach guided the description of experiences, and the investigation and portrayal of the essence of the phenomenon. Semistructured interviews were employed in the production of knowledge concerning the meaning participants attached to their lived experiences of educational leadership as justice agents.

Qualitative Research

This qualitative research examined the experiences of primary school principals in Singapore in their enactment of educational leadership for justice. Krathwol (2009) suggested qualitative procedures may be useful when a study involves exploring, describing, and explaining complex interpersonal interactions, and when emotions and feelings are attached to the phenomena. Extending this idea, Merriam and Tisdell (2016) proposed that the primary goal of a qualitative study is to uncover how individuals construct reality in their social interactions and interpret these meanings to make sense of their lives and their worlds. Bogdan and Biklen (2007) advised that qualitative researchers remain cognizant of and reject their preconceptions of what they will find, and instead, proceed as if they know little about the people and settings they will study. Bogdan and Biklen submitted that because the study is inductive, the questions would evolve and be shaped by the data collection. Therefore, qualitative researchers would not go into a study with a hypothesis to test or precise questions to answer. Hence, the purpose of this study was to allow participants to explain what it meant for a principal, as a justice agent, to lead for justice. Because educational leadership for justice is, at its core, an emotional response to the call to serve others, the meaning for each principal was constructed based on individual lived experiences. Accordingly, this study portrayed phenomenon in context (Krathwol, 2009).

Phenomenology

The research followed Moustakas's (1994) procedures for phenomenology, described by Creswell and Poth (2018). According to Creswell and Poth, a phenomenological study begins with the identification of a phenomenon of interest to study, which in this research was how primary school principals, as justice agents, led for justice. The next step was to distinguish and specify the broad philosophical assumptions of phenomenology. Moustakas (1994) identified the core processes of phenomenology as epoche, transcendental-phenomenological reduction, and imaginative variation. Epoche "requires a new way of looking at things, a way that requires that we learn to see what stands before our eyes, what we can distinguish and describe" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 33). In epoche, researchers need to bracket or set aside, as much as possible, their own understandings, judgments, and experiences to fully describe how participants view the phenomenon. Transcendental-phenomenological reduction requires researchers to move beyond the everyday to a state where each experience is perceived in a fresh way, and a complete description of the phenomenon is given of "its essential constituents, variations of perceptions, thoughts, feelings, sounds, colours and shapes" (Moustakas, 1994, p. 34). Finally, in imaginative variation, researchers use significant statements and themes from participants' descriptions of their experiences to seek possible meanings of the phenomenon from divergent perspectives. According to Moustakas, the aim of imaginative variation is to arrive at "the underlying and precipitating factors that account for what is being experienced" (1994, p. 98).

Creswell and Poth (2018) summarized the procedures of phenomenology as follows:

- (a) collect data from individuals who have experienced the phenomenon by using deep multiple interviews;
- (b) analyze the data to highlight significant statements that provide understanding of how participants experienced the phenomenon, and develop clusters of meanings from these

significant statements to generate themes; (c) develop a textural description and a structural description of the experiences, that is, a description of what participants experienced and how they experienced it; (d) report the *essence* of the phenomenon by using a composite description; and (e) present the understanding of the essence of the experience.

Semistructured Interviews

Brinkmann and Kvale (2015) defined the research interview as a conversation that has a structure and a purpose; a conversation that requires careful questioning and listening to obtain thoroughly tested knowledge. The aim of in-depth interviews is not to test hypotheses, nor to evaluate the practice of participants (Seidman, 2012). At the heart of comprehensive interviewing is an interest in the stories of participants, an understanding of their lived experiences, and the meaning they make from the experience (Seidman, 2012). Brinkmann and Kvale characterized the semistructured qualitative interview by discussing 12 aspects from a phenomenological standpoint:

1. **Life world:** a world encountered in everyday life. The interview seeks to describe direct experience for what it is, before seeking explanations for the experience.
2. **Meaning:** the interviewer records and interprets what is said and how it is said.
3. **Qualitative:** the aim is to seek various aspects of the interviewee's life world, not quantitative measurements.
4. **Descriptive:** the interviewer seeks precise descriptions of what interviewees experienced and felt, and how they acted.
5. **Specificity:** the interviewer seeks specific situations and actions, not general opinions.

6. Deliberate naiveté: the interviewer is open to new and unexpected phenomena, is curious and sensitive to what is said, and is aware of the interviewer's own presuppositions.
7. Focus: the interview focuses on particular themes and is not entirely "nondirective" (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015, p. 34). Although the interviewer focuses the interview on particular themes, the interviewer does not lead the interviewee to specific opinions about these themes.
8. Ambiguity: if the interviewee's answers are ambiguous or contradictory, the interviewer needs to clarify, as much as possible, whether the ambiguities or contradictions are due to a breakdown in communication in the interview or genuine inconsistencies and contradictions in the interviewee's life world.
9. Change: in the interview, interviewees may change their descriptions or attitudes toward a theme, or may suddenly see new relations of which they were initially not aware. The interview may be a learning process for the interviewee and interviewer.
10. Sensitivity: sensitivity to and knowledge of the topic of the interview may vary if more than one interviewer is involved in the research.
11. Interpersonal situation: the interview is the coconstruction of knowledge by the interviewer and interviewee. The interviewer needs to be aware of the interpersonal dynamics in the interview as well as respect for the interviewee's personal boundaries.
12. Positive experience: the interview may be an enriching experience that enables the interviewee to gain new insights into his or her life situation.

Population and Sample

The population for this study was four principals of Catholic primary schools and six principals of government primary schools in Singapore. The rationale for situating the study in Catholic and government schools was that the education system in Singapore can be considered somewhat of a paradox, such that the MOE sets strategic national goals to align all schools but decentralizes power and expects individual schools to exercise autonomy in setting their own goals and designing their own structures and processes to achieve the desired outcomes (Hargreaves & Shirley, 2012). Thus, this study, through semistructured interviews, sought to uncover commonalities among the practices of principals in Catholic and government schools. Such commonalities may be a response to the strong central leadership of the MOE. This study also sought to identify if differences arose in practices among principals that could result from Catholic schools being faith-based institutions that were simultaneously empowered by the MOE to exercise flexibility and innovation. Additionally, the study in four Catholic primary schools supervised by various religious orders helped reveal the extent of influence from the charisma of the religious order.

Purposive sampling in this study rested on the indicators of effective leadership, which the fraternity of school leaders in Singapore considered in recognizing the work of their peers. Indicators such as school climate, national examination results, or the quality of school experience survey results were sensitive data that is not released to the public. Thus, in this study, which examined the delivery of equality and equity in educational provision as well as the commitment to inclusion, the identification of participants followed one or more of these criteria:

- Oversubscription at the annual Primary Grade 1 registration exercise in their current or previous schools.

- Recognition of the principals' leadership as indicated by their appointment as principal of their second or third schools.
- Recommendation by peers in the school leaders' fraternity.
- Appointment to committees which examined educational issues with national impact.
- Appointment to a team of principals who conducted leadership development courses for peers.
- Recognition by the MOE through the National Day Award.

Instrumentation

The semistructured interviews in this study were guided by a set of core questions on the perceptions of participants about leadership for justice, the origins of their beliefs about justice, and their practices as justice agents in shaping school culture and formulating curricular policies and programs. To improve the clarity of the interview questions, a panel comprising three former primary school principals in Singapore evaluated the interview questions and suggested improvements before the interview instrument was used for data collection. Two members of the panel were veteran principals who have had the experience of leading two schools. The third member of the panel was a veteran educator who had led a school and served as curriculum developer at MOE Headquarters. A message was sent to potential members of the panel to request their participation. Upon receiving the consent of panel members, an e-mail was sent to request they give their evaluation of the 11 interview questions through a site designed using Qualtrics, a survey-creation platform. Feedback from the panel informed the refinement of the interview questions. The Qualtrics report is in Appendix A.

Table 2 shows the interview questions related to the research questions. Although the core questions guided the interviews, probes were developed in the interviews to clarify and extend statements made by participants.

Table 2

Interview Questions Related to Research Questions

Research question	Interview questions
<p>Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about leadership for justice?</p>	<p>a) In this study, the definition of ‘justice in school’ has two components: i) equality and equity in educational provision, requiring that the same resources are made available to all students and schools, and more resources are intentionally provided to better serve the students with the highest need, ii) action grounded in a commitment to inclusion, valuing Singapore’s sociocultural diversity, and promoting social cohesion and harmony. In relation to Singapore’s national values of justice, equality, and meritocracy, to what extent do you agree with the definition of justice in school? Would you suggest other ways to define justice in school?</p> <p>b) As a primary school principal in Singapore, in what ways do you put into practice the concept of leadership for justice?</p> <p>c) To what extent do you consider yourself an ethical leader? In what ways do your beliefs about justice influence your practice as an ethical leader? (The MOE document, <i>Leader Growth Model</i>, describes an ethical leader as one whose leadership is values-driven and undergirded by the Singapore education system’s ethos of the teaching profession and philosophy for educational leadership.)</p>
<p>Research Question 2: What are the origins of the principals’ beliefs about justice in school?</p>	<p>d) Who or what are the sources of influence on your beliefs about justice in schools?</p> <p>e) In what ways do the Ministry of Education’s philosophy for educational leadership and leader growth model influence your beliefs about justice in schools? (Additionally, for Catholic principals: In what ways do the Archdiocesan Commission for Catholic Schools, Singapore and your school board influence your beliefs about justice in schools?)</p>
<p>Research Question 3: How do the principals’ beliefs about justice shape school culture?</p>	<p>f) How do your beliefs about justice influence your practice as a culture builder? Please give some examples.</p> <p>g) Please give examples of ways in which your school advances justice.</p> <p>h) What are the key success factors to culture building in your school?</p> <p>i) What are the challenges and barriers to culture building in your school?</p>
<p>Research Question 4: In what ways do the educational policies, programs and practices in these schools promote justice?</p>	<p>k) What are some ways in which your beliefs about justice influence your practice as an educational leader of curriculum and instruction?</p> <p>l) What policies and programs have you put in place in your school to make it a more just educational institution?</p>

Validity and Reliability

Seidman (2012) recognized that the interaction between interviewers and participants is inherent in the nature of interviewing. Furthermore, Seidman argued that the role of the interviewer as an instrument in the interview is to be affirmed rather than diminished. Referencing Lincoln and Guba (1985), Seidman perceived the human interviewer as an adaptable and flexible instrument, capable of responding to situations with skill, tact, and understanding. However, Seidman acknowledged that qualitative researchers still confront issues of validity and reliability. The author proposed that multiple interviews with each participant would enhance validity, as would interviewing a number of participants to find the common thread in their experiences. Thus, the entire process of this research emphasized continually checking, questioning, and interpreting the findings. In addition, the same questions were asked of each participant, and any leading questions were avoided. The researcher recorded and transcribed the interviews. Participants were requested to review the transcript of their interview to discern any errors.

Getting good data from interviewing requires practice; hence pilot interviews are vital (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Pilot interviews allow researchers to learn about their own interview techniques; specifically, those techniques that support the objectives of the study and those that detract from those objectives (Seidman, 2012). Therefore, in the interest of data quality, a pilot interview with a principal of a primary school in Singapore was included in the plan for the study.

Ethical Considerations

All participants were informed of the purpose of the study, how the results of the study would be used, and the professional impact of the study. All participants were informed that they

had the right to refuse to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time. The participants were assured that their names and information will be kept confidential and a copy of the study was offered.

Data Collection

The researcher applied for approval for the research study from the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects. Upon receipt of approval (see Appendix B), a letter was sent to the Educational Leadership Development Centre (ELDC) of the MOE to seek permission to carry out the study. The letter included a request for the ELDC to identify a list of schools that met a set of criteria for purposive sampling. The letter to ELDC is in Appendix C. The criteria included results of the school-climate survey, national examination, and quality-of-school experience survey. MOE approved the study but declined to assist in the identification of schools, due to the sensitive nature of the data. The reply from the MOE is in Appendix D. Thus, the criteria for purposive sampling were amended to those listed earlier.

Consequently, the researcher selected a principal for the pilot interview. The principal had experience leading more than one school. Furthermore, the principal had served in leadership positions at a government school as well as Catholic schools. The researcher had known the principal professionally for more than 10 years. An e-mail was sent to the potential respondent, explaining the purpose of the pilot interview and requesting participation. The e-mail provided assurance of confidentiality. The researcher arranged the date, time, and place of the interview with the selected participant, scheduling the interview for a period of 90 to 120 minutes. The interview resulted in rich data that contributed significantly to the findings. Therefore, it became a sample for data collection instead of a pilot interview. Yet, learning from

the interview informed the refinement of the interview technique as well as probes in subsequent interviews.

After the first interview, a letter of invitation was e-mailed to the principals of nine schools, based on the revised criteria for a purposive sample (see Appendix E). Four principals identified for participation were first-time principals. The other principals identified for participation were leading their second or third schools. An added criterion in the selection of first-time principals as participants was the length of service in their current schools. They must have served their current schools for more than 2 years. The reason for selecting first-time principals who have led their schools for at least 2 years was that principals needed time to build relationships with various stakeholders before embarking on cultural change. Additionally, principals needed time to learn about the strengths and areas for improvement of their schools before engaging stakeholders in the visioning exercise for school growth, followed by the development of policies, programs, and practices that enable them to achieve their strategic goals. The letter of invitation to participate explained the purpose of the study, informed the principals that participation was strictly voluntary, and guaranteed the right to confidentiality.

The researcher arranged the date, time, and place of the interview with the selected participants, scheduling the interview for a period of 90 to 120 minutes. The interview questions were forwarded to participants a week before the interview to give the participants time to reflect on the topic of the research. Permission was requested of each participant to audio record the interview to ensure that all comments were preserved. The responses were transcribed and returned to interviewees to obtain their agreement of the recorded data. The electronic and hard-copy interview records were secured in a locked file to maintain the promise of confidentiality.

Beyond the technical aspects of qualitative interviewing, Creswell and Poth (2018) suggested attention be paid to the dynamics between the interviewer and interviewee. In phenomenological interviews, researcher patience and skill and the absence of power asymmetry are necessary for an open and free dialogue in which appropriate questions are asked and participants discuss the meaning of their experiences.

The researcher intended for data collection to include examination of school documents related to school policies, programs, and practices that promoted justice. In the letter of invitation to participate in the study, permission was sought from participants to make school documents available for analysis. However, no school documents were offered for examination.

Data Analysis

Creswell and Poth (2018) viewed data management and analysis as a spiral of processes, not a linear process. The steps in Creswell and Poth's data management and analysis follow:

1. Managing and organizing data to obtain a database of texts, images, and recordings.
2. Reading and memoing emergent ideas to record reflections over time, or summarize field notes.
3. Describing and classifying codes into themes, that is, naming initial codes, list code categories and descriptions, assign the codes to units of text, images, and recordings, reduce codes to themes, and finalize the codebook.
4. Developing and assessing interpretations to relate categories/themes to contextual understandings and diagrams as well as to relate categories/themes to an analytic framework in literature to arrive at possible theories or propositions.
5. Representing and visualizing the data to create a point of view, displaying and reporting the data to account for the findings.

These steps in Creswell and Poth's data management and analysis informed the management and analysis of the data collected in this study.

However, Miles and Huberman (1994) and Merriam and Tisdell (2016) advised that data collection and analysis should be a simultaneous process that is recursive and dynamic. The reason is that although a researcher is clear about the research problem at the outset of a qualitative study and has selected a purposeful sample to collect data, the researcher will not know what will be discovered, or what the final analysis will be like. Ongoing analysis allows the researcher to quickly identify tentative themes after the first interviews, and to refine questions for the next interviews to confirm themes or generate new ones. Early analysis provides the researcher with opportunities to identify weak data and engage in corrections (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Following up on contradictory data is valuable because contradictions could lead the researcher to rival conceptions of the phenomenon researched, particularly in a phenomenological study where the essence of the phenomenon will emerge only with ongoing analysis of the data from the interviews. Moreover, ongoing data analysis enables a researcher to avoid repetitious and unfocused data (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

A prerequisite of good data analysis is an effective system for organizing and managing data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Every interview transcript, field note, or observation receives a designation according to the theoretical framework that informs the study. The purpose is to ensure easy retrieval of specific pieces of data for analysis and the written analysis of findings. A necessary follow-up step is to create an inventory of the entire data set, organized and labeled, again, for easy retrieval.

In addition, data analysis is an inductive and comparative process (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), and the constant-comparative method of Glaser and Strauss (1967) is appropriate for data

analysis. The goal of data analysis is to make meaning from the data by consolidating, reducing, and interpreting what was said in interviews, or what the researcher observed (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) preferred the term *data condensation* in place of *data reduction* because the word reduction implies a weakening or loss of data. Eventually, the meaning derived from data analysis should enable the investigator to answer the research questions. Thus, this study on the perceptions of primary school principals about their role as justice agents employed the constant-comparative method of data analysis. Specifically, the processes involved included (a) comparing particular incidents and insights from interviews and other data sources with other incidents from the same data set, (b) assigning tentative codes to text segments that have similarities, (c) noting interesting patterns and contradictions, and (d) examining categories of codes, combining them into larger categories that establish the essence of educational leadership for justice. Because coding requires deep reflection about and interpretation of the data's meaning, coding is regarded as analysis, not merely technical preparatory work for higher level thinking about the study (Miles et al., 2014).

The coding methods described by Miles et al. (2014) guided the coding in this study. Miles et al. (2014) suggested two stages of coding: the researcher assigns codes to chunks of data in the first cycle using up to 25 different approaches to coding, and in the second stage or pattern coding, the researcher groups summaries of data from the first cycle into smaller categories, themes, or constructs. Pattern codes are explanatory or inferential codes that identify an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation. Miles et al. (2014) advised that for beginning qualitative researchers who are learning how to code data, the *in vivo* coding method is appropriate. In this method, researchers can generate codes from the phrases used repeatedly by

participants. *In vivo* codes are placed in quotation marks to distinguish them from researcher-generated codes.

The next three methods of coding described by Miles et al. (2014) are affective methods that were suitable for this study, analyzing the more subjective experiences of participants. First, emotion coding labels the emotions recalled or experienced by the participant or inferred by the researcher. Emotion coding provides insights into participants' perceptions, worldviews, and lived experiences. The next affective method of coding is values, which entails applying codes that reflect participants' values, attitudes, and beliefs. Miles et al. (2014) defined values as the importance people attribute to themselves, another person, thing, or idea. Attitude means the way people think and feel about themselves, another person, thing, or idea and belief is defined as part of a system that includes values and attitudes as well as personal knowledge, experiences, opinions, prejudices, morals, and other interpretations of the social world (Miles et al., 2014, p. 75). The third affective method of coding is evaluation coding such that the researcher assigns codes that signify judgment about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policies.

Another type of coding described by Miles et al. (2014) that was applicable to this study is causation coding. This method of coding identifies causal beliefs from the data about why particular outcomes occur and not merely how they occur. Causation coding is appropriate in identifying the connections between participants' perceptions of their role as justice agents and their leadership practice.

Analysis of the data in this study was an iterative process of coding and recoding after each reading of the transcripts. Starratt's (2009) five levels of ethical enactment were used as codes. Concurrently, the researcher wrote analytic memoranda during the coding and recoding process to record possible categories, subcategories, patterns, or emergent themes. Writing

analytic memoranda also aided the formation of linkages or connections among the data from the various interviews. Saldana (2016) suggested that in writing analytical memoranda, the researcher should think of the code not just as a word or phrase but as a trigger or prompt for reflection on the deeper and complex meanings of the data. At the same time, writing analytic memoranda enabled the researcher to challenge personal assumptions and recognize the extent to which the researcher's personal experience as a principal influenced the meaning ascribed to the data. Several rounds of coding led to categorization and recategorization of codes to identify concepts or themes to be used in presenting the findings.

Researcher's Background

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the key instrument, and the researcher's conception of self and others, experiences, and perspectives impact the processes in an interpretivist inquiry (Creswell & Poth, 2018). According to Bogdan and Biklen (2007), one cannot separate research and writing from "your past experiences, who you are, what you believe, and what you value" (p. 38). Thus, this study on the perceptions of primary school principals about their role as justice agents required the researcher to be open about what was brought to the research by discussing the researcher's personal experiences as a school leader. This disclosure will allow readers to judge for themselves the extent to which the researcher was able to transcend personal biases and focus solely on participants' experiences. In this section, the researcher reflected on the key issues, people, social contexts, and events which influenced the researcher as an educator and school leader.

The researcher served in the Singapore education system for 36 years. The researcher taught science in four secondary schools, and had three postings at MOE Headquarters as systems officer, media producer, and curriculum officer. The researcher served as a vice

principal for a year in a government primary school and as a principal for more than 10 years in a government primary school and a Catholic primary school. The final posting was at the National Institute of Education as a senior teaching fellow for 3 years. The researcher believed her personal background, educational experiences as a student in Catholic schools, and professional trajectory shaped her relationship to education, and influenced her role as a researcher.

The researcher's Cantonese-Peranakan heritage exemplifies the cultural diversity of Singaporeans. The researcher's paternal grandparents were immigrants from Guangdong, China, and maternal grandparents were Peranakans. Peranakans are descendants of Chinese immigrants who settled in Malaya and married Malays between the 15th and 17th centuries. The researcher's parents were educated in a British education system because Singapore was a British colony until 1959. Thus, the home language was English.

The researcher grew up in an extended family home with grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The family was not rich but never felt disadvantaged in any way. Home had many books and magazines, and, as a preschool child, the researcher read English-language newspapers with her maternal grandfather daily. School was a joyous experience most of the time. Because the researcher's father was excellent in mathematics, she knew instinctively that she had to do well in the subject, even though he was never explicit about the standard of academic achievement he expected of her. She found science fascinating and thoroughly enjoyed it in school. Hence, there was little pressure at school and at home.

Consequently, as an educator, the researcher could appreciate how important it is for children to be able to read early in life so they can access the resources for all subjects. As a principal of primary schools in Singapore, the researcher worked with teachers to provide learning support in and outside curriculum time with the aim of enabling every child to read at

least at grade level by Primary Grade 2. She believed those children who were not able to read at grade level at the end of Primary Grade 2 in a Singapore school would struggle to keep up with their peers in Primary Grade 3 when the curriculum was enlarged to include science. The first school where the researcher served as principal was a government school with a large number of children from a low socioeconomic background. The teachers paid special attention to children who came from homes where the English language was not the home language. Beyond the LSP initiated by the MOE, the school put in place additional intervention measures to support these students in their learning of the English language. The school also constantly monitored pupils' grasp of mathematics concepts and skills. The objective was to bridge any learning gaps before they became chasms. Additionally, the researcher's ability as a student to appreciate the importance of conceptual understanding in the learning of science motivated her later decisions as a teacher and school leader toward the minds-on as well as hands-on approach to the learning of science.

The researcher attended the Convent of the Holy Infant Jesus (CHIJ) schools at primary and secondary levels. The CHIJ network comprises 11 all-girls Catholic schools that used to be led by Irish nuns but are now led by lay principals. The school had catechism, daily prayer, monthly mass, and annual religious camps. When the researcher was a student in CHIJ schools, the nuns' and teachers' expectations in academic achievement and conduct were high but not excessive. Hence, the students had little competition and grew up in a happy and healthy environment. The researcher believed this environment influenced her expectations as a teacher and school leader; that is, she expected herself and her colleagues to work extremely hard, give their best, seek collaboration rather than competition, and make learning enjoyable for students. Although Singapore seems to have a reputation for being extremely competitive, schools in

Singapore often share their best practices at platforms provided by the MOE. The researcher believed that many school leaders had an abundance mentality rather than a scarcity mentality.

The researcher's classmates were mostly Chinese Singaporeans, a large percentage of whom were Peranakans. Students who were Peranakans could choose to learn Malay as a second language instead of Mandarin. The researcher learned Malay as a second language and her ability to speak Malay facilitated relationship building with Malay teachers, staff, students, and parents. The researcher's ability to speak Malay proved to be quite useful in defusing potentially incendiary situations when she was a school leader. Although the classes in CHIJ schools were not diverse, and typically there were only one Malay girl and two or three Indian girls in a class of 40 students, her neighborhood was diverse and she considered her family to be an inclusive one. A regular dinner guest, a friend of the researcher's uncle, was a young man of Arab descent and the neighbor with whom the researcher played most of the time was a Muslim girl. Two aunts and a cousin married people from another race. The family's commitment to being inclusive was tested during the racial riots between the Chinese and Malays in the 1960s but the goodwill and strong relationships the family had developed with neighbors and relatives of other races kept them united during those difficult days. Therefore, as a school leader who grew up experiencing racial riots in the 1960s, the researcher could fully understand the fragility of interracial relations and was committed to serving Singapore's national educational goal of valuing Singapore's sociocultural diversity, and promoting social cohesion and harmony (MOE, 2012).

The researcher believed that being in an all-girl school gave her and her classmates the opportunity to learn independence and develop leadership capacity. Teachers impressed on them that they had no barriers because of their gender. School was a safe space to test their leadership

skills. Later, as a teacher, the researcher always believed she was blessed with equal opportunities at the workplace. Perhaps the researcher did not perceive much gender bias as a female teacher in Singapore because there were numerous role models of female educators leading at the highest levels in MOE headquarters. The researcher believed that Mrs. Lee Kuan Yew, the wife of Singapore's founding Prime Minister, contributed significantly to the opportunities for women in Singapore in career advancement. Mr. and Mrs. Lee met when they were law students in Cambridge. They were intellectual equals and she had great influence over Mr. Lee's policies. Mr. Lee's respect for his wife was evident.

The researcher's experience as a teacher in the Gifted Education Programme had the greatest impact on her teaching approaches and contributed to developing a growth mindset. Her students in the Gifted Education Programme had very high levels of energy and curiosity. They expected to challenge and be challenged in every lesson. They set the researcher on the path of constantly seeking innovation in teaching and learning. This mindset was of immense value when the researcher became a school leader. She worked with teachers to find ways to break away from traditional mindsets and enable the school to achieve what teachers thought their school could never achieve. For example, their students in an all-boy Gabrielite Montfortian Catholic school came from homes where the primary language was English, and they had, in the past, performed poorly in their mother-tongue languages of Mandarin, Malay, or Tamil. As a result, mother-tongue teachers had to develop novel approaches to make second-language learning enjoyable and appealing to students. They were heartened when students responded well to the new methods, began to believe they could do well in mother-tongue languages, started to enjoy mother-tongue lessons, and made significant achievement gains.

However, the change in curricular and pedagogical approaches alone was insufficient for their school-based curriculum innovation. It had to be supported by other changes to structures, processes, and programs. The school undertook reorganization to function as a PLC, focused on teacher collaboration and professional development in curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment to achieve growth in students' learning, and paid attention to the well-being and progress of every child. The researcher believed it was collective responsibility in a culture of care and service that enabled the school to progress. The work of Noddings (1992), *The Challenge to Care in Schools*, guided their efforts in creating a culture of care. Noddings stated that the main aim of education should be to produce competent, caring, loving, and lovable people. Noddings urged educators to show students how to care by creating caring relations with them, not by merely telling the students to care. Noddings reasoned that when educators care, they accept the responsibility to continuously increase their own competence so the recipient of their care is enhanced.

The researcher believed that the foundation of the cultural change in the school was a character-formation program that the teachers developed collaboratively. The character-formation program was based on the charism of the school's founder, St Louis Marie de Montfort, who established the religious order of the Brothers of St Gabriel. One belief of St Louis Marie de Montfort that served as the guide in the school's efforts to live its mission of shaping lives for service to God and nation, was "Love each child as a son or daughter of God." Furthermore, St Louis Marie de Montfort regarded the poor as "sacraments of Jesus Christ," and called on Montfortian educational institutions to give special attention to the poorest (Friant, 1996, ¶ 28).

This section outlined the history, experiences, and influences that have shaped the researcher's personal and professional positionality. Several conclusions can be made about the

researcher's position regarding the role of the principal as a justice agent. First, enacting leadership for justice in Singapore schools entails recognizing and honoring the racial and religious traditions of a diverse Singapore population. Second, equity in educational provision buoys students from a low-socioeconomic background to avail themselves of the opportunities provided by the education system. Third, justice entails giving equal opportunities to girls to nurture their academic abilities and develop their leadership capacity. Fourth, to lead for justice is to serve the well-being and progress of every child in the school, and school-based innovation allows schools to customize teaching and learning to meet the specific needs of their students. Finally, the charism of the religious order that supervises a Catholic school should be vital to the life of the school community.

The researcher's motivation to study leadership for justice arose from her experiences as a principal. Students, teachers, and principals in Singapore schools recite the pledge every school day. Therefore, the researcher wanted to study the extent to which schools in Singapore lived those values. As a principal, the researcher often believed that no matter what efforts a principal made, they could always improve in helping the school grow into a more just educational institution. The researcher believed that principals in Singapore were very committed educators and some have introduced policies, programs, and practices that have served their teachers and students effectively. The researcher wanted to learn from these principals how they led for justice.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Overview

The purpose of the study was to investigate the perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about their role as justice agents. The study sought to elucidate what primary school principals believed about leadership for justice, the sources of influence on their beliefs about justice, and their enactment of ethical leadership, culture building, and leadership in curriculum and instruction. Policies, programs, and practices that advanced justice would illustrate the points made by the participants. Following details of the demographics, the findings are presented aligned with the research questions.

Demographics

Ten primary school principals in Singapore participated in this study. Four principals led Catholic primary schools and six were principals of government primary schools. Of the 10 principals, four were men and six women. Four were first-time principals who had led their schools for at least 3 years. The other six were experienced principals leading their second or third schools. Among the principals, seven were Chinese, one Eurasian, one Indian, and one Malay. All four principals of the Catholic schools were Catholics. Among the six government school principals was a Buddhist, a Catholic, a Christian, a Hindu, a Muslim, and a principal who identified as having no religion. For confidentiality, pseudonyms were used in reporting the findings. The pseudonyms of Catholic principals were Adriel, Brian, Clement, and Hannah; the pseudonyms of the government school principals were Damien, Elsa, Flora, Gabriel, Irma, and Joy.

Research Question 1: What are the perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about leadership for justice?

A majority of participants agreed that the definition of justice used in the study applied to the Singapore context. The definition of ‘justice in school’ in this study had two components: (a) equality and equity in educational provision, requiring that the same resources are made available to all students and schools and more resources are intentionally provided to better serve the students with the highest need, and (b) action emerged as a commitment to inclusion, valuing Singapore’s sociocultural diversity, and promoting social cohesion and harmony.

Generally, the participants observed that the term justice was not frequently used among the members of the Singapore education fraternity. Brian commented that although principals in Singapore did not usually speak of justice, they spoke of equality, equity, and meritocracy, and held much concern for students who had difficulties keeping up with the curriculum. In that respect, justice included equity, fairness, and a concern for the poor in the provisioning for schools. Participants regarded education as a social leveler and held that various forms of funding and financial provisions by the MOE, such as the Opportunity Fund and financial assistance to students, attested to the notion that MOE was concerned about equalizing success. Furthermore, participants thought an understanding of justice was articulated in the Singapore pledge with regard to race, language, and religion. Damien observed that it was right to identify justice for study because it was one of the key pillars of the national pledge.

The three key areas in the findings were (a) consciousness of justice in the national agenda, (b) the influence of the principals’ beliefs about justice on their practice as ethical leaders, and (c) leadership actions taken at the school level to narrow gaps in the experience of justice in the lives of the students and teachers.

Consciousness of Justice in the National Agenda

Findings showed that in enactment of leadership in schools, foremost on the minds of participants was a consciousness of the mission of the Singapore education system “to mould the future of our nation.” Participants subscribed to the mission of the education system and took a long-term view of education. Hannah encapsulated the long view when she said that, as a principal, she would have to address the question, ‘What kind of society do we want to build?’ Hannah contended that principals need to consider what must be done now to ensure students grew up with the right values and perspectives. Participants spoke about developing their students into good and useful citizens who understood their responsibility to society. Participants were cognizant of their role as citizen–public servant and educator, aligned with Starratt’s (2009) Levels 2 and 3 of ethical enactment.

Participants acknowledged the strong leadership provided by MOE in crafting policies and designing programs to advance justice in schools. Participants agreed that the government of Singapore was very willing to invest in education and that MOE provided financial and human resources to ensure every school received very good basic funding to run effective school programs. Hannah opined, “We have a strong sense of social justice - that every school should be given a certain amount to help them succeed.” MOE funds included specific programs for students with different special needs to address social background or ability. MOE provided funds for special needs that impacted the learning ability of children as well as funds for the Gifted Education Programme. Most participants also mentioned programs designed by MOE to cater to different academic needs. Examples commonly mentioned were the Learning Support Program, which catered to children who were not reading at age level; the Learning Support Programme for Mathematics, designed for those who had difficulty reaching facility with the

mathematics concepts and skills for their age level; and school-based dyslexia remediation. In addition to financial provisions, MOE supported schools with human-resource provisions for teachers, allied educators, and administrative staff.

Gabriel maintained a need “to recognize that every Singaporean matters” and if the people of Singapore regarded themselves as Singaporeans, they would have less need to identify as Chinese, Malay, or Indian. Adriel thought the schools were fairly “color-blind.” Additionally, she opined that government schools were “totally impartial” about religion. She said that in Catholic schools, “While we do put forth Catholic practices and routines, we make sure that we don’t impose on anybody.” Clement reinforced Adriel’s remark by suggesting that the Singapore government and school principals were quite conscious that they must treat all students equally, regardless of their background. He said,

We are very conscious that we are a multicultural society, therefore, we need to make sure that we cater to everyone. Regardless of race, language or religion, we help them to grow. In a Catholic school we are conscious that in our prayers, we tell our students to pray according to their own faith. So, during prayer time, those who have the Catholic faith will pray together, and those who not have the faith at this point in time, they are to be respectful of the others and do some reflections of the day. Maybe when they hear other people pray they may pick up certain things along the way. So, I think this is very much in line with our national agenda of inclusivity.

Participants from Catholic schools agreed that justice was a value for which Catholic schools had always strived because justice was very much the mission of Catholic schools in Singapore. In general, participants accepted as their responsibility the implementation of MOE policies with

fidelity, but when necessary, customized MOE programs to meet the needs of the cohort of students in their schools.

In customizing programs to serve the students in their schools, a key concern of participants was equity. One participant, Joy, emphasized the equality of opportunities rather than just equality of resources. Gabriel offered the view that “equality means we give equal opportunities but not equal provisions and support.” Elsa perceived fairness as enabling students to achieve equal outcomes and not just providing access to equal opportunities. An area of focus was the difference in students’ home background, not just in students’ socioeconomic status, but also their family values and social capital.

However, participants also maintained an awareness of areas for improvement in the education system with regards to just practices. These areas included the Primary Grade 1 registration exercise, entry to secondary school where priority was given to affiliation, and the variety of secondary schools with different funding or access: autonomous, independent, or Special Assistance Plan (SAP) schools. The different phases in the Primary Grade 1 registration exercise were staggered. Priority accrued to children with siblings already in the school, followed by children whose parents were alumni or staff members, and those with church or community affiliation. If the registration at a school was oversubscribed, a ballot would be conducted that would consider the proximity of the home to the school. Clement commented that in that sense, “it does not fit the broad definition of equality because there are groups of people who benefit more than others.”

Another consideration was that selected primary and secondary schools were designated in 1979 as SAP schools. SAP schools catered to academically strong students who excelled in the Chinese mother-tongue language and English language. Clement suggested that the focus of

these schools on Chinese language and culture meant that about 30% of Singaporeans would not be able to choose these schools. The situation gave rise to the question of equality.

Although examining areas in the education system where policies could be more just, participants also were aware that MOE had to consider the competing needs and wants of different stakeholders. Any policy changes made by MOE had to be undertaken sensitively and in small incremental steps rather than a large destabilizing modification. For example, in 2017, Minister for Education Ng announced that by 2019, one-fifth of places in all secondary schools with affiliated primary schools were to be set aside for students who do not benefit from affiliation priority (C. M. Ng, 2017). Many affiliated primary and secondary schools were Catholic schools with a long history of good achievement. Some Singaporean children in unaffiliated primary schools aspired to join those secondary school. Thus, MOE had to balance giving equal opportunities to these students to fulfill their aspirations with the desires of students already in the affiliated primary school to continue their education in the affiliated secondary school.

How Beliefs About Justice Influenced Practice as Ethical Leader

Participants recognized that students' school experience influenced the type of leader they, in turn, will become. Thus, participants' leadership, manifested by the actions they took based on personal or national values, would impact students' lived experience of justice. Participants regarded their role as a great responsibility because of the awareness of their impact on the lives of students and teachers.

In the MOE *leader growth model*, the ethical leader was described as one who possesses a reflective spirit, operates from a values-driven core, undergirded by the ethos of the teaching profession and the philosophy for educational leadership. The ethical leader possesses a strong

sense of personal identity, self-awareness, and understanding of his or her own leadership (MOE, 2014b). The experience of a participant, Irma, at an interview for appointment to principalship gave a glimpse of the weight that MOE placed on values-driven leadership and the leader's self-awareness. Irma said that in the interview she was asked the question, "What is your compass?" Irma replied her compass was the values with which she was raised and her Catholic faith, which taught her about love. Irma believed that love held other values such as personal values, school values, universal values, and Christian values. As an educator, Irma maintained that love entailed knowing and observing each child to understand him or her to provide support. Irma would often say to her teachers and staff, "The child cannot be compromised." Another principal, Hannah, thought the Leaders in Education Programme, designed by the MOE in collaboration with the National Institute of Education to develop potential principals, supported MOE's focus on values. She remembered that the Leaders in Education Programme emphasized values in education and in leadership with prominence given to school leaders having values and vision.

In general, participants viewed the nature of their work as values-centric and future-focused, requiring them to make ethical decisions. Gabriel said, "Personal values and beliefs are at the heart of all we do." Elsa said that principals' decisions and actions must be consistent with their espoused values. Brian believed that when he encountered an ethical dilemma, he would "err on the side of love" and be guided by a sense of justice. For Brian, the ultimate consideration was determining the best action to take for the benefit of students. Damien and Joy opined that Singaporean school leaders were inducted and imbued with values of justice, equality, and meritocracy and Damien believed those values were part of the Singapore identity. Joy emphasized the values of care, respect, and harmony in developing the ethos of her school. Another participant, Flora, spoke about being conscious of the expectation to be an ethical role

model. She often talked with teachers about the high standards expected of teachers as well as the higher expectations of middle managers. Therefore, as a principal, Flora held herself to even higher expectations. Her Hindu faith required her, as a principal, to be the “leading light of the school community.”

As a Catholic principal, Hannah believed she was “answerable to God.” Thus, the Catholic values of forgiveness and sacrifice guided her leadership. She believed she should give her high-ability students an experience of struggle in a mixed-ability class. She wanted students to learn to slow down because another student in class was not able to catch up. To her, life and education are about making sacrifices for one another. In so doing, she believed that high-ability students would gain a different set of skills that were often not measured in examinations.

Another participant from a Catholic school, Clement, felt called to live the founder’s mission and vision to serve the least advantaged. If children with learning needs requested a transfer from another school, Clement accepted them. He observed that a local children’s hospital recommended a number of these children because of his school’s reputation as a caring school. He argued that Catholic schools must differentiate themselves from the rest of schools. However, Clement was aware that he had to be fair to teachers and address their need to be equipped to teach children with learning needs.

Participants understood the need to be reflective, to clarify personal principles, and to evaluate decisions. Adriel said, “I need to be very clear about my principles and values.” She commented that clarifying one’s personal values and principles was an ongoing exercise in reflection. She remembered that when she was a Vice Principal, her Superintendent had put her and the other Vice Principals in a cluster through an exercise to identify their values and principles. At that time, she had thought she knew her personal principles and values well.

However, with every case she handled and every ambiguous area she encountered, she learned to know herself better and developed a deeper understanding of her values and principles. She said, “I need to know myself. I need to be very clear about what I stand for and to help the teachers understand.” Adriel also said that in the fast-paced environment of school, leaders could make wrong decisions or make right decisions for the wrong reasons. Therefore, as ethical leaders, principals need to have the courage to admit wrong decisions.

Leadership Actions for Justice

A common thread in participants’ responses to how they put into practice the concept of leading for justice was service to every student in conjunction with a preferential option for those with the highest needs. Participants understood that defining the highest needs required making a judgment. Participants’ beliefs about justice influenced variations in participants’ practices, informed by student profiles. Participants’ key strategies in leading for justice were (a) serving every student, (b) ensuring the school used data and teacher observations from interactions with students to gain a clear understanding of the needs of every child. Data from MOE provided information on students’ socioeconomic status, progress, and achievement in areas such as academics, health, and physical fitness, (c) ensuring students’ rights to education and to a safe school, and (d) implementing the Student Development Team (SDT) structure to enable the school to better care for and develop every student. In the SDT structure, Year Heads supervised the holistic development of students. Year Heads worked with class form teachers to pay closer attention to students’ socioemotional needs, cultivate values, and provide counseling.

Participants recognized that in academic growth, students could be considered high progress, middle progress or low progress, and that each group had a different need. Common strategies among principals included ensuring a smaller class size for low progress students and

differentiated instruction for middle progress and high progress students. For example, Clement said that his school streamed students at Primary Grades 5 and 6. The school consciously made classes for low progress students smaller so teachers could have more time to spend with each student. They also provided additional help with pull-out sessions for students who needed even more help. At the same time, in classes with high progress and middle progress students, the school ensured that differentiated activities catered to the different needs of students. In Irma's school, teachers gave high progress students accelerated learning experiences meant to stretch their potential and support low progress students with small-group teaching.

Deployment of teachers to meet the needs of the different groups of students was a key consideration for participants. A common practice among participants was to match the needs of students with the strengths of teachers, because some teachers worked better with those in low progress classes and other teachers were better suited to high progress classes. Brian, the principal of a Catholic school established by a religious order, had a specific mandate to care for the poor. Brian said that, in setting priorities, he referred to the founder's writings, which directed schools to have a preferential option for the poor where the definition of poor extended beyond the financially poor to include "kids who are suffering, who don't have a voice, who are in all sorts of difficulties where there is family dysfunction or who are struggling cognitively or have special needs." To Brian, prioritizing the poor meant giving more resources and ensuring the school did not deploy the weakest teachers to these classes but instead deployed good or even the best teachers. Adriel, another participant from a Catholic school, also spoke about deploying the best teachers to the weakest classes.

In meeting the different needs of students, participants considered students' talents and interests in nonacademic areas, not just in academic areas. In Irma's discussion with teachers,

she impressed on them the importance of recognizing individual student's unique talents and potential. She said, "Some of them may not see their talents right now but over time they will be discovered, and we would want to journey with these children to discover these talents."

Therefore, she introduced the idea of the growth mindset and talked to teachers about nurturing the growth mindset in students. She said students needed "to know that they can do it and if they set their minds and hearts to it, they will be able to achieve." Thus, Irma's school looked into providing a variety of programs for those who identified their talents and interests as well as those who had yet to discover their talents and interests. For example, at Primary Grades 1 and 2 levels, the school introduced a cocurricular program comprising a variety of activities that included sports such as wushu, aesthetics, and life skills. From these cocurricular activities (CCAs), students could discover areas in which they were talented or skillful or in which they had an interest; thus, in Primary Grade 3 they could select a CCA according to their strength.

Leadership for justice also entailed equal funding and appropriate deployment for CCAs. Clement said schools would usually receive greater funding for their niche CCAs than other CCAs. In Clement's school, they tried to minimize the gap in funding. The school received additional funding from MOE for their niche CCA that allowed the school to distribute more funds to other CCAs. The school also ensured that all CCAs were well-resourced and had teachers who were passionate about the CCAs.

In Joy's response on leadership for justice, she described her experiences in her first school. Joy's first school had a larger percentage of students from low-income homes than other schools. In addition, among her students were more than 10 children who lived in a Muslim orphanage near the school. Joy believed in motivating the teachers and staff to commit to the mission of the school to serve students from low-income homes. Communication was paramount

to Joy. It was important to her that teachers and staff could understand the enormity of students' needs. She found that providing specific information about the student profile enabled her to rally support for students. Teachers were more observant about students' struggles with academics and were willing to try harder to provide additional lessons after school and make home visits.

Moreover, Joy liaised with MOE for additional resources. She could obtain greater financial support for students because MOE was aware of her student profile and was able to tap discretionary financial-assistance funds. MOE also provided the school with more Allied Educators than other primary schools. Allied Educators worked with teachers to provide students with greater attention when they needed it. For example, an Allied Educator who was the school counselor worked with teachers, students, parents, external professionals, and community agencies to provide counseling support for students' mental health, and socioemotional development. Another example was the Allied Educator who provided learning and behavioral support to pupils with special needs in a mainstream school. The aim was to enable students with special needs such as dyslexia, autism, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder to integrate better into mainstream schools.

Some students in Clement's school were also from very challenging home backgrounds. In addition to the Financial Assistance Scheme provided by MOE, he created a second-tier school-based financial-assistance scheme. He involved his Catholic school board in enhancing the school's provision for financial aid by writing to organizations for additional resources. Furthermore, some students in Clement's school needed to be counseled and taught to manage themselves. Usually, schools were resourced with a full-time school counselor and a part-time school counselor, but in addition to this, Clement's school recruited their former part-time school

counselor as an adjunct teacher to provide additional counseling support. This additional staff enabled the school to direct more attention to those students whose parents were unable to afford additional external help in counseling.

Equality in educational provision included serving the needs of students with high intellectual ability. Hannah's school offered a program for the intellectually gifted. She did not have prior interaction with such students before leading her current school, so she was initially skeptical about the program. However, having interacted with students in the program, she was convinced they needed to be stretched intellectually as well as developed to serve the country. Similarly, in reviewing the program offerings in his school, Gabriel realized that much attention had been paid to the students who needed learning or behavioral support. However, a group of students came into the school with a high level of readiness to learn, so he started a program to meet the needs of high-ability students. Gabriel believed a school must serve all students. He said, "If not, we are not doing justice."

In general, primary schools in Singapore have a mix of children from various socioeconomic, racial, and religious backgrounds. Participants used data on student profiles to determine the level of support to provide to each group of students: high progress students, middle progress students, low progress students, and those with special needs. Several participants cautioned that in seeking to provide equity in learning opportunities, schools may focus on helping low progress students and stretching high progress students but risk ignoring those in the middle. Participants agreed that middle progress students should not be expected to manage on their own but should also be supported to do their best.

In several schools, a participant appointed a data manager or formed a data-management subcommittee to facilitate evidence-based decision making. For example, Flora created a post in

her school for Subject Head/Data Information Manager. Her vision for data use was to examine correlations and predict outcomes for early interventions. The Subject Head/Data Information Manager was expected to provide data to the school's executive-management team to aid in the design of programs for intervention or enrichment. An outcome of her data use was a schoolwide reading program, implemented over several years, that addressed the specific needs of students in the school. Many students were from less-advantaged homes that did not support a reading culture. In Irma's school, in addition to academic data, the data-management subcommittee studied other data that offered information on student well-being. The data-management subcommittee provided the school's executive-management team with the number of students at each level who had learning needs, counseling needs, or were from dysfunctional homes. Irma said that knowing what the numbers looked like at each level enabled her management team to strategize for better support for students.

In some schools, Primary Grade 1 registration data was used to preempt difficulties students might face if they had not attended kindergarten. In such cases, the school organized bridging kindergarten-like courses before the children entered primary school or, if the numbers were very high, worked with self-help groups to offer bridging courses. For example, during the Primary Grade 1 registration exercise, the staff in Joy's school asked parents whether their children had attended kindergarten. If the children had not attended kindergarten, the school would alert self-help groups: Chinese Development Assistance Council (CDAC) for Chinese students, Singapore Indian Development Association (SINDA) for Indian students, and Council for the Development of Singapore Malay/Muslim Community (MENDAKI) for the Malay students. Self-help groups assist families to prepare children before they start Primary Grade 1.

In addition to the hard data available from MOE or from schools' records, schools gathered information about students' needs from teacher observations during lessons or from one-to-one teacher–student interactions during the Form Teacher Guidance Period (FTGP), which had been introduced in all primary schools since 2012. Relationship building with students was central to the work of teachers in the FTGP. One period of about 30 minutes per week afforded time for teacher–student interaction, which allowed teachers to better understand their students. The FTGP also gave teachers the opportunity to equip students with social and emotional competencies. Flora advised teachers in her school to think beyond what they observed about students to identify needs. For example, Flora said that if a student consistently failed to hand in homework or if the teachers observed a student regularly not eating during recess, teachers should try to determine underlying issues. Talking with students may enable teachers to identify the real issues.

Another area of leadership for justice pertains to students' right to education and students' right to a safe school. Several participants talked about students who were regularly absent. Although the numbers were small, participants wanted to ensure that every student had the right to successfully complete primary education. Participants recognized that students had many complex reasons for irregular attendance at school. Participants worked with parents and Family Service Centres to counsel and support the family to help the students attend school. If absence persisted despite intervention and counseling, participants set in motion actions to comply with Singapore's Compulsory Education Act. Compulsory education stated that the minimum period of education for all Singapore children should be up to a successful completion of Primary Grade 6 and that parents were primarily responsible for ensuring their children attend school regularly. According to the Compulsory Education Act, if a child failed to attend primary

school regularly, the parent or guardian of the child may be guilty of an offence. The penalties provided in the Act for a person convicted for the offence were a fine or imprisonment.

Flora described several cases where she liaised with the Ministry of Social and Family Development to ensure that parents of students who were regularly absent had a thorough understanding of the Compulsory Education Act. At that point, parents realized the serious consequences of noncompliance and sent their children to school. Flora said, “I will do all in my power to help the children.” When necessary, Flora’s school would provide students with transport fees, eye glasses, books, and other resources. If parents needed jobs, the school would approach a Member of Parliament for help in job placement. The school was confident of the support of Members of Parliament in serving students with high needs.

Safety of students was as important to participants as school attendance. Gabriel considered safety another aspect of motivation. He believed students must feel safe to learn. Gabriel’s school promoted the tagline “Ours is a safe and happy school” and articulated unequivocally that there should be no bullying or name calling. At morning assembly, teachers taught students that knowing what was right must be followed by doing what was right because knowing and doing led to being.

Safety in school also meant every student felt safe in school regardless of race, language, or religion. An approach employed by participants was to introduce programs that taught students to appreciate and respond to the different cultures in Singapore. Another was to strategize for social mixing in CCAs. For example, in Gabriel’s school, Malay and Chinese students were encouraged to sign up for the school’s Indian Dance CCA. Additionally, he deliberately assigned Chinese teachers to serve in the Malay Dance CCA so they could encourage Chinese students to join the Malay Dance CCA. Gabriel believed that teachers who

taught mother-tongue languages could be a powerful influence in the school's effort to encourage social mixing.

Yet another aspect of safety in school related to the inclusion of students with special needs. Hannah spoke about a student in her school who had autism and was very disruptive. At times, the student's disruptive behavior posed a risk to the safety of other students. Although the school was prepared to devote time and resources to be inclusive, the school was also responsible for the safety of other students. In such cases, the principals would struggle with inclusivity. Ultimately, principals would have to make a judgment call and the principals' decisions must stand up to scrutiny.

Elsa thought that equality of educational provision could not be achieved in full. In her opinion, "While you try to provide equal resources, resources such as teachers are never equal." She was aware that some students may have very caring teachers who were exceptional in meeting students' needs whereas other students may have had teachers who do not care as much. However, she believed that the SDT structure mitigated that situation because it enabled her to make effective teachers available to more students. The SDT structure required teachers to work as a team for all. For example, every teacher teaching Primary Grade 4 level had a role to play in serving all students in Primary Grade 4. In rallying her teachers, Elsa encouraged them to widen their perspective by thinking "Every child, my pupil." In the SDT structure where all students were considered as one, grouping of students for remedial lessons and supplementary classes cut across all classes in that grade. Students were grouped according to their needs and pace of learning. In such remedial and supplementary groups, teachers may have students from other classes, not only their own class. Elsa assessed that changing mindsets require much time and

effort because it would not be easy to convince teachers to extend their responsibility to all students in a grade instead of being immediately focused on their own classes.

Summary

As principals of primary schools, participants acknowledged their role as leaders of learning. However, a theme that emerged repeatedly from participants' discussions of their leadership for justice was their role as citizen–public servant. Participants believed the mission of the education system “To mould the future of our nation” necessitated a long-term view that required them to consider the kind of society they wanted to build. The Participants regarded their leadership as values-centric and future-focused. As public servants, they were conscious of the centrality of justice in uniting people of different races, languages, and religions. Participants held that justice in schools encompassed serving every student, ensuring students' rights to education and a safe school; attending to students' socioemotional development, character formation, and well-being; and recognizing varied talents and interests. Participants considered the enactment of leadership for justice as providing equal opportunities to all students and equalizing students with the highest needs. Participants led and managed change through evidence-based decision making. Thus, the themes participants revisited in interviews were serving every student, the role of education as a social leveler, and safety for all students. As ethical leaders, they acknowledged the need for values-based leadership and reflective practice. Participants were cognizant of the impact of their words and actions on others. Furthermore, they saw as essential reflection on the alignment between their espoused values and values in action.

Participants acknowledged the strong leadership by MOE in policy formulation, organizational structure, and curriculum development. MOE provided financial and human resources as well as key programs to ensure that every school succeeded in delivering good basic

education. MOE also supported school-based curriculum innovation by providing various sources of funding. Participants had autonomy in deploying funds to customize learning experiences based on students' needs. The SDT structure initiated by MOE facilitated collaboration among teachers to care for every student and monitor their well-being and progress. The SDT fostered collective responsibility among teachers for the development of all students in the grade in socioemotional learning and character formation.

Research Question 2: What are the origins of principals' beliefs about justice in school?

The two main sources of participants' beliefs about justice were faith and family. Several participants also mentioned friends, colleagues, people they encountered while growing up, senior officers in MOE, and world leaders. One of the participants' secondary-school experience and the leadership example of the principal of that school impacted her beliefs. Generally, multiple sources of influence shaped a participant's beliefs about justice. However, in reporting the findings in the following paragraphs, the aim was to examine each source of influence described by the participants.

Influence of Faith

Participants who said their faith influenced their beliefs about justice identified as Buddhist, Catholic, Christian, Hindu, or Muslim. Damien explained how Buddhist teachings influenced his leadership principles and showed the connection between them. The four Buddhist "givings" or principles that guided Damien in his leadership were the following:

1. bring joy to people—one is asked to see the good in people and praise them,
2. give hope—one should give care, concern and encouragement,
3. give others faith—one provides comforting words

4. convenience—one should help others and one should not inconvenience others because of one’s own self-righteousness.

Damien’s first leadership principle was “leadership by example” which he saw as aligned with convenience. His second leadership principle was “observe and listen actively,” which connected with giving others faith. His third leadership principle was “verbalize care and concern,” which related to give hope. Finally, his fourth leadership principle was “enthuse others,” which tied with bring joy to people.

Damien’s leadership principles led him to build a culture of care and a culture of learning in his school. He sought to provide his students with diverse experiences so they would have opportunities to maximize their experiences. He used the metaphor of the starfish story to give hope to his students and to inspire his teachers to make a difference:

An old man spotted a young man throwing starfish into the sea. When asked why, he replied, “The sun is up and the tide is going out. If I don’t throw the starfish in the sea, they will die.” Upon hearing this, the old man said, “But there are miles and miles of beach and there are millions of starfish. You cannot possibly make a difference!” The young man bent down, picked up yet another starfish and threw it into the sea. As the starfish met the sea water, he said, “It made a difference for that one.”

Faith was also the source of beliefs about justice for Clement who was a participant from a Catholic school. Clement became a Catholic at the age of 30 years but the strongest influence on his values was the bible. He said, “We all need a faith to anchor our values.” As a student, he did not have the opportunity to study in a Catholic school. Furthermore, his early service in the teaching profession was in a government school. However, after several years as a teacher in a government school he was promoted to be a vice principal in a Catholic school. In the Catholic

school he was influenced by the mission of the religious order that established the school. He said that the mission of reaching out to the most disadvantaged “spoke loudly” to him because in his service as a teacher in a government school he encountered students who struggled academically. Thus, he believed, “We cannot give up on people that others may have given up on. We must help all students who come to us to the best of our ability.” Now, as the principal of a Catholic school, Clement sought to teach his students “to serve and excel for the Glory of God.”

Likewise, Brian’s Catholic faith was the source of his beliefs about justice. Brian received his primary and secondary education in Catholic schools founded by a religious order whose mission was preferential help for the most disadvantaged. He also served as teacher and vice principal in schools established by the same religious order. During his years of education and service in those schools, he was influenced strongly by the writings and thinking of the founder. Those influences still shaped the way he viewed things currently. In addition, the “prolonged encounter and accompaniment” by the religious in the schools he attended had an enduring impact on his formation. Furthermore, his experiences as a Catholic youth leader and participation in regional Catholic youth programs shaped his worldview significantly. What guided Brian now, as a principal in a Catholic school, was the belief that “In everything that we do, especially in our prayer as a school, we pay a lot of attention to the kids who really need us most.”

Hannah was another participant whose Catholic faith influenced her leadership as a principal in Catholic school. She believed she was answerable to God because the school was His school. Beyond providing care to the students in her school, she believed in teaching Catholic values of sacrifice and forgiveness. Teaching the value of sacrifice may entail “giving

students less for them to struggle” instead of always giving them the best. She thought it was important to teach students to make sacrifices for one another. For example, in a mixed-ability class, high-ability students could make some sacrifices by slowing down and waiting for the rest. However, in doing so, the high-ability students could also gain coaching skills. Therefore, to Hannah, justice was about how one measured the benefits of education.

Additionally, Hannah sought to see the difference between government schools and Catholic schools. She suggested that the emphasis in government schools was care whereas the motivation in Catholic schools was love. She did not think care and love could be considered equivalent. She viewed love as fundamental whereas care had an aspect of responsibility. Hannah believed, “Care tells you what to do but love tells you why you do it.” She thought that because Catholic schools were anchored in love, the emphasis was more on equity than equality. It was her view that in government schools, equality was very important. She said, “You need less judgment call in equality, you just weigh, measure and everybody gets equal. Whereas for equity you need judgment call.” She thought that because of their long history, Catholic schools have had more autonomy to make judgment calls. However, increasingly, parents have become more questioning so principals need to have their decisions stand up to scrutiny.

Irma was a Catholic participant who led a government school, but it was her Catholic faith that had one of the strongest influences on her leadership practice. Irma’s Catholic faith gave her the innate desire to love and serve others. She attributed her faith formation to her father, who was committed to raising his children as pious Catholics, as well as her 10-year Catholic education, which was grounded in loving and serving others. Irma appreciated the faith and belief that her teachers had in her as well as the opportunities they made available to her. She told her students that when she was a student she could do many things because it was her school

that gave her those opportunities, aside from her parents. School and home encouraged her to be well rounded. As much as the school had given her in those 10 years, now as a principal in a government school, she saw herself as able to give the same to her students. In her conversations with teachers and middle managers, she reminded them that not all children were bright and not all children were born with a silver spoon; therefore, for those who were not, “we are the custodians and we are the ones who are able to give these children that opportunity.”

Gabriel also conveyed how his Christian faith influenced his beliefs. His faith taught him that “Christians must first follow the laws of the nation because if they could not follow the laws of the nation, they would not be able to claim to follow the laws of God.” Gabriel said that the bible was very clear that a Christian ought to be a good person and a good citizen. Therefore, from his Christian upbringing he knew that he must be a good person, do the best he could, and do good to others. His beliefs prompted a consciousness to develop his students into good and useful citizens, to maximize the potential of every student in his school, regardless of gender or race, and to respect students by giving them voice and choice in the design of school programs. Gabriel’s school was a coeducational government school.

Another participant whose beliefs were influenced by her faith was Flora. She believed that religion was a spiritual journey more than a set of practices. As a Hindu, she learned that to be religious or to do right was one’s *dharma* or duty. Furthermore, one had a duty to do good or to do right but should not expect returns. Everything one does may or may not go according to plan but one’s intent was very important. Thus, as a principal, she tried to be the best principal she could and when she made mistakes, she would tell herself that at least she was clear about the intent of the action or the rationale of the decision. She would learn from the mistakes and move on. As a principal, it was important that she understood grounded sentiment. She said,

“When you have your ears very close to the ground, you try to do the right thing. However, when you do the right thing, sometimes things do not go well.” Flora also believed in another saying in Hinduism,

Sometimes to save a family, you may have to lose a person; to save a community, you may have to lose a family; to save a nation, you may have to lose a society; to save the world you may have to lose a nation.

Therefore, she believed that decisions must be needs driven. The first thing she would say to teachers was that she did not believe that everybody must have the same number of teaching periods or that class sizes must be the same or that all CCAs should have the same provisions. She told them that it was about value-adding, so their goals and contributions would determine the support they would receive.

Similarly, Joy’s faith as a Muslim influenced her leadership beliefs. The Muslim teaching that most influenced Joy’s leadership was alleviation of suffering through charity. She believed it was a universal value in the sense that “We don’t want to see people suffer. If you have a little bit more, you don’t just keep it all to yourself. See if you can help others.” From a young age, she had been taught that charity was important. Muslims must give a tax or gift to the poor every year, based on what they have. Therefore, when she led a school that had many students from low-income homes, she united her teachers in giving extra help to the students, engaged the community self-help groups to provide additional academic help to students, and tapped financial and human resources from MOE and the community to better serve her students.

Influence of Family

Family members were the other main source of influence on several of the participants. Hannah’s husband influenced her views on Catholic education. The strong influence of his 10-

year Catholic education on his life decisions and values was evident to her. Having done very well in primary school, he could have opted for any secondary school but he chose to continue in the Catholic school. His school was established by a religious order whose charism was to serve the underserved. Hannah believed that his teachers were instrumental in his learning the values of humility, courage, and justice.

Another family influence on Hannah was her elder daughter. Although her daughter may not have done exceedingly well in school, she had deep generosity for others. She was supportive of her friends who did well and she eagerly celebrated their success at award ceremonies. Hannah said that her daughter had a great influence on her as a teacher and leader because her daughter “was very different, so I get to see her beauty at close hand.” A lesson she learned from her daughter was that “a child is not measured by her performance or achievements.”

In addition to the influence of her Catholic faith, Irma learned from her parents’ example about loving and serving others. Irma did not come from a rich family. Her mother was a homemaker and her father was the sole provider who worked in a blue-collar job. However, her parents never compromised on their children’s education but instead made personal sacrifices to give Irma and her brothers what they needed for schooling. Furthermore, Irma’s parents saved on themselves so that Irma and her brothers could take piano and swimming lessons. As a leader, Irma put students’ needs first in the various aspects of school life such as planning of programs or quality of teaching and learning. Her call to teachers was to love the students, and when they designed school programs or processes, the goal was to allow students to love learning, desire to come to school, and enjoy being in school.

Another lesson Irma learnt from her parents was that they provided encouragement and motivation instead of scolding or punishment when she and her siblings did not do well in school. Irma related a case of a student who was frequently absent. On investigation, his teachers found out that the student's father was on dialysis and that his father relied on him to take him to the dialysis center. Understanding the student's home situation allowed the school to give him the necessary support. The school engaged the student's mother to work out a solution, after which the student resumed regular attendance. With the support of the school, the student eventually passed the PSLE and progressed to secondary school. The lesson Irma and her teachers learned from this instance was the need to see beyond an observation and to be more understanding of unique situations.

In the same way, a key source of influence on Flora in addition to her Hindu faith was her family of educators, especially her mother. Although her family members acknowledged that teaching was a difficult job, it was their impact on students that kept them committed to it. Flora perceived teaching as a calling and argued that it must be a first-choice job, never a second choice. She described a conversation with her niece who had to make a decision about becoming a teacher or a psychologist. Flora said,

I told her that if teaching comes second for her, then don't be a teacher because teaching can never be the number two option for a job, it must be a calling. When you look at the roles you play and the lives you're going to shape, you better know what you're doing. Therefore, in Flora's view, an awareness of the roles expected of teachers and the lives they would shape required potential candidates for teaching to be cognizant of the strength of their commitment.

Influence of Personal Experiences

The influence of personal experiences on the beliefs of the principals varied. They included experiences as a student, teacher, and leader. Elsa identified as having no religion but the greatest influence on her beliefs was her experience as a student in a Catholic secondary school for 4 years. The principal of Elsa's school left an indelible mark on her educational experience and personal formation. Elsa found her school to have had a culture that embraced students of all faiths or none. Although Elsa was not a Catholic, she was not made to feel different from the Catholic student. Elsa said, "They embrace wherever you're from and whoever you are." The principal frequently talked to students about Catholic values and mission, but Elsa saw those values as universal values with which she could identify. Elsa remembered that priests were invited to talk to the students as well but it was a very open culture and as a non-Catholic student, she did not feel unwelcome. Furthermore, the principal prioritized student well-being in her decisions and actions. The emphasis the principal placed on community building and character development encouraged Elsa to readily participate in all the school's activities including Catholic masses. Elsa said, "The principal of the school shaped my beliefs about character building." Now as a principal of a government school, Elsa has placed emphasis on character development and equality of outcomes for her students.

Similarly, Joy's personal experiences influenced her beliefs about justice. Even as she was growing up, she was attuned to the environment around her. She could observe whether her classmates, friends, and people around her received equal treatment or resources. She said that as a student, she had good teachers, and as a teacher and principal, she had good mentors. Currently, as a principal, she saw the need to ensure no one was "short-changed or disadvantaged."

Gabriel also attributed the influence of personal experiences on his belief system as a Singaporean teacher. Having served in the education service for many years, he had the opportunity to interact with many different people including parents, teachers, and senior management in MOE. Additionally, platforms such as Principals' Forum and meetings with the Minister of Education extended his knowledge of the issues facing society.

Correspondingly, Damien ascribed the source of influence on his beliefs to the MOE. He regarded MOE's philosophy for educational leadership as providing direction to a school leader. However, he thought that "the DNA of what a school leader should do" was espoused by former Minister for Education Heng. Minister Heng talked about belief in oneself, belief in others, and belief in a larger purpose. Specifically, at the MOE Workplan Seminar 2014, Minister Heng urged principals and teachers to believe that "every child can learn, every child can do better, and every child can achieve more" (Heng, 2014). Minister Heng also encouraged teachers and principals to believe "you can do better, that you can keep on honing your craft, keep on learning and growing personally and professionally" (Heng, 2014). Furthermore, in calling teachers and principals to have belief in a higher purpose, Minister Heng sought to inspire them "to believe that they were part of something larger than their students, than themselves, than the whole teaching fraternity put together" (Heng, 2014). Heng referred to their role in "the larger Singapore story, the story of survival and success against the odds, the story of turning constraints into opportunities, and the story of building unity from diversity and turning diversity into strength" (Heng, 2014).

Adriel also credited discussions with the MOE and with peers at the cluster level as a source of influence. Personal readings and discussions with principal friends in a support group were equally important to her. However, Adriel thought that although the philosophy of

educational leadership articulated beliefs for many principals, she did not consider it a source of influence. Generally, other principals concurred with Adriel about the impact of the philosophy of educational leadership. Additionally, principals saw the leader-growth model as a map for professional development rather than a source of influence on their beliefs about justice. More important to Adriel was how senior leaders in MOE acted. Adriel recalled a disciplinary case of a principal several years ago:

The initial mood among the other principals was dark and quite angry. We just felt that MOE did not support the principal. However, a senior leader in MOE shared her perspective and was able to explain the ethical reasons behind the actions taken by the MOE. She spoke about our beliefs and the premise on which we worked, and how we hold ourselves as role models. That turned around the perceptions of principals about MOE's actions. We accepted that this was a sad consequence but one that couldn't be helped. That is why that particular MOE officer is still perceived as a leader that others would follow.

Adriel believed that one of the influences on a principals' beliefs about justice was working with ethical bosses. She commented, "If you don't hold a boss in respect, then it is very hard to do the job."

Influence of World Leaders

The world leaders mentioned by two principals as having been the source of their beliefs were Gandhi, Mandela, and Mother Teresa. Brian thought Mother Teresa and Gandhi exemplified what it meant to give, to care, and to do right, regardless of the cost. From a young age, Flora had been reading about Mandela and was inspired by the belief that "education is a weapon if you're going to change the nation." Additionally, Flora adopted, as her tagline, a

quotation from Gandhi: “Be the change you want to see in the world.” According to Flora, these concepts have shaped her belief system that a teacher was a very powerful and influential figure and, therefore, a principal who led a community of teachers would be even more powerful and influential because the principal had to be inspirational as well. Flora elaborated on her belief about the power of the teacher by sharing the story of Ek Lava in Hindu mythology. According to Flora,

Ek Lava observed and learned from a Guru (teacher) from afar and despite not being Guru’s disciple directly, he revered the Guru because he had learnt skills and knowledge, albeit indirectly. The power of the teacher was strong in Hinduism and Indian languages. Hinduism also teaches that the first person a child encounters is the mother (Matha) who introduces the child to the father (Pitha). After the father, the child encounters the teacher (Guru) who is responsible for introducing the child to god (Deivam). Thus, the teacher is very powerful and will not know where his or her influence stops.

Consequently, as a principal, Flora consistently asked herself if she had done enough for students. She gave an example of a principal’s reflexivity when she described her belief that it was good to be unsettled because it encouraged continuous improvement.

Participants who were principals of Catholic schools were also asked about the influence of the ACCS and their school boards on their beliefs about justice. Generally, participants perceived the influence of ACCS as emergent. Adriel said that in 2015, ACCS disseminated a paper entitled “Desired Features of a Catholic School (Singapore).” The experience of participants also indicated that the impact of school boards varied. Adriel commented that some school boards were concerned only with spiritual development but not school operations. Conversely, some school boards provided a manual with detailed directives on school operations

including finance policy, antibullying policy, or even instructions on when and how the crest could be used. In contrast, Hannah thought some school boards had a broader, visionary perspective but not an appreciation of the operational perspective that could pose difficulties for principals.

Findings showed that the charism of the founder of the religious order that established the school appeared to have had a greater impact on the beliefs of participants who were principals of Catholic schools. For Brian and Clement, the guidance provided by the religious order in response to the founder's call to serve the most disadvantaged helped them preserve the ethos of their schools. In fact, the "accompaniment" of religion rather than mere guidance, generated a greater influence on participants.

Summary

Findings indicated the manifold sources of influence on the beliefs of principals about justice: their faith, family, personal experiences in their formative years, the people they encountered in their service as an educator, and world leaders. Although MOE's philosophy of educational leadership was not a source of influence for most principals, it articulated their beliefs. Findings also showed that the influence of senior leaders in MOE rested on their values-centric leadership. In addition, it appeared that the religious order that established Catholic schools had stronger influence on the beliefs of the principals than school boards, especially if the religious order deliberately nurtured students, teachers, or school leaders in living the charism of the founder.

Research Question 3: How do principals' beliefs about justice shape school culture?

In the explanations provided by participants about how their beliefs about justice shaped school culture, some participants extended the definition of justice used in this study. The

definition of “justice in school” in this study had two components: (a) equality and equity in educational provision, requiring that the same resources are made available to all students and schools, and more resources are intentionally provided to better serve students with the highest need, and (b) action grounded in a commitment to inclusion, valuing Singapore’s sociocultural diversity, and promoting social cohesion and harmony. The widening of the definition of justice in participants’ comments could be summarized in a remark by Clement: “School culture is important because it determines how we treat each other.” The two broad areas on which participants elaborated in the investigation of school culture were student well-being and staff well-being. Additionally, to some participants who were principals of Catholic schools, the influence of the mission, vision, and values of the religious order were equally important.

The findings were organized into the following categories: (a) leadership by example, (b) justice for teachers, (c) communication, (d) Catholic school culture, (e) key success factors in culture building, and (f) challenges and barriers to culture building. However, no distinct boundaries emerged between the categories. Therefore, some participant responses could fit into more than one category but were referenced in only one category to avoid repetition.

Leadership by Example

Findings indicated that participants were conscious that their actions and words revealed their beliefs about justice to the school community. Participants believed that how principals act and what they say had a more direct impact on the experience of justice in school than published statements of the school’s mission, vision, and values. Therefore, participants sought alignment between espoused values and values in action through role modeling. Gabriel believed that making expectations explicit was an aspect of justice. He explained that the school should make expectations of students explicit so students could meet those expectations. He opined that no

justice would exist if students were not told expectations and then were punished for failing to meet expectations. Therefore, in his first year as principal in the school, he used the morning assembly to role model respectful ways to communicate expectations to students about desired student behaviors. The morning assembly was also a platform for students to demonstrate what they had learned.

Hannah also referred to role-modeling when she argued that how school culture materialized depended on teachers, but “What school leaders say and recognize makes a difference.” She believed teachers would have no problems implementing if they knew what was valued by school leaders. For example, if the espoused value of the school was to serve students who were less privileged and the principal recognized teachers who have helped less advantaged students, the message to other teachers would be clear. They would know what was valued and would make it happen. Brian reinforced the idea that the actions and behaviors of school leaders were vital to culture building. He elaborated, “what you say, what you don’t say are being judged every day and you definitely have to walk the talk.” He expected that being optimistic and being a person of hope would aid a leader in culture building. In addition, Joy commented that leadership by example should apply to all members of a school’s leadership team, not just the principal. In Singapore schools, the leadership team comprised the principal, vice principals, heads of department, subject heads, year heads, and senior teachers. For example, if the school expected teachers to work hard, key personnel must be seen to do more than teachers. The leadership team should communicate a common message.

Justice for Teachers

Justice for teachers was a recurrent theme in participants’ discussion on justice in school. Several participants said that to promote justice in their schools they first needed to role model

justice for teachers in their relationships with them. Clement added that as a culture builder, he strived to treat all teachers equally and work with those who needed the extra guidance to enhance growth for all concerned. Additionally, the practice of performance appraisal in Singapore schools required him to ensure teachers were clear about what was expected of them.

Adriel contended that “Justice is about hearing everybody.” She role modeled justice for teachers by listening to them. Every year she sent an e-mail to invite teachers and staff for a half-hour one-on-one session. It was an opportunity for them to share their opinions and for her to clarify policies. She noted that in their feedback they expressed appreciation for those sessions. In addition, she endeavored to give teachers and staff a voice in school decision making. If circumstances did not allow teachers to have direct input in school decision making, they were given a choice from two to three options. Elsa also believed in role modeling justice by listening. She made the effort to talk with the teachers one-to-one, asking them about their thoughts concerning the school. Some misconceptions held by teachers regarding her intent in certain school issues surprised her, so she appreciated the chance to clarify. She regarded the one-to-one conversations as a platform for relationship building.

Joy also emphasized justice for teachers and their well-being. She organized focus-group discussions with teachers to provide a platform for them to raise any concerns they might have. She noted that some issues raised included their workload, work–life harmony, state of discipline in the school, and a sense of whether their efforts for students were bearing fruit. She thought that having focus-group discussions with teachers allowed her to listen to the teachers, gain an understanding of their anxieties and address them, as well as present further information about students’ needs. She supposed that focus-group discussions enabled her to connect better with

teachers and influence them to be more empathetic toward students, many of whom were from low-income homes.

Adriel mentioned that another aspect of justice for teachers was their right to work to maintain stability, even though many initiatives from MOE needed implementation. She recognized that, as a principal, she had to provide stability in the school environment as well as processes for teachers to do their work well. Several participants concurred that if they had already introduced more than a few new initiatives, they scaled back on further changes to give teachers time to consolidate new learning.

Communication

Participants viewed communication as key to culture building. Flora invested time on communication before implementing any initiative, to ensure teachers connected to the purpose. In her opinion, when teachers felt connection to the purpose, they would still do the necessary activity even if they were not monitored because they were committed. Additionally, Flora believed that “Touching the emotional cord with the teachers is very powerful.” She held focus-group discussions with parents and asked them to recount what had made a difference to their child. Then, she related the parents’ compliments or stories at a segment called Staff Bouquet Time during meetings with teachers. She was convinced that “It goes a long way in helping the teachers to believe that they are powerful and can make a difference.”

As a culture builder, Joy also made it her priority to communicate purpose. She used students’ profiles to help teachers better understand the high needs of students and to find purpose. She considered effective communication essential in generating collective responsibility among teachers to make it their mission to protect students’ rights to education, despite poverty

and a challenging home environment. Firstly, they attended to students' basic needs such as food and attendance. Then they gave of their time for extra lessons to ensure learning.

Gabriel equally believed that communication was key. However, his focus was in being transparent in his communication with teachers and staff. In addition to formal or informal conversations with them, Gabriel communicated expectations and provided feedback through a regular memorandum called "The Principal's Desk." In the memorandum, he commended desired actions or attitudes as well as mentioned those that were unacceptable. On certain serious matters, he clarified that teachers would be held accountable if they did not carry out what was expected. They would be asked to explain themselves. He found that for those who failed to comply, it was usually due to a misunderstanding about expectations. Thus, the ensuing conversation allowed teachers to explain their reasons for noncompliance and permitted Gabriel to clarify and explain to them the context of his directive. He observed that often, after such a conversation, teachers would understand his position. In addition to communication, Gabriel stressed the role of celebrations in culture building. He said it was essential for a principal to affirm teachers through personal message or public celebration.

Adriel, likewise, valued being transparent and explicit in her communication, and expected teachers to do the same. She informed them that if any teachers felt the school leadership did not provide them with the necessary professional development to do their job and achieve the performance grade they desired, it was their responsibility to let the school leadership team know. She stressed that teachers should have a clear understanding of the expectations in key result areas of performance appraisal.

Catholic School Culture

Participants who were principals of Catholic schools regarded the alignment of school culture with Catholic values and the charism of the founder as of utmost importance. Furthermore, Brian viewed school leadership as a personal mission and believed the leader of a Catholic school must be strong in the Catholic faith so the school could be foundationally Catholic in its ethos. In his talks and prayer, he raised awareness about justice. He sought to direct students' attention to God as the source of awareness. In his opinion, the long-term accompaniment of the religious order—not merely a single training program—was vital to the formation of Catholic school leaders. Additionally, Brian recognized the necessity to recruit Catholic teachers and staff for missions. However, in establishing Catholic school ethos, the principal should nurture trust between Catholic and non-Catholic teachers in the school. In his opinion, to facilitate the building of trusting relationships, all teachers must be able to see that the same was expected of them regardless of religion. Moreover, Catholic teachers must not be seen to be given privileges.

Brian said that it was necessary for his school to “anchor on the charism of the founder to awaken a sense of justice in students.” The founder of the religious order that established Brian's school instructed preferential options for the least advantaged. When he first joined the school, he reviewed its efforts in giving students exposure and understanding who were the least advantaged. He perceived that, given the profile of his students who came from more advantaged homes, it would be good if they were exposed to the very poor in Singapore society. He led his teachers to use the opportunity provided by the school's hydroponics program for students to donate their harvest of vegetables to the poorest residents of public housing. He wanted to let students encounter “people who live in a completely different paradigm from them.” Although

the experience could be disturbing or uncomfortable for students, he considered it necessary. Many students in his school would not know what living in public housing felt like because they never grew up in it.

Clement agreed that if school communities professed to live Catholic values, they would provide equal treatment for staff and students. Clement commented that a challenge he encountered as a principal in a Catholic school that had teachers and staff of various ethnicities and religions was to nurture common values as well as belief in the mission and vision of the religious order. He was thankful that a clear majority of the teachers were not averse to the values of the founder. The teachers viewed the values of integrity and service to the least advantaged as universal values that cut across all faiths. He was confident of teachers' commitment but saw the need to be more conscious about promoting those values. A step in that direction was the weekly half-hour Catechism lesson for Catholic students and a parallel ethics lesson for non-Catholic students.

In efforts to develop a just school, Clement prioritized student well-being, yet questioned the extent to which parents, teachers, and MOE had a common goal for student well-being. He did not want his school to overemphasize academic achievement because to him, holistic development, spiritual development, and character development were very important. However, some parents demanded more supplementary lessons and greater emphasis on academic achievement. Although some teachers were willing to go far beyond their usual bounds for students, others were unwilling to do so. Therefore, his challenge was to unite the different stakeholders in the school community to pursue the same goals.

Clement appreciated that when Minister Heng became the Minister for Education in 2011, Heng introduced a national movement to deemphasize academic achievement. Clement

applauded the courage Minister Heng had to take away school ranking. Clement contended that it was unnecessary to put too much emphasis on academic achievement because Singaporean students could achieve academically. Therefore, the question was whether the three parties—parents, teachers, and MOE—could make a concerted effort toward student well-being. Clement acknowledged that since the change of tone set by Minister Heng and MOE, fewer parents demanded greater academic achievement. Clement observed that now, more parents talked about spiritual growth and character development. Clement saw the principal's role as having to strike a balance among the needs of all stakeholders.

Key Success Factors to Culture Building

The key success factors identified by participants were trustful relationships and personal attributes. Hannah asserted that relationships were key, whether among staff, parents, alumni, school leaders and teachers, or school leaders and parents. She believed the quality of relationships allowed the direction of the school to be realized. In her opinion, when relationships were not strong, many interactions would become more transactional and “when relations became transactional, people grabbed as much as they could.” She argued that when people had strong relationships, they would trust each other, and when they had trust, “people wasted less energy trying to tussle, and everyone could then focus their energy on the students.” Thus, Hannah's argument was that trusting relationships transformed school culture.

Correspondingly, Brian believed in building trusting relationships with teachers and staff to transform school culture. Brian said that his first response would be to trust teachers. He believed that a more sympathetic and kinder view of teachers and staff helped them, and also influenced the tone of the school. When teachers or staff needed to attend to personal matters, he would grant them time off. He added that he believed teachers or staff asked for time off because

they genuinely needed it. He said he gave time off in good faith and in turn he expected they would not abuse it. He suggested that setting the tone of trust, openness, and care impacted on transforming school culture.

Alternatively, Damien identified key success factors in culture building as teachers' beliefs and a common vision for students' success. However, he recognized that trusting relationships were a prerequisite to transforming school culture. Communication of rationale for school decisions and support for individual teacher's professional and personal needs facilitated the building of trust in relationships. He articulated the leadership team's flexibility on time off. For example, if teachers needed to attend to family matters, they could take time off after they had completed their lessons for the day and did not have to remain in school until the end of the day. He noted that this policy had reduced the number of applications by teachers and staff for urgent leave.

Additionally, Adriel believed that principals should not make rules that affected the entire staff even though those rules were intended to manage the few who lacked a sense of responsibility. She added that she strived not to judge before investigating a situation. She said,

If something goes wrong, there probably is a reason or miscommunication rather than people being delinquent. People have a right to fulfil all aspects of their lives and we must help but they also have to realize that justice means that there are consequences to the choices made.

She said, however, that teachers should not expect to get a high performance-grade if their work was done by others.

Then, Clement was convinced that if principals wanted teachers to care for students, teachers themselves must first have had the experience of being cared for by their school leaders.

Thus, he introduced the framework for staff well-being based on *The Dimensions of a Great Place to Work*, which fostered credibility, fairness, pride, and camaraderie. He believed that the framework for staff well-being contributed to the school's caring culture. Another key success factor Clement identified was his school's identity. His school had a long history and was part of a larger network of schools established by a Catholic religious order whose charism was to serve the least advantaged. He surmised that, in a sense, the culture of his school was more than 3 centuries old. Because his school believed in serving the least advantaged, it accepted students who needed more guidance, such as those who had a learning need or those who were suffering in their current school. He said that because of the founder's charism, the school was obligated to accept those students. However, to get teachers and parents of other students to commit, he considered it crucial to talk with them about the school's history and network.

Several participants identified personal attributes as a key success factor in culture building. Irma said that, as a principal, it was essential that she acted on her convictions so the school community could see that her actions followed her words. It was Irma's conviction that as educators, they had to give their students hope and that "regardless of which socioeconomic status you come from, or a racial group, the fact is that there is the same hope for everybody." Irma's policy was that a student at the end of Primary Grade 4 would not be assigned to the Foundation class unless the student was extremely weak and had a learning difficulty. The student would be given the chance to take subjects at Standard levels in Primary Grade 5 because the school did not want to close the door to them so early. At the end of Primary Grade 5, if their results were still quite weak in single digit or 11 or 12 of 100, then the school would place them in the Foundation class. Even if the student scored 17 or 18 of 100, the student would be allowed to remain in the Standard class. Irma found the policy very difficult to implement initially

because teachers believe it was much to ask of them because it was unrealistic, and students with 17 of 100 should obviously be in the Foundation class. However, she believed that with guidance from teachers, support from parents, and motivation from students themselves, it was possible to help them pass subjects at the Standard level. Over the years, the school proved it could help those students succeed. Therefore, teachers were now more receptive of the policy. Irma added it was a difficult decision that took much courage because these students could fail; however, they decided to proceed with that policy.

Another participant, Brian, perceived the personal attribute of faithfulness to God was essential to building a Catholic school culture. As a Catholic school principal, he found himself developing a stronger need for prayer and prayer life over the years because of the demands of school leadership. Brian said, “With every challenge it just seems so daunting and that you have no recourse but to turn to prayer. That has also shaped my own prayer life in a very unexpected way.” He firmly believed that having faithfulness to God and praying helped him manage himself and, in turn, manage how he affected and influenced the culture of the staff and school. He encouraged Catholic teachers to gather every week to pray together, pray for one another, and pray for the school. It had become a common practice for the Catholic teachers and staff to get together after school every Wednesday to pray in the chapel. In addition to building community among teachers, Brian also devoted time to nurturing the community of students or parents. Brian considered it important to focus on building the community because he believed “justice can only exist in a community, doesn’t exist if there is no community”.

Elsa was another principal who considered personal attributes as a key success factor in culture building. It was important to her to earn credibility by being consistent. She believed that consistency in her words and actions allowed teachers, students, and parents to have a clearer

understanding of her beliefs and policies. She suggested that if various members of the school community who interacted with her heard the same message, she would gain credibility. She believed that if the different stakeholders could arrive at the conclusion that she was consistent and if they could identify with her beliefs, they would commit to following her.

Challenges or Barriers to Culture Building

The most common challenges or barriers to culture building shared by participants were belief systems or mindsets and certain structures in the educational system. Brian said that a principal's own prejudices and fears could create barriers and invariably erode trust. He said, "Sometimes it's difficult. I try not to do it, but it happens." For example, if a teacher had been difficult to work with for many years, he found it trying "to always see things through the eyes of love" even though he had learned from the teachings of the founder of his Catholic school that one should "always act out of kindness and see things through the eyes of faith." In contrast, the fear and assumptions that others held could affect openness. It took him some time "to wear down the sense of distrust of school leaders" that he had detected when he first joined the school. The school atmosphere was quite formal with teachers and staff seeking permission for everything, including things that did not need the principal's permission. He acknowledged that he had to address the assumptions of the staff and students about the school as well as his own assumptions and views about people.

Gabriel also mentioned mindset as a barrier to principals' efforts in culture building. Gabriel said he was aware of his impatience in wanting to see improvements, but realized that he had to give teachers time to adapt to changes. He saw the need for him to talk less and listen more. About talking less, Gabriel said, "I feel that it's within my control, something I can do. If

the heart is in the right place, as an ethical leader, culture building should not be too tough. It requires conscious effort.”

Damien described another instance of different mindsets creating a barrier to culture building. His school had expressed clearly its commitment to care for students and to employ a restorative approach to discipline. Thus, teachers who were used to more punitive forms of discipline would experience tension because of a mismatch of beliefs. Therefore, he believed that school leaders needed to explicitly articulate expectations. Damien ensured a high level of transparency in communications so teachers were well-informed of expectations. When teachers did not meet expectations, the school leadership team would identify the teachers’ strengths and redeploy according to strength, provide professional assistance, and monitor their work.

Adriel and Elsa said that a challenge to culture building was the misconception some teachers held about the role of teachers in Singapore today. They added that these teachers had not kept current with the evolving role of teachers. These days, teachers were expected to work collaboratively and share knowledge and skills. Hence, they had to attend several meetings a week. Although their instruction time in the classroom had been reduced, some teachers were unable to appreciate the reduced teaching load because they viewed meetings and other responsibilities as administrative duties, unrelated to the work of a teacher. Their anxieties were expressed as an inability to achieve work–life balance. In some schools, teachers and staff had a long career in the school but had not experienced any other school. Some were unable to appreciate how the expectations of teaching had changed, so they amplified the current issues they faced or persisted in comparing the current situation with life as they knew it in the past.

Clement also mentioned complacency among teachers as a challenge to culture building in a Catholic school. Clement said that teachers in a Catholic school that had a long history were

likely to think that because the school was so well-known because of its long history, nothing untoward would happen to it. In the meantime, government schools were fast catching up and some were very strong in character development, which was seen in the past as the strength of Catholic schools. He cautioned teachers that they should not rely on their history or reputation and be satisfied with past achievements. He urged them to continuously improve their teaching strategies. Clement commented that the history or reputation of a school could be an advantage or disadvantage. He thought government schools had to put in more effort to attract students. Therefore, teachers in government schools had had to work very hard.

Irma, Flora, and Joy mentioned resistance to change as a barrier to culture building. Participants concurred on the need to address teachers who were resistant to change. Participants first engaged them to help them better understand the mission of the school. If, however, their negative talk persisted and they were negatively influencing other teachers, participants would explicitly tell them not to influence other teachers who wanted to make change and help students succeed. If any danger existed of the negative attitudes creating a toxic work environment, the teachers would have to go. Flora said,

Our mission is to mould the future of the nation, so we cannot afford to put the children in the wrong hands. As much as I want to nurture and inspire and help, I think we have a moral obligation to weed out the wrong ones.

Diversity of mindsets among parents was another challenge to culture building. Hannah said that in her school profile, parents were quite articulate and vocal about sharing their views and trying to influence school decisions. The challenge was how to build trust with parents so teachers could focus on students. In another example, Flora said that some students with severe special needs would be better served in specialized schools, but their parents expressed fear of

stigmatization and insisted on the students remaining in mainstream schools. She thought Singapore had lagged in progress on mental models related to special needs.

Damien mentioned consistency of practice as a challenge to culture building. Because his school was a start-up school, every year they had new teachers joining them who had different values, purposes, and agendas. The habits they had acquired were from their previous schools, so they had a need to maintain consistency in practice. Damien had to create platforms to ensure consistency and coherence. They set aside time, called Time-Tabled Time (TTT), for teachers to collaborate and learn together how to teach more effectively. There was TTT for every subject at every level. TTT was factored into individual teacher's curriculum time. At the TTT, heads of department (HODs) gave direction on what needed to be done, what they need to do together, and monitoring progress. TTT was a platform for beginning teachers to learn from experienced teachers and for experienced teachers to share their tacit knowledge. TTT allowed everyone to achieve equity and allowed for professional development daily. Thus, attendance of HODs at TTT allowed alignment to achieve consistency of practice. Additionally, the TTT was an opportunity for grade representatives to hone their leadership skills with guidance from HODs.

Other barriers to culture building mentioned by the participants included performance ranking and numerous initiatives from MOE. Some participants thought ranking of teachers was unhelpful because it put teachers in the position of mistrust; a position where collaboration would not be perceived as favorable. Some also thought that the pace of implementation of new initiatives from MOE could be challenging for teachers in schools because every department in MOE that launched an initiative would also offer training and request to work with teachers.

Emergent Theme

An emergent theme participants mentioned was growing class divisions in Singapore. One participant commented that MOE had initiated discussions on this topic following the release of the research, *A Study on Social Capital in Singapore*, by Chua, Tan, and Koh (2017). The researchers found that more could be done to promote social mixing among Singaporeans with different school backgrounds, and between those living in private and public housing. Accordingly, participants expected further discussion in the ensuing months on structures and programs to promote mixing among school children in Singapore.

Summary

Participants shaped their school culture by paying attention to their relationships and communication with teachers, students, and parents. They worked at building trusting relationships with various stakeholders. They communicated the values and beliefs that were important to them and strived to align their actions with their espoused values. They were conscious of the need to role model values and beliefs as well as the necessity to be consistent. Principals appreciated the value of being transparent and explicit in their communication. They recognized that diverse mindsets or assumptions could be barriers to culture building. They were conscious that justice for teachers was a prerequisite to their efforts to build a school culture that promoted justice. Justice for teachers was a recurrent theme in their discussions. However, participants were also clear that those who did not have the values, attitude, and competencies to be a good teacher would have to leave. For Catholic principals, living Catholic values or the mission and vision of the founder was central to their endeavor to lead for justice.

Research Question 4: In what ways do the educational policies, programs, and practices in these schools promote justice?

Participants' responses on their enactment of leadership of curriculum and instruction for justice dwelt on three main areas: (a) a vision for quality teaching and learning, (b) actions to improve students' learning outcomes, and (c) partnership with parents and the community. Policies, programs, and practices that promoted justice for teachers, students, and the community interlaced with discussion of the three main areas. Moreover, those curricular policies, programs, or practices that had illustrated ideas in the findings of other research questions were not repeated in this segment.

Vision for Quality Teaching and Learning

As leaders of curriculum and instruction, participants were expected to develop and communicate a shared vision of quality teaching and learning. For example, Damien communicated that to teach well, teachers must first have a strong belief about teaching and learning. In leading his teachers to envision quality teaching and learning, Damien asked them to address the question "Why do you want to teach?" After teachers had articulated their beliefs, Damien, together with his leadership team, sought to illustrate the alignment between the teachers' beliefs and Singapore Teaching Practice (STP), (MOE, 2017c). MOE developed the STP and the Singapore Curriculum Philosophy (SCP), (MOE, 2017d) to make explicit how effective teaching and learning are to be achieved in Singapore schools. The STP was the result of an endeavor that aggregated data from interviews with over 1,000 teachers. The SCP described the core beliefs of teachers in Singapore about teaching and learning. A core belief was that Singapore teachers aspired to place every student at the center of their educational decisions. Furthermore, it was expected that teachers' beliefs would guide the design and implementation

of their curriculum. Hence, Damien regarded the STP and SCP as the anchor for teachers when ambiguity or misconceptions arose about teaching and learning. Appendix F provides details of the STP and SCP.

Similarly, Gabriel emphasized leading his school to envision quality teaching and learning. Gardner's work on the disciplined mind influenced Gabriel. Gabriel considered subject discipline more important than subject matter in the teaching and learning of various subjects. He argued that subject discipline would inculcate stronger values in the learner, and those values would last a lifetime. Gabriel believed that subject discipline taught the attitude and ethics of learning. For example, in the learning of the English language, primary school students would attain foundational skills, particularly in grammar, spelling, and basic pronunciation, but they would also learn to be effective communicators. However, in Gabriel's school, the goal of English-language learning included developing "affective communicators" who had compassion in communication. Thus, students in his school would acquire values while learning communication skills.

Overall, participants who were principals of Catholic schools had similar views about ensuring their school's curriculum aligned with Catholic values or the founder's mission and vision. Hannah described how, in the last 2 years, her school embarked on an exercise to more fully understand their school vision. She noticed that before the envisioning exercise, teachers had diverse ideas about education in a Catholic school. In the exercise, she led teachers in more clearly articulating Catholic values that should guide their curriculum. They identified values such as courage, justice, sacrifice, and forgiveness. Hannah observed that, in addition to designing their character-development program to align with those values, subsequent verbal and written communication among teachers made more frequent references to those values. Hannah

suggested that actualizing the values would follow once those values had been articulated and documented for reference. However, she believed principals and their leadership team should take the lead by role modeling values in action.

Hannah gave an example of values in action. She described pointing out and giving a higher profile to cleaners in the school, and in so doing, took the opportunity to teach gratitude and appreciation for all people in the school who had contributed to making students' life better. She envisaged that by the leaders' actions, students would get the sense that the cleaners' job was not less important. Additionally, teachers would see the principal role modeling values education. Hannah said, "Teachers are good people, and that's why they come into education. They have a big heart but sometimes, in the busyness, they don't see a lot of things." Hence, school leaders need to draw teachers' attention to teachable moments for values education. The school leaders' examples would nudge teachers to independently seek opportunities to raise examples for values education from the naturally occurrences in the daily life of the school.

In another example of how Catholic values impacted teaching and learning, Brian's school limited their practice of streaming students, as guided by their founder's charism, to serve the least advantaged. According to Brian, the prevailing practice of schools around the world established by the religious order of their founder was to prohibit streaming. He said that the religious order always advocated that the strongest students would provide role models for the weakest students. Therefore, the school should not deny the weakest students access to the stronger students. Brian presumed that when students were streamed, the weakest students would suffer. Although Hannah's school was not established by the same religious order as Brian's, she also held the opinion that a school should not deny the weakest students access to the stronger ones.

In contrast, Clement agreed to teachers' request to stream in Primary Grades 5 and 6, even though he understood that low progress students would not have access to high progress students if they were streamed. Teachers claimed they would not be able to carry out differentiated instruction if the range of progress among students was wide. The teachers preferred streaming because then they could give targeted interventions. Clement said the school was committed to making decisions with students at the center. They recognized that students had different abilities and if they failed to cater to students' needs, they would not do justice. Clement commented that streaming was a difficult issue that posed a dilemma to principals.

Likewise, Adriel led her teachers in developing a values-education curriculum based on Catholic values and customized to the needs of students. The curriculum design was carried out with the help of a religious leader. The key principle guiding the design was the belief that all children were blessings. The curriculum sought to help students be the blessings they were meant to be. The main goal was for students to treat one another well. The values-education curriculum included a student-suggestion scheme to give students a voice in school decision making. Moreover, the school introduced several practices to support the values-education curriculum. One such practice was to organize a thanksgiving day in which teachers and staff led by example by giving love offerings that went to purchase a Christmas hamper for each foreign worker on the school site. Additionally, to recognize the work of the school's cleaners and security guards, the students served them a celebratory lunch as a gesture of appreciation. The assessment of the impact of their values-education curriculum was important to the school. An idea teachers implemented was to have the graduating class of Primary Grade 6 students produce a video on what the values of the school meant to them.

In addition, Adriel highlighted a practice she considered crucial to the achievement of any school's vision for quality teaching and learning. She said that before policies were implemented, principals must ensure that those policies were first discussed and endorsed by key personnel. Then, to engender commitment, policies should be presented to teachers for their feedback before implementation. Flora reinforced the idea of commitment when she requested key personnel and teachers propose programs or activities that contributed to students' learning experiences. Flora said if, after discussion, the school's executive-management team deemed programs or activities beneficial to students' growth, she would exhaust all means to acquire funds for those programs or activities. Flora was confident she could tap the various sources of funding available from MOE, such as the Innovation Fund or Cluster Fund.

Improving Student-Learning Outcomes

Participants regarded the improvement of student outcomes as integral to their leadership of curriculum and instruction. Participants emphasized monitoring the well-being of all students. Nevertheless, the schools paid special attention to monitoring whether the basic needs of students from low-income homes had been met. For example, Joy and Flora said that to serve students from low-income homes, the first goal of teachers was to monitor whether they had enough food and whether their attendance was regular. Beyond basic needs, participants urged teachers to be vigilant and observant in monitoring student progress. Teachers were expected to investigate if students consistently did not complete their homework or failed in basic learning such as spelling. The schools ensured a strong foundation in learning through interventions that included placement in the LSP or remediation by allied educators.

In contrast, participants were aware that in serving students from low-income homes they must also identify students with high academic potential and provide learning experiences that

stretched them. Joy described a case in which teachers helped a student to achieve her aspiration who had lost both parents and was on financial assistance. Teachers were aware of the student's ambition to attend one of the top secondary schools, so they provided more academic and socioemotional support. At the PSLE, she became the school's top student and qualified for her most desired secondary school. Joy said the student made a good role model for other poor children because if students could harness the power of being positive and seeing possibilities, teachers would work to help them achieve their goals.

Correspondingly, participants considered monitoring the effectiveness of learning as a key strategy to improving learning outcomes. For example, Irma, together with vice principals and other key personnel, conducted lesson observations to monitor the quality of teaching and learning. After lesson observations, school leaders and key personnel provided feedback and guidance to teachers on how to improve. In cases where lesson observation showed lessons were below expectations, unengaging, or such that teachers taught the bare minimum, Irma reminded teachers that "You cannot short-change your classroom teaching. You can't give the children less than what they deserve." However, she recognized that, in a class of 30 mixed-ability children, some students would be "short-changed" if teachers provided the same learning experiences to all 30 students. Therefore, she organized professional development for teachers in differentiated teaching and learning so students could be involved and engaged in learning that was more suited to their pace.

One strategy used in Gabriel's school to improve student-learning outcomes was student feedback to teachers. After each examination, teachers would ask students to review and identify the areas in which they did not do well. During teacher-student interaction time, students were expected to tell teachers what had prevented them from achieving better performance as well as

how they would like the teachers to help them. Gabriel said this created equal opportunities for all students because they had very different needs.

Another way Singapore schools improved learning outcomes was to integrate information and communication technology into the curriculum. However, not all students' families could afford computers and Internet access at home without help from the community. Schools in Singapore identified students who would benefit from the Neu PC Plus Programme initiated by Singapore's Infocomm Media Development Authority (2017). The Neu PC Plus Programme provided subsidy to students and people with disabilities from low-income households to own a new computer for about SGD 250. Students had to apply for the program and, upon approval, would also be provided free software and 3 years of free subscription to a broadband service. Joy's school had guided many students to avail themselves of the opportunity to own computers through the Neu PC Plus Scheme. However, despite the affordable price, some students' families still could not raise the required sum. In such instances, Joy's school partnered with self-help groups—CDAC, MENDAKI, and SINDA—to further help the students financially.

Another feature of the Singapore school system that participants leveraged to help students from low-income homes was the afterschool Student Care Centre (SCC). In addition to afterschool care, SCCs contributed to character development and the academic support of students. Currently, almost all primary schools have school-based SCCs and by 2020, all schools are expected to have school-based SCCs. Usually, at the beginning of the year, teachers identify students at risk due to financial or family circumstances. These students were supported through the school's SCC, which provided students with after-school care at highly subsidized rates. The Ministry of Social and Family Development administered a scheme to ensure affordability for

children from low-income families. Students who were eligible for the Student Care Fee Assistance scheme could receive up to 98% subsidy of the monthly fees.

A majority of participants mentioned their use of the Opportunity Fund provided by MOE to equalize opportunity. Schools used the Opportunity Fund for enrichment classes or overseas trips. The fund provided a way to give students learning opportunities that normally would be available only to students from wealthy homes. Joy gave the example of enrichment classes in speech and drama in her school. In the past, only children from wealthy homes would be able to attend private classes in speech and drama. However, the Opportunity Fund allowed her to provide speech and drama classes to all students in her school. She noted that such classes were especially beneficial to students from low-income families because they built students' confidence.

Likewise, several participants said that the policy to involve all students in CCAs and enrichment activities helped equalize opportunities. Irma said that, when planning programs, her school considered all students as a group, not segregated by race except for the learning of mother-tongue languages. However, she monitored the use of funds by the Mother Tongue department to ensure students taking different mother-tongue languages were provided the same opportunities. For example, schools received funds that allowed them to provide students with cultural experiences such as attendance at concerts. She ensured that students who learned the Chinese, Malay, and Tamil languages had equal opportunity to attend cultural performances.

It appeared that one of the most significant ways participants improved the learning outcomes of students was to implement the SDT structure which MOE introduced in 2014. Several participants referenced the SDT when describing how their schools promoted justice. The aim of the SDT was to enhance the quality of school experience with emphasis on values

education and students' socioemotional needs. The SDT allowed teachers to collaborate in monitoring the progress of every student in the grade, as well as take collective responsibility in helping all students in the grade improve.

Partnership with Parents and the Community

Participants acknowledged that the partnership of parents and the community was crucial to the achievement of their vision for quality teaching and learning as well as equity in educational provision. In addition to each school's partnership programs, the *Family Matters Programme*, funded by the Ministry of Social and Family Development, enabled schools to strengthen their partnership with parents. The funds for the *Family Matters Programme* allowed schools to organize workshops that encouraged parents to learn better parenting skills.

Additionally, schools worked with self-help organizations—CDAC, MENDAKI, and SINDA—to provide students from low-income families with a community tuition program. With permission from schools, self-help organizations made use of school premises for community tuition that was open to all students in the neighborhood, not only students of the school that hosted the community tuition program. Weekly tuition was conducted on Saturdays. However, for schools with a high percentage of students in need of additional tutoring, the self-help groups organized a tuition program in the school during afterschool hours. This service was open only to students of the specific school. In this instance, tuition involved small groups of students, especially those who struggled with mathematics. Joy recognized that mathematics was a subject with which many Malay students from low-income families had difficulty. She approached MENDAKI to provide additional support to students who had performed very poorly in the subject.

Another way self-help organizations assisted schools was in family counseling. For example, Joy's school approached MENDAKI, which provided social workers who liaised with families in need. Social services provided by self-help organizations augmented those offered by Family Service Centres. Participants also described support from others in the community. For example, several participants mentioned Chinese temples and Christian churches that supported schools with bursaries. Participants acknowledged they should reciprocate the goodwill by making their schools available for use without charge by their community partners.

Summary

As leaders of curriculum and instruction, participants led their teachers in developing a shared vision of quality teaching and learning for all students. They aligned curriculum with the schools' mission, vision, and values. They encouraged and provided professional-development opportunities to equip teachers to teach effectively. They led curricular innovations to meet the needs of their students. They monitored and evaluated student performance as well as teaching and learning practices to encourage improvement. They worked with other governmental organizations as well as community agencies to better serve students from low-income homes.

Summary of Findings

In leading for justice, participants recognized that, as principal of a school, their main role was to lead the learning. However, the mission of the education system "To mould the future of our nation" placed on them the larger responsibility of serving well as citizens and public servants. As public servants, participants appreciated the need to ensure the rights of others and to earn the trust of the people they served. To mold the future of a nation necessitated a long-term view that required them to consider the kind of society they wanted to build. Participants regarded their leadership as values-centric and future-focused. They were conscious of the

centrality of justice in establishing an inclusive society among a multiracial and multireligious people. As justice agents, participants viewed education as a social leveler. They acknowledged that, as ethical leaders, they must be clear about their personal values, beliefs, and principles. Participants were cognizant of the impact of their words and actions on others. Therefore, they strived to be reflective practitioners. Furthermore, they acknowledged that it was essential to reflect on the alignment between their espoused values and values in action.

Justice in schools encompassed serving every student, ensuring students' rights to education and a safe school, attending to the socioemotional development, character formation, and well-being of students and recognizing varied talents and interests. Participants considered the enactment of leadership for justice as providing equal opportunities to all students and equalizing students with the highest needs. Participants led and managed change through evidence-based decision making.

Participants acknowledged the strong leadership by MOE in the formulation of policies, initiation of organizational change, and curriculum development. MOE provided financial and human resources as well as key programs to ensure every school succeeded in delivering effective basic education. MOE also supported principals' autonomy in the implementation of school-based curriculum innovation by providing various sources of developmental funds. Accurately, participants recognized the need to be good stewards of those resources. In addition, MOE initiated structural change in schools through the implementation of the SDT. The intent of the structural change was to facilitate collaboration among teachers to serve the socioemotional and character-development needs of students. The SDT structure also fostered collective responsibility among teachers for the well-being and progress of all students in the grade.

Participants acknowledged the responsibility to implement the SDT structure to achieve the intent of the structural change to meet the needs of every student.

Findings indicated the manifold sources of influence on the beliefs of principals about justice: their faith, family, personal experiences in their formative years, the people they encountered in their service as an educator, and world leaders. Although MOE's philosophy for educational leadership was not a source of influence for most principals, it articulated their beliefs. Findings also showed that the influence of MOE senior leaders rested on their values-centric leadership. In addition, it appeared that the religious order that established Catholic schools had stronger influence on the beliefs of the principals than school boards, especially if the religious order deliberately nurtured students, teachers, or school leaders in living the charisma of the founder.

As culture builders, participants perceived the nurturing of trusting relationships with teachers, students, and parents as foundational. They viewed as essential communication of values, beliefs, and purpose; role modeling; and consistency. Principals respected transparent and explicit communication. They acknowledged that their own mindsets or assumptions could be barriers to culture building. Also, teachers' mindsets or assumptions could block communication. They were conscious that teachers must experience justice at the workplace if a school leader desired to build a school culture that promoted justice. However, those who did not have the values, attitude, and competencies to be good teachers would have to leave. Living Catholic values or the charisma of the founder was central to the endeavor of Catholic principals in leading for justice and building a school culture that promoted justice.

As leaders of curriculum and instruction, participants led teachers in developing a shared vision of quality teaching and learning, and aligned curriculum with the schools' mission, vision,

and values. They encouraged and supported teachers in professional development for effective teaching and learning. They led school-based curricular innovations to meet the specific needs of students. They monitored and evaluated student performance as well as teaching and learning practices to encourage improvement. They liaised with other governmental organizations and community agencies to better serve students from low-income families.

Participants in this study identified a growing class divide as an emergent theme in Singapore. A recent study by the Institute of Policy Studies revealed that more could be done to promote social mixing between Singaporeans from different school backgrounds, and between those who live in public and private homes. Principals believed that schools would be expected to put structures and programs in place to encourage social mixing between children from different schools, and between children who live in public and private homes.

CHAPTER V
SUMMARY, DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND
RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary and Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this qualitative study was to investigate the perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about their role as justice agents. Among the 10 participants interviewed, four were principals of Catholic schools and the rest were principals of government schools. Despite a large body of literature on educational leadership, few studies examined how principals' beliefs about justice influenced their leadership for justice. Research on how Catholic school principals enacted leadership for justice was also limited. Because principals' beliefs impact the lived experiences of students and teachers through school policies, culture, and curriculum, a need existed to investigate how their beliefs about justice influenced their practice as ethical leaders, culture builders, and leaders of curriculum and instruction. Furthermore, no research had been conducted on this topic in Singapore.

When Singapore became a republic in 1965, the government identified justice and equality as foundational values for nation building. Education was and still is of national significance to Singapore. Education was regarded as instrumental in uniting a multiracial and multireligious people, as well as developing Singapore's only resource: her people. Although MOE (2007) articulated a set of beliefs and guiding principles for school leaders in the document, *Anchored in Values and Purpose: Philosophy for Educational Leadership in Singapore*, a void persisted in research on how Singapore schools enacted educational leadership for justice. This study sought to investigate the perceptions of principals as justice agents as well as the extent to which they carried out their role as justice agents.

Several themes emerged in this study on participants' perceptions of leadership for justice. The first theme was the principal as a public servant. Interview participants embraced their responsibilities as citizens and public servants, and subscribed to the role of education as a social leveler. Participants' consciousness of the significance of education in the national agenda and their role as public servants aligned with Starratt's (2009) Level 2 of ethical enactment, describing public servants as representatives of the state. According to Starratt (2009), in enacting their role as citizen–public servants, school leaders must see that democracy works and further the democracy of the people. Moreover, school leaders, as public servants, must not violate the rights and the trust of the people in the school. Findings showed that as public servants, participants recognized the significance of the mission of the Singapore education service to mold the future of the nation and articulated their commitment to it. Parallel to participants' consciousness of the significance of education to nation building was an awareness of areas for improvement as Singapore progresses toward its goal of becoming an inclusive society.

Furthermore, participants regarded their work as values-centric and future-focused. They took a long-term view of their efforts in developing students into good citizens and active contributors to society. Questions a participant asked of herself encapsulated the common concerns of other participants: “What kind of society do we want to build?” and “What must we do now so that our students will grow up with the right values and perspectives?” During the last 50 years of Singapore's growth as a nation, prominence had been given to valuing Singapore's sociocultural diversity and social cohesion. This emphasis translated into educational policies, programs, and practices. Principals, as public servants, were not mere implementers of public policy but shaped school policies in ways that reflect their personal and organizational values

(Stevenson, 2007). This study, however, provides only a momentary view of principals' beliefs and practice in leading for justice. A more extensive study is needed to examine the extent to which Singapore schools achieved social cohesion and equality.

The second theme was serving every student. The predominant perception among participants about justice in schools was the responsibility to serve every student. As educators and public servants, participants perceived their role as creating conditions in school to support the learning, well-being, and development of every student. The responses of participants pointed to the strong leadership of MOE in policy formulation, creation of a macroculture, and a clear direction for curriculum development. At the MOE Workplan Seminar 2012, then Minister for Education Heng (2012) articulated the direction for the education system in Singapore, stating that "the goal in education was to provide every child with the opportunity to develop holistically and maximise his or her potential," and that in creating opportunities for all, MOE will ensure that "every school is a good school."

Participants discussed the policies crafted by MOE that aimed at supporting every school in providing a good basic education. Financial and human-resource provisions by MOE for the fundamentals in school operations ensured that every school in Singapore could deliver the same strong educational foundation to every student. In addition to financial and human-resource provisions, MOE also designed learning programs such as the LSP implemented by all schools to safeguard strong educational foundation. Alternatively, developmental grants from MOE afforded principals the autonomy to design school-based innovation and curriculum customization to meet the specific needs of students. Participants' responses echoed the description by Hargreaves and Shirley (2012) of the education system in Singapore as

paradoxical, and one of the paradoxes was “more autonomy, more control” (p. 80). Hargreaves and Shirley wrote,

the government retains responsibility for providing high value for public money and aligning what schools do with the nation’s social and economic strategies. The Ministry of Education spells out broad strategic requirements while tactically empowering schools to fulfil those requirements in their own way. (p. 81)

The commitment of MOE and schools to serve every student reflects the ethic of care where schools serve the common good and the rights of individuals, and the ethic of justice where schools respect the intrinsic dignity and worth of individuals (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001; Starratt, 1991). Furthermore, their focus on student-centricity necessitates placing students at the center of their decision-making process on ethical issues (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001).

A third theme was the role of education as a social leveler. Participants’ definitions of serving every student comprised creating opportunities for all, and equalizing students with high financial, learning, or socioemotional needs. In their discussion on equity, participants again referenced the leadership of MOE in financial and program initiatives to serve students with high needs. However, the study revealed that responsibility for equitable provision rested not only on MOE and the schools, but also on other governmental and community agencies such as the Ministry of Social and Family Development, Ministry of Health, Infocomm Media Development Authority, and the community self-help groups. Thus, the obligation of equity can be considered a national agenda. Ryan (2006) contended that schools will achieve social justice only when there is systemic change. Ryan further argued that enactment of social justice should be anchored not merely in the technical aspects of school leadership but in its moral calling, and that the practice of equity should be a collective process.

In addition, findings also indicated that participants from Catholic schools viewed their responsibilities not just as public servants but also as leaders of their faith community. Participants from Catholic schools and participants from government schools averred that justice dictates serving every student. Furthermore, Catholic values or the charism of their founder strongly shaped Catholic principals' call to justice. Catholic values of courage, justice, sacrifice, and forgiveness influenced efforts to equalize students, defining justice as serving the most disadvantaged. In exercising preferential option for the poor, they considered not only students who were financially poor but also those who were suffering, those who did not have a voice, those who struggled cognitively or had special needs, and those who experienced difficulties due to family dysfunction. The beliefs of the Catholic participants reflected two themes in Catholic Social Teaching: (a) rights and responsibilities, where Catholic tradition teaches the inseparability of personal rights and responsibilities from social responsibilities and protection of the rights of others, and (b) option for the poor and vulnerable, which explains that the basic moral test of a society where there are divisions between rich and poor is how the most vulnerable members are coping (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998). According to Groome (2002), "How God's people treat the poor and powerless measures their faithfulness to the covenant." (p. 217).

A fourth theme was safety for all students. Several participants discussed the importance of school leaders articulating unequivocally that bullying and name calling had no place in a school, and argued that the clear public stand had to be supported with antibullying policies. The ethic of justice maintains that respect for the intrinsic dignity and worth of individuals was the foundation of any endeavor to build a caring culture in school (Shapiro & Stefkovich, 2001; Starratt, 1991). However, a dilemma would arise if students with special needs risked the safety

of other students. Participants agreed that principals would have to weigh their commitment to serve special-needs students with the rights of the other students for a safe school. Ultimately, principals need to judge the knowledge that their decision must stand up to scrutiny. Noddings (1999) suggested that “inclusion of some special-needs students in regular classroom can be shown to make it very difficult for teachers to attend adequately to their main teaching duties. Neither the special-needs child nor the other youngsters receive the care they need” (p. 17). The same argument could be made about disruptive students. Therefore, any selected practice must allow a school to care adequately for the special needs or disruptive student as well as students who are ready to learn.

The fifth theme was justice for teachers. Overall, participants in this study shared the belief that justice in school had to begin with the way teachers were valued and developed. Participants conveyed the importance of expressing clearly their expectations of teachers. The argument was that, in general, teachers would meet expectations if they had a good understanding of those expectations in the key-result areas of performance appraisal. Justice for teachers included opportunities for professional development as well as career growth. Hence, a key role of principals was people development.

In addition, participants were cognizant of the power of teacher ownership on the success of programs and practices. Participants agreed that to engender ownership, they had to communicate purpose and consider teachers’ concerns and feedback before implementing any policy or program. Additionally, participants considered the personal needs of teachers to be as important as their professional needs. Opening a door to conversations with teachers and being supportive of teachers in their time of personal difficulties was not only a just action but develops teachers’ allegiance to the school. In Starratt’s (2009) levels of ethical enactment,

respect for others and the recognition of the sacredness with which others deserve to be treated outlined the fundamental or Level 1 of ethical enactment as a human being. More importantly for Catholic principals, the Catholic Church declared that human life is sacred and insisted on respect for the dignity of all people. Therefore, every Catholic school is measured by the extent to which it respects the life and dignity of the human person (U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, 1998).

The study also investigated the origins of participants' belief about justice. Participants were clear about the influences on their beliefs about justice. Although the two most commonly mentioned sources of influence on their beliefs about justice were faith and family, senior leaders in MOE were also mentioned as an influence on participants' beliefs. Two participants from Catholic schools said the accompaniment by the religious order strongly influenced their beliefs. The influence of faith and family on personal formation can be considered a widely accepted idea. However, the influence of senior leaders in MOE or religious leaders requires further exploration. Schein and Schein (2017) introduced the notion of macrocultures, described as the culture of nations, ethnic groups, religions, and other kinds of social units. Schein and Schein argued that the culture of an organization is sometimes nested in the macro culture. Schein and Schein described the culture of an organization as "a product of joint learning leading to shared assumptions about how to perform and relate internally" (2017, p. 13).

Possibly, cultural transmission by senior leaders in MOE through regular meetings, annual workplan seminars, and even during the leadership-preparation program gave rise to consistency in some participant responses. For example, participants each averred, in their perception of justice in school, that their mission was to serve the learning and well-being of every student. The notion of serving every student was the direction set by MOE, articulated by

Minister Heng at the 2012 MOE Workplan Seminar. In another example, participants agreed that although the philosophy for educational leadership was not a source of influence on their beliefs, it did not contradict their beliefs but did, in fact, articulate their beliefs.

Likewise, cultural transmission by religious leaders influenced Catholic participants' beliefs about justice. Two participants from Catholic schools credited the accompaniment of religious leaders for their strong commitment to living the charism of their founder. Moreover, both participants were appointed as vice principals in a school established by the religious order before being considered for principalship. They perceived the accompaniment of religious leaders as a deliberate effort to aid their faith and leadership formation. In fact, one participant suggested he could consider his school culture to be 3 centuries old because it was built on the teachings of the founder.

However, the study indicated that formation for spiritual leadership of Catholic schools in Singapore was not coordinated at the national level but was the purview of individual religious orders that established schools or, in the case of diocesan schools, some guidance from the religious leaders on the school board. Currently, the Catholic community in Singapore lacks a coordinating body responsible for structured spiritual-leadership preparation or continuing spiritual leadership development of Catholic principals across the Catholic schools. A coordinated and deliberate approach to the spiritual formation of Catholic school leaders and key personnel in Singapore could be considered. The reason for widening the opportunity for spiritual formation to include key personnel arose from the example of MOE itself, where heads of department and subject heads as well as senior teachers received professional development in school management and teacher leadership. Trained key personnel were expected to not only add

value to the management of their schools but also form the pool of potential vice principals who could eventually be appointed as principals.

Also, Jacobs (2005) contended that Catholic schools were both civic institutions and faith communities; therefore, the aim of Catholic schools “was not only to form knowledgeable and virtuous citizens but also to form mature and responsible disciples” (p. 101). In the Singapore context, the Leaders in Education Programme, organized by MOE and the National Institute of Education, developed all potential principals, including potential Catholic school principals, to lead schools as civic institutions. Therefore, the Catholic community in Singapore should consider the identification and spiritual formation of educators for eventual leadership of Catholic schools to form disciples.

This study also investigated how participants, in leading for justice, enacted ethical leadership, built culture, and led in the creation of curriculum and instruction. First, participants embraced the notion that ethical leadership was central to school leadership. They discussed the necessity of leaders knowing their personal values, beliefs, and principles, and aligning their leadership practice with those ethics and values. More importantly, they respected reflexivity because they believed that reflection on their words and actions gave them awareness of their impact on others as well as the extent to which they had been consistent in word and deed. The beliefs and practices of participants supported Brown’s (2004) assertion that educational leadership for social justice entailed developing awareness through critical reflection, and that reflective practice involves the examination of personal assumptions, values, and beliefs, as well as the consequences of leadership actions on school practices and students.

Thus, as ethical leaders, participants’ values-centric leadership and reflective practice served as a compass for their growth in self-management as well as development of personal

strength. Starratt (2009) suggested that values of responsibility and authenticity aid principals in their pursuit of transformational leadership. Furthermore, ethical leadership in the context of Catholic schools can be considered a mission to develop the school as a moral community bound by a covenant that transforms it from a civic institution into a sacred organization (Sergiovanni, 1992).

This study found that in participants' enactment of culture building, their practices reinforced the findings of other research on school culture. Leadership by example, communication, and trusting relationships were critical to participants' efforts to shape school culture. Participants believed that to establish a culture that promoted justice they had to role model the values and beliefs they espoused. Their role modeling of values in action allowed the school community to judge the authenticity of their communication as well as create conditions for trusting relationships to develop. Participants regarded the communication of purpose as crucial in inspiring teachers to commit to a shared vision and shared values. Moreover, through the building of trusting relationships, participants sought to influence a transformation in school culture to advance justice. The actions of participants reflected Starratt's (2009) Level 5 of ethical enactment: as an educational leader. Starratt (2009) described an ethical educational leader as one who inspires others to go beyond self-interests and instead, strive for a higher purpose. Starratt's conception of the ethical educational leader strengthened Bass (1985), who stated that a transformational leader is one who raises consciousness about higher purpose and who, through articulation and role modeling, inspires others to transcend their own self-interests for the good of the group, organization, or country.

Additionally, several participants discussed the impact of role modeling by senior leaders in MOE on their own beliefs about justice. This role again raised the notion of macroculture

proposed by Schein and Schein (2017). In the early 1990s Schein (2010) conducted a culture analysis of Singapore's Economic Development Board (EDB). Schein found that artifacts of culture, espoused values, and underlying assumptions operating in the EDB aligned well. Furthermore, shared assumptions in the EDB reflected the mental models of founding leaders of Singapore, shared by Singapore's government in general. Hence, a study to investigate the impact of MOE culture on the culture of individual schools would be instructive.

This study found that in participants' enactment of leadership of curriculum and instruction, four main areas of responsibility emerged: (a) developing a shared vision of quality teaching and learning; (b) alignment of the curriculum with the school's mission, vision, and values; (c) professional development of teachers to deliver quality lessons; and (d) monitoring and evaluation of student performance, and teaching and learning practices to improve student achievement. However, students' experiences of and learning about justice were contingent on the extent to which the school community lived its espoused value of serving every student. Findings indicated similarities in participants' beliefs and practices of differentiated instruction to meet students' pace of learning; use of data from student profiles and performance to make evidence-based decisions; deployment of teachers to match students' needs; equipping of teachers to meet the different learning needs of students; and monitoring classroom teaching and learning. However, participants were divided on the practice of streaming. Some saw mixed-ability grouping as a more just practice whereas others saw streaming as a strategy to meet the different learning paces of students.

In addition, this study identified two elements of quality teaching and learning that had the potential to promote students' experiences of justice in school and improve student achievement. The two elements were positive classroom climate and student feedback to

teachers. Participants referred to the SCP when describing their actions as leaders of curriculum and instruction. Among the beliefs articulated in the SCP were the following, which expressed clearly the commitment of MOE and schools to serve every student: “We believe that every child wants to and can learn. We value every child as an individual. We believe that learning takes place in caring and safe environments” (MOE, 2017d, p.1).

According to the SCP, positive classroom climate facilitates the building of mutually respectful relationships between teachers and students. Furthermore, results of a meta-analysis by Hattie (2009) showed that the effect size of teacher–student relationship on student achievement was 0.72. Hattie wrote,

Building relations with students implies agency, efficacy, respect by the teacher for what the child brings to the class (from home, culture, peers), and allowing the experiences of the child to be recognized in the classroom. Further, developing relationships requires skill by the teacher—such as skills of listening, empathy, caring, and having positive regard for others. (2009, p. 118)

Hattie’s argument supported Shields’s (2004) contention that strong relationships with all children are at the heart of educational equity. Additionally, several participants were exploring the adoption of Positive Education into their schools’ curriculum. Positive Education applies the science of positive psychology to teaching practice to encourage students and school communities to flourish.

The second element of quality teaching and learning underscored in this study was the practice of student feedback to teachers. A participant considered student feedback to be a strategy to promote justice for students. As practiced in his school, students reviewed their performance in an assessment to identify areas in which they did not perform well. During

teacher–student interaction time, students gave feedback to teachers on what they were not able to do. They also gave feedback on how they would like the teachers to help them. This strategy gave students equal opportunity to have their specific needs met. On student feedback, Hattie (2009) argued that “it is feedback to the teacher about what students can or cannot do that is more powerful than feedback to the student” (p. 4). Hattie elaborated that success in teaching depends on how the teacher reacts to what the teacher learns about the student’s gaps in learning. However, the practice “necessitates a different way of interacting and respecting students” (2009, p. 4) and is more about classroom climate than about increasing the amount of feedback.

Nevertheless, the successful development of positive classroom climate or implementation of student feedback to teachers required structural change in the organization of schools. To this end, MOE initiated the FTGP and SDT. The FTGP was introduced in all primary schools in 2012. Central to the work of teachers in the FTGP was relationship building with students. One period of about 30 minutes per week afforded time for teacher–student interaction that facilitated teachers’ better understanding of their students. The FTGP was also an opportunity for teachers to equip students with social and emotional competencies. The SDT, introduced by MOE in 2014, sought to enhance the quality of school experience with emphasis on values education and students’ socioemotional needs. The SDT facilitated teacher collaboration in monitoring the progress of every student in the grade as well as promoted collective responsibility among teachers for helping all students in the grade improve. Also, the SDT platform allowed for teacher leadership to emerge.

Participants’ commitment to implementing the SDT effectively agreed with the assertion by Jenlink and Jenlink (2012) that transformational leaders must be skillful in generating a common vision and collective responsibility. Adding to the connection between transformational

leadership and instructional leadership, a study by Marks and Printy (2003) showed that where transformational leadership coupled with shared instructional leadership, teachers developed high-quality pedagogy and students performed at high levels on authentic measures of assessment. Sanzo et al. (2011) and Seashore Louis et al. (2010) supported the importance of developing and sustaining a community of professionals who share leadership and instructional leadership.

This study demonstrated that the beliefs and practices of the participants in leading curriculum and instruction dovetailed with Starratt's (2009) Level 3 of ethical enactment: as an educator. Participants recognized their responsibility as educators who promoted the intrinsic value of learning, possessed a firm understanding of the learning process, led staff in developing professional knowledge in teaching and learning, and had knowledge of developments in the psychology of learning and personalization of learning. A possible explanation for participants' confidence in leading curriculum and instruction was the practice in Singapore of appointing only educators who had proven themselves to be effective teachers to leadership positions in schools and MOE headquarters.

This study also saw alignment of participants' leadership in curriculum and instruction with Starratt's (2009) Level 4 of ethical enactment as educational administrators. Leading in curriculum and instruction entailed visionary leadership as well as change leadership. In leading the school community to serve every student, participants communicated vision and purpose as well as inspired commitment. They communicated rationale and managed teachers' concerns and apprehensions in the implementation of the FTGP and SDT. However, participants acknowledged that commitment was required to sustain effectiveness in structural change. Time and effort were necessary to support teachers through a mindset change.

At Starratt's (2009) Level 4 of ethical enactment, educational administrators must question the status quo of structures that create injustices, and act to address those injustices. This study found that at the national level, the FTGP and SDT were structural changes introduced by MOE to create conditions in schools to address the needs of every student. All primary schools in Singapore were expected to implement the FTGP and SDT. In addition, at the school level, actions taken to serve the specific needs of the cohort of students demonstrated ethical enactment at Level 4. For example, several participants created mixed-ability classes instead of streaming students to provide lower progress students access to their higher progress peers. In contrast, other participants streamed their classes to address students' different paces of learning. For example, a participant made the decision to stream classes due to the teachers' apprehension about their ability to effectively differentiate instruction for a class of students with widely differing paces of learning. At that point in time, the participant took the decision with the best interests of the students in mind as well as respect for teachers' concerns. However, the principal believed that with further professional development, teachers could gain more confidence to attempt differentiated instruction in a mixed-ability class. Thus, the examples showed that the context in which leadership decisions were made is an important consideration in assessing the morality or effectiveness of those decisions.

Nevertheless, Starratt's (2009) contention that ethical leaders must question the status quo of structures that create injustices and act to address those injustices puts in operational terms the definition of social justice by Groome (2002): "Social justice is the responsibility of society to create structures that protect the dignity of all and allow each member to participate in the public life" (p. 226). For participants from Catholic schools, the implication is that the design philosophy of the SDT aligns with Groome's notion that "social justice requires society to

arrange itself to welcome the participation of all according to their needs and talents.” (p. 226). Furthermore, Groome asserted that justice requires subsidiarity and government intervention. Perhaps MOE’s directive on the SDT and the implementation of the SDT in schools can be considered an example of Groome’s idea of subsidiarity and government intervention.

An unexpected finding in this study was the impact of Catholic education on students’ future leadership beliefs and practices. Although findings related to the experiences of only two participants, inferences from those findings could be of interest to Catholic educators. One participant was a Catholic who had a 10-year Catholic-school education. Now, as a principal of a government school, the values she acquired through Catholic formation in school, as well as her family, influenced her beliefs about justice and her leadership practice. Another participant, who identified as having no religion, credited her 4-year Catholic secondary school education for having influenced her values as a principal of a government school. Specifically, she claimed that the principal of the Catholic secondary school shaped her beliefs about values and character development. Furthermore, the culture of openness in her secondary school, which embraced students of all faiths, gave her a strong feeling of belonging to the school. This bodes well for Catholic schools around the world, which are currently seeing an increasing number of non-Catholic students in their schools. A study to investigate the impact of Catholic education on the leadership beliefs and practices of non-Catholic principals could be illuminating.

An emergent theme arose from the comments of participants on the research findings about a growing class divide in Singapore. A study on social capital in Singapore by the Institute of Policy Studies, National University of Singapore in 2017 revealed the need to encourage mixing between people with different school backgrounds, and between those living in private and public housing, to strengthen social capital and trust (Chua et al., 2017). Several participants

noted that MOE had initiated conversations on this issue with school leaders. They expected further deliberations on structures and programs to promote social mixing.

Conclusions and Implications

The study identified five themes in participants' perceptions of leadership for justice: (a) the principal as public servant, (b) serving every student, (c) education as a social leveler, (d) safety for all students, and (e) justice for teachers. Participants embraced their responsibilities as citizens and public servants and subscribed to the role of education as a social leveler. As public servants, participants recognized the significance of the mission of the Singapore education service to mold the future of the nation and articulated their commitment to it. Leadership for justice in Singapore entailed serving the holistic development of every student, including socioemotional development and character formation. Principals as justice agents strived to provide equal opportunities to all students and intentionally pursue equity to equalize students with higher needs. Enactment of leadership for justice necessitates questioning the status quo of structures and leading structural change to promote just practices. Justice for teachers is essential to leadership for justice and encompasses respect for teachers as individuals with personal and professional needs. Principals built trusting relationships with teachers to create a culture of care and advanced the professional development and career growth of teachers.

More importantly, participants were conscious of the many areas for improvement yet to be addressed in making schools more just institutions. Leading for justice is an endeavor with no end. Additionally, the study found that participants from Catholic schools committed to developing their schools as civic institutions and faith communities. However, leadership preparation for their role as educational leaders of civic institutions was more structured and

deliberate than their preparation for spiritual leadership of their faith community. Because the values and beliefs of principals determine their leadership practice, it is essential that the selection process of educators for principalship is able to provide insights into potential candidates' moral compass, self-awareness, and understanding of their own impact and influence.

Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations may be considered for further research:

- A similar study could be carried out on the perceptions of secondary school principals in Singapore about their role as justice agents.
- A similar study could be conducted on the perceptions of parish school principals or public elementary school principals in the United States about their role as justice agents. Such a study would provide principals in the United States and Singapore with points of comparison that may be helpful.
- This study on the perceptions of principals about their leadership for justice did not include the perceptions of teachers or students about their lived experiences of justice in school. An investigation on the perceptions of teachers and students would give a fuller picture of the extent to which justice and equality had been achieved in Singapore schools, especially with regards to race and gender. A similar study could be conducted in the United States.
- This study revealed the strong influence of MOE on Singapore schools, including Catholic schools. A more in-depth study could be conducted on the extent to which MOE culture influenced the culture of individual schools in Singapore.

- A study could be conducted to investigate the influence of an archdiocese on the culture of parish schools.
- A study could be conducted on the role of an archdiocese in the preparation of principals for spiritual leadership in Catholic schools.
- This study found that a non-Catholic principal's Catholic education influenced her leadership beliefs and practices, suggesting that further studies could be carried out on the influence of Catholic school education on the leadership beliefs and practices of non-Catholic principals in Singapore or the United States.

Based on the results of the study, the following recommendations may be considered for practice:

- It is essential that the interviews of educators for principalship include questions that provide insights into the potential candidates' moral compass, self-awareness, and understanding of their own impact and influence. Additionally, for the selection of principals to lead Catholic schools, questions about spiritual leadership will be relevant.
- Educators should identify and enhance the spiritual formation of Catholic educators in Singapore and the United States early, for eventual leadership of Catholic schools.
- Catholic universities and colleges should establish courses that will prepare and support Catholic principals to lead for justice, and for their role as spiritual leaders.
- Leadership development courses for school leaders and key personnel in Singapore should provide opportunities for participants to examine the extent to which they served their school communities as justice agents.

Researcher's Reflections

The motivation for this study was the recognition of the heavy responsibility on the shoulders of leaders as they served others. The words and actions of leaders can inspire or defeat the people they lead. Principals' practice of leadership reaches beyond their student population to include their students' families. Similarly, principals' leadership may impact teachers' families as much as the teachers themselves. As a principal, the researcher often asked herself whether she had done the right thing and whether she had done enough for students and teachers. The researcher found that those were the same questions her peers asked themselves. Hence, the researcher conducted this study to find out how effectively principals in Singapore served their school community.

It was not surprising that the study found similar beliefs and consistency of practice among participants. Similarities could be attributed to the strong leadership of MOE in all areas of school life. Furthermore, principals in Singapore were exposed to common experiences in the Leadership in Education Programme, a leadership-development program designed by MOE and the National Institute of Education. Senior leaders in MOE provided extensive input into the conduct of the program. As discovered in the study, the Leadership in Education Programme centered on values and on valuing people. Furthermore, only those who had attended the Leadership in Education Programme would be considered for appointment to principalship.

Based on the study, participants from Catholic schools were equally committed to developing their schools as civic institutions and faith communities. However, their practice as leaders of civic institutions appeared to be better developed and confident than their leadership of their faith community. The researcher sensed a desire among Catholic participants for formation as spiritual leaders. The researcher had a similar desire for formation as a spiritual leader when

she was the principal of a Catholic primary school. It would be difficult for principals to develop students to be disciples of Christ if principals were not adequately prepared for the responsibility. Perhaps that was the motivation for the researcher's application to pursue a course of study on Catholic educational leadership at the University of San Francisco.

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APPENDIX A: QUALTRICS REPORT FOR FEEDBACK ON INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Qualtrics Report

Review of interview questions

October 30th 2017, 11:35 am MDT

Q2—In relation to Singapore’s national values of justice, equality and meritocracy, what is your understanding of justice in school?

In relation to Singapore’s national values of justice, equality and meritoc...

Is justice defined in first part of survey? Or is this where you like principals themselves to define it ? Leadership for justice Different principals may have different understanding of what it is. Good to scope so that it will be easier for you to analyse data later.

in relation to what is your understanding of the word/term ‘justice’ in the context of Singapore in general and in the school context? Would be nice to see if there is congruence in how the Ps define justice. And just wondering if you want see how Ps modify for school application and in the first place where they get their definitions of justice for Singapore from :)

If justice is not defined (in terms of the national value), the possibilities in the answer can be endless. Maybe good if a definition is given so that the scope for this Q can be narrower (unless that is not your intention).

Q3—What do you think leadership for justice in a primary school entails?

What do you think leadership for justice in a primary school entails?

Again, scope can be wide as justice in school can encompass justice for pupils, staff, administration, parents - and definitely dependent on each situation as justice requires the leader to be fair, impartial when handling each situation. You may need to narrow the scope?

Question is too broad? Do you want to know how the P puts into practice the concept of justice in the school - in general? at different levels (ie. in management of staff, non-teaching staff, students, parents, stakeholders - canteen operators, bus drivers, security guards, ...) Or how it is captured in school environment? Or if it is encapsulated in school values (in some form)? OR is this asking for the ideal i.e. what it should look like (no limitations, restrictions to consider)?

Leadership for justice from whose point of view? Students? Staff? Stakeholders? MOE? Church? Community?

Q4—To what extent do you consider yourself an ethical leader? In what ways do your beliefs about justice influence your practice as an ethical leader?

To what extent do you consider yourself an ethical leader? In what ways do...

Good Q - as it targets the leader's beliefs about justice and ethics.

I like this question :) Good to see what Ps in secular and mission schools say about this. What is their definition of an ethical leader? Hmm... Second part of question is nice :)

Ethical needs definition too. Not sure if the two are co related? I need to think about this quite deeply to answer your question.

Q5—Who or what are the sources of influence on your beliefs about justice in schools?

Who or what are the sources of influence on your beliefs about justice in s...

Fair Q - as the leader can list as many (or as few) as he/she feels are influences.

Nice question. not sure if it should be "about justice in your school", "about justice for schools" or ... schools = in general, or is it specific to one school Also, preposition - for or in - which works better?

For this I guess my ans is likely to be personal and professional experiences.

Q6—To what extent do the Ministry of Education's philosophy for educational leadership and leader growth model influence your beliefs about justice in schools?

To what extent do the Ministry of Education's philosophy for educational le...

Loaded Q - although the LGM is based on the philosophy for educational leadership, it is basically a 2-part Q 1) on MOE's philosophy (which views leadership as anchored in values and purpose - lead, learn and inspire) 2) on the LGM (which in turn is based on a framework which encompasses the 6 major domains)

Nice - you may have to carry the latest versions these documents or graphic organizers with you to interviews so Ps don't have to think too hard hahaha :) :) I think their have been changes/ modifications made over the years ... Not so sure - not fully in touched (just my gut feel)

MOE philosophy of educational leadership and growth model not explicitly articulated leh. Principals may stumble on this one.

Q7—This question will be asked of Catholic school principals only: To what extent does the Archdiocesan Commission for Catholic Schools, Singapore influence your beliefs about justice in schools?

This question will be asked of Catholic school principals only: To what ext...

The assumption is that all Ps of catholic schools are familiar with the Archdiocesan Commission.

Don't limit to ACCS maybe say ACCS/ School Board/ and what's the word for different missions - e.g. CHIJ, Canossian, LaSalle, Gabrielites etc... They have different charisms

During my time, ACCS was not quite clear. But recently Archi did re org the ACCS. Maybe current catholic principals can answer this one better than me.

Q8—How do your beliefs about justice influence your practice as a culture builder?

How do your beliefs about justice influence your practice as a culture buil...

Fair Q

Beliefs turn into Application (Practices) lead to building a particular culture ... Good question :)

Easier if they can give you eg for this.

Q9—How do you develop your school culture to advance justice?

How do you develop your school culture to advance justice?

Fair Q

Give some examples

Actually, justice is most if the time a value that is below the ice berg for me as a p. At the back of our minds we indirectly or subconsciously have this sense of justice or fairness. But I don't recall developing school culture to advance justice per se. More like justice being a basis for my actions or policies in developing school culture.

Q10—What are the key success factors to the building of a culture of justice in your school?

What are the key success factors to the building of a culture of justice in...

OK if your scope is only on justice. However, P has much more to build.

How to monitor success? E,g,...

Based on last comment, it will be tough for me to answer this one.

Q11—What are the barriers to your efforts to build a culture of justice in your school?

What are the barriers to your efforts to build a culture of justice in your...

OK as the barriers can be a few or many depending on the school and personality of the P.

challenges and barriers...

I recall that when I speak of school culture in the past, culture of justice was not what my KPs spoke of.

Q12—How do your beliefs about justice influence your practice as an educational leader of curriculum and instruction?

How do your beliefs about justice influence your practice as an educational...

Fair Q

How are ideas translated/ infused into the class curriculum and instruction? Is this more direct? Is that the intent?

My beliefs about justice definitely had an influence on my practices.eg I often spoke to my kids about hoping that every child who is a Muslim will graduate as a better Muslim, a Hindu, a better Hindu and likewise, a Christian kid graduating as a better Christian. Easier to ask them to give, eg.

Q13—What policies and programs have you put in place in your school to make it a more just institution?

What policies and programs have you put in place in your school to make it...

Difficult Q as policies and programmes put in place may not just effect justice.

How is this different from the above? Not sure if the two question merge a bit...

Ok, nit as cheem/philosophical as the other questions above

Q14—Other comments or suggestions?

Other comments or suggestions?

Good if you can let the Ps know your thesis statement so that they understand your direction and focus. Good to also have a definition of justice in school as it can mean different things to different people.

Ok, nice work, Antonia. Enjoyed doing this. Brought back memories of school:) All the best and see you in Nov
God bless

Response rate

Answer	%	Count
Unknown	100.00%	3
Total	100%	3

APPENDIX B: THE INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR THE PROTECTION OF
HUMAN SUBJECTS (IRBPHS)—APPROVAL AND CONSENT FORM

IRBPHS - Approval Notification

To: Kit Wah Antonia Teng

From: Terence Patterson, IRB Chair

Subject: Protocol #899

Date: 09/14/2017

The Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco(USF) has reviewed your request for human subjects approval regarding your study. Your research (IRB Protocol #899) with the project title **Perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about their role as justice agents** has been approved by the IRB Chair under the rules for expedited review on **09/14/2017**.

Please be certain to obtain written approval prior to recording interviews. Any modifications, adverse reactions or complications must be reported using a modification application to the IRBPHS within ten (10) working days.

If you have any questions, please contact the IRBPHS via email at IRBPHS@usfca.edu. Please include the Protocol number assigned to your application in your correspondence.

On behalf of the IRBPHS committee, I wish you much success in your research.

Sincerely,

Terence Patterson, EdD, ABPP

Professor & Chair, Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects

University of San Francisco

irbphs@usfca.edu

USF IRBPHS Website



CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY

Below is a description of the research procedures and an explanation of your rights as a research participant. You should read this information carefully. If you agree to participate, you will sign in the space provided to indicate that you have read and understand the information on this consent form. You are entitled to and will receive a copy of this form.

You have been asked to participate in a research study conducted by Kit Wah Antonia Teng, a graduate student in the Department of Education at the University of San Francisco. The faculty supervisor for this study is Dr. Patricia Mitchell, a professor in the Department of Education at the University of San Francisco.

WHAT THE STUDY IS ABOUT:

The purpose of this research study is to examine how principals' perceptions about leadership for justice influence their practice as (a) an ethical leader, (b) culture builder, and (c) educational leader of curriculum and instruction. In this study, I will also elucidate the factors concerning the principal as a justice agent: (a) what principals of primary schools in Singapore believe about justice, as it relates to primary education in Singapore; (b) the origins of principals' beliefs about justice in school; (c) how principals' beliefs about justice shape the school culture, and (d) the ways educational policies, programs, and practices in these schools promote justice.

WHAT WE WILL ASK YOU TO DO:

During this study, the following will happen: you will participate in an audio-recorded interview where I will ask you about your perceptions regarding leadership for justice, the origins of your beliefs about justice, and how your beliefs about justice influence your leadership practice as an ethical leader, culture builder, and leader in curriculum and instruction. The interview questions will be emailed to you one week before the interview. You are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time. As part of the study, I seek to examine relevant school documents you may provide to illustrate points raised during the interview.

DURATION AND LOCATION OF THE STUDY:

Your participation in this study will involve one interview session of 90 to 120 minutes. The study will take place at a time and place convenient to you.

POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS:

We do not anticipate any risks or discomforts to you from participating in this research. If you wish, you may choose to withdraw your consent and discontinue your participation at any time during the study without penalty.

BENEFITS:

You will receive no direct benefit from your participation in this study; however, the possible

benefits to others include your contribution to the field of educational leadership for justice as well as to the design of leadership development programs for future principals.

PRIVACY/CONFIDENTIALITY:

Any data you provide in this study will be kept confidential unless disclosure is required by law. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. I will not include information that will make it possible to identify you or any individual participant. Specifically, I will keep study data including the audio-recording of the interview in locked files at all times. Audio-recording the interview ensures that I preserve all comments. Your responses will be transcribed and returned to you to obtain your agreement of the recorded data. If I decide to use a transcription service, I will sign a confidentiality agreement with the transcriptionist. Upon completion of the research all data will be destroyed after five years.

COMPENSATION/PAYMENT FOR PARTICIPATION:

There is no payment or other form of compensation for your participation in this study.

VOLUNTARY NATURE OF THE STUDY:

Your participation is voluntary and you may refuse to participate without penalty. Furthermore, you may skip any questions or tasks that make you uncomfortable and may discontinue your participation at any time without penalty. In addition, the researcher has the right to withdraw you from participation in the study at any time.

OFFER TO ANSWER QUESTIONS:

Please ask any questions you have now. If you have questions later, you should contact me at +1 415 748 9965 or +65 81266138 or kteng3@usfca.edu. If you have questions or concerns about your rights as a participant in this study, you may contact the University of San Francisco Institutional Review Board at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

I HAVE READ THE ABOVE INFORMATION. ANY QUESTIONS I HAVE ASKED HAVE BEEN ANSWERED. I AGREE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RESEARCH PROJECT AND I WILL RECEIVE A COPY OF THIS CONSENT FORM.

PARTICIPANT'S SIGNATURE

DATE

APPENDIX C: LETTER TO REQUEST APPROVAL FROM THE MINISTRY OF
EDUCATION, SINGAPORE TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

2 October 2017

Ms. Low Yoke Kiew

Zonal Director Schools North and Deputy Director, Leadership Development

Dear Ms. Low,

I am a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco. I am writing to request permission from the Ministry of Education, Singapore to conduct a study on the leadership practices of primary school principals who have effectively served the well-being and success of their students. Besides contributing to the field of research on educational leadership, the study seeks to inform the development of potential school leaders. The title of the study is 'Perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about their role as justice agents'. This study is a part of my doctoral dissertation and it involves interviews with a total of eleven primary school principals in Singapore. Additionally, I will study relevant school documents which participating principals may choose to offer for investigation.

Anchored on Singapore's national values of justice and equality, the purpose of the study is to examine how principals' perceptions about leadership for justice influence their practice as (a) an ethical leader, (b) culture builder, and (c) educational leader of curriculum and instruction. In this study, I will also elucidate the factors concerning the principal as a justice agent: (a) what principals of primary schools in Singapore believe about justice, as it relates to primary education in Singapore; (b) the origins of principals' beliefs about justice in school; (c) how principals' beliefs about justice shape the school culture, and (d) the ways in which educational policies, programs, and practices in these schools promote justice.

I would be very grateful for the support of the Educational Leadership Development Centre (ELDC) in identifying schools for my study. I am considering the following criteria for a purposive sampling:

- a) Quality of School Experience – schools with QSE scores above the national average.
- b) School Climate Survey - schools with SCS scores above the national average.
- c) Good academic achievement in the PSLE - schools which have achieved scores which are above the national average and/or comparable schools for both standard subjects and foundational subjects.

However, I would be most appreciative if ELDC would advise if there are other indicators of effectiveness in school leadership I should consider. Based on the list of schools provided by the ELDC, I will invite one principal to participate in a pilot study. The aim of the pilot study is to refine the interview process. Subsequently, I will invite five principals from government primary schools and five principals from Catholic primary schools to participate in the study.

The identity of all participants in the research will be protected through the use of pseudonyms, and the names of the schools will not appear in the results. Participants may answer only those questions with which they feel comfortable. I will sign a confidentiality agreement with the transcriptionist if I elect to use a transcription service. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time, and any data collected up to that point in time will be destroyed.

Thank you for your consideration of this request. I hope that MOE Schools Division will support the contribution of this study to the field of educational leadership.

Yours faithfully,

Kit Wah Antonia Teng
Doctoral student, University of San Francisco

APPENDIX D: REPLY FROM THE MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, SINGAPORE

GRANTING APPROVAL TO CONDUCT THE STUDY

10/11/2017 Students & Alumni DonsApps Mail - Permission to conduct research
<https://mail.google.com/mail/u/0/?ui=2&ik=8a79515ec5&jsver=khUFNOKniXg.en.&view=pt&msg=15ef042b82e03e58&search=inbox&siml=15ef04...> 1/1

Kit Wah Antonia Teng <kteng3@dons.usfca.edu>

Permission to conduct research

Yoke Kiew LOW (MOE) <LOW_Yoke_Kiew@moe.gov.sg> Thu, Oct 5, 2017 at 10:57 PM

To: Kit Wah Antonia Teng <kteng3@dons.usfca.edu>

Message Classification: Restricted

Dear Antonia

Schools Division has considered your request and we have no objection in your conduct of the research study for your doctorate programme.

2 However, we seek your understanding that we are unable to identify a list of schools based on the set of sensitive school data. We suggest that you approach interested Principals directly so that they would feel free to consider your request to participate in the study. You could contact me if you need further clarification (9[REDACTED]5).

3 We wish you success in all your endeavours and joy in your learning!

Best wishes

Yoke Kiew

Ms. Low Yoke Kiew

Zonal Director Schools North and Director, Leadership Development, Schools Division

Ministry of Education • 1 North Buona Vista Drive, Singapore 138675 • Tel : +65 68796190 •

Fax +65 67763542 • <http://www.moe.gov.sg>

Integrity the Foundation • People our Focus • Learning our Passion • Excellence our Pursuit

CONFIDENTIALITY: If this email has been sent to you by mistake, please notify the sender and delete it immediately. As it may contain

confidential information, the retention or dissemination of its contents may be an offence under the Official Secrets Act.

APPENDIX E: LETTER OF INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE IN THE STUDY

11 November 2017

Principal
_____Primary School

Dear Principal,

I am a doctoral student at the University of San Francisco. I am writing to invite you to participate in a study on the perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about their role as justice agents. This study is a part of my doctoral dissertation and it involves interviews with principals who have effectively led their schools to serve the well-being and success of all students. I have obtained permission from the Schools Division of the Ministry of Education, Singapore for this study. Your participation is voluntary.

If you agree to be in the study, you will participate in a recorded interview for 90 to 120 minutes where I will ask you about your perceptions regarding leadership for justice, the origins of your beliefs about justice, and how your beliefs about justice influence your leadership practice as an ethical leader, culture builder, and leader in curriculum and instruction. The interview will take place at a time and place convenient to you. The interview questions will be emailed to you one week before the interview. You are free to decline to answer any question you do not wish to answer or to stop participation at any time. As part of the study, I also seek to examine relevant school documents which you may choose to provide. Your name as well as the name of your school will not be disclosed in the study. Study records will be kept in locked files at all times. If I decide to use a transcription service, I will sign a confidentiality agreement with the transcriptionist. No individual identities will be used in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Individual results will not be shared with the Ministry of Education, Singapore.

Within two months of the conclusion of data collection, a summary report of the study will be emailed to you. If you wish to receive the final report in the form of a dissertation, I will email it to you.

If you have questions about the research, please contact me at +65 81266138 or kteng3@usfca.edu. If you have further questions about the research, you may contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects (IRBPHS) at the University of San Francisco which is concerned with the protection of volunteers in research projects. IRBPHS can be reached via email at IRBPHS@usfca.edu.

I hope that you will contribute to the field of educational leadership for justice. Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Yours sincerely,

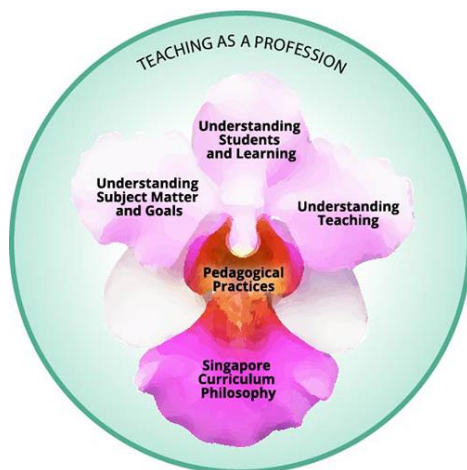
Kit Wah Antonia Teng
Doctoral student
University of San Francisco

APPENDIX F: SINGAPORE TEACHING PRACTICE AND SINGAPORE CURRICULUM

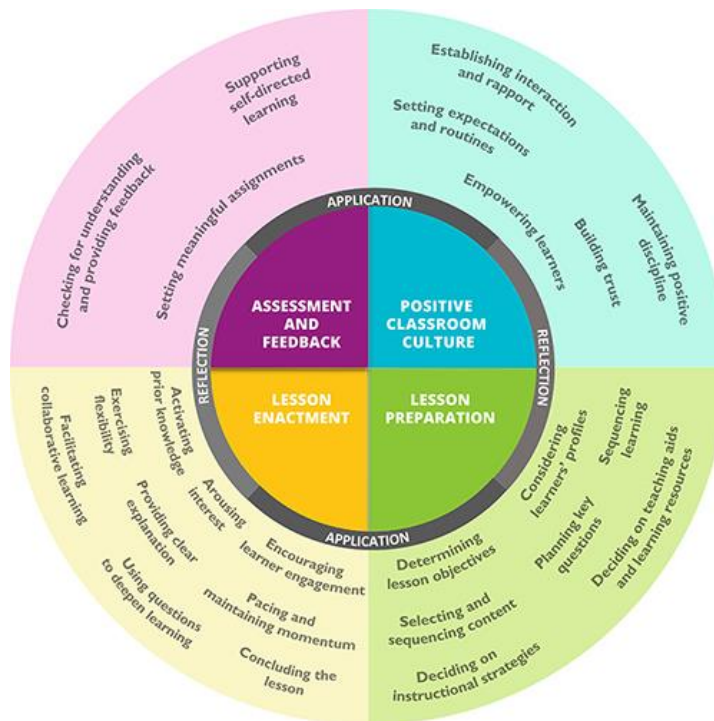
PHILOSOPHY

Singapore Teaching Practice (STP) and Singapore Curriculum Practice (SCP)

The Singapore Teaching Practice is a model that makes explicit how effective teaching and learning is achieved in Singapore schools. The STP is represented in the form of an orchid to reflect the Singapore context within which we practise our craft.



The four core Teaching Processes at the heart of [Pedagogical Practices \(PP\)](#) make explicit what teachers put into practice and reflect on before, during and after their interaction with students in all learning contexts. When applying and reflecting on the four Teaching Processes, teachers can look into the corresponding 24 Teaching Areas with accompanying Teaching Actions or Considerations.



The Singapore Curriculum Philosophy presents our teaching fraternity's core beliefs about teaching and learning. These beliefs, which place every student at the heart of our educational decisions, guide the design and implementation of our curriculum.

- We believe in holistic education.
- We believe that every child wants to and can learn. We focus on children's learning needs when designing learning experiences.
- We believe that learning flourishes
 - in caring and safe learning environments,
 - when children construct knowledge actively,
 - through the development of thinking skills and dispositions, and
 - when assessment is used to address children's learning gaps.

SINGAPORE CURRICULUM PHILOSOPHY

- In educating our students in Singapore, we seek to achieve our Desired Outcomes of Education so that our students are future-ready, have a strong sense of national identity, and are equipped to contribute in a globalised world. We aspire to bring out

- the best in our students so that they are empowered to live life to the fullest, contribute to, and care for their community and nation. We also aim to enable our students to develop their interests to pursue their passions and fulfil their aspirations.
- To realise the aims of education in Singapore, our curriculum is designed to develop the character, mind and body of our students. It serves to nurture in them values and to develop their knowledge, skills and dispositions. Our curriculum provides learning experiences for our students to actively interact and bond with others. In doing so, they become aware that they are part of society. Through this, they learn to embrace diversity and collaborate with people from different backgrounds.
 - The Singapore Curriculum Philosophy presents our teaching fraternity's core beliefs about learning. These beliefs, which place every student at the heart of our educational decisions, guide the design and implementation of our curriculum. They underpin our practices and guide our teaching actions so that every student is an engaged learner. The Singapore Curriculum Philosophy describes our roles, and those of our students', in the process of teaching and learning.

WHAT WE BELIEVE ABOUT TEACHING AND LEARNING

- We believe in holistic education centred on values and character development.
- We believe that every child wants to and can learn. When children find meaning in learning, they are motivated and challenged, and take ownership of their learning.
- We value every child as an individual. Our children have diverse learning needs and bring with them a wide range of experiences, beliefs, knowledge, and skills. For learning to be effective, we adapt our teaching pace, approaches and assessment practices to be developmentally appropriate.

- We believe that learning takes place in caring and safe environments. We cultivate positive teacher-student and peer relationships so that there is a culture of care and mutual respect in our classrooms, where children learn to appreciate diversity. They are encouraged to take risks, learn from their mistakes and from one another, and be confident in expressing their views.
- Learning takes place individually and collaboratively, as children construct and co-construct meaning from knowledge and experiences. We guide learners to activate prior knowledge, and assimilate and accommodate new knowledge through exploration, and interaction with others. This allows them to build a strong foundation of knowledge by connecting new ideas and experiences with what they already know, thus facilitating the understanding of concepts and the application of what they have learnt to different contexts.
- We believe in developing thinking skills and dispositions in our learners. To do this, we guide them to construct, interpret, and evaluate knowledge from different perspectives. We help learners understand that by thinking about their own thinking, they can monitor, assess and improve their learning.
- Assessment is integral to the learning process and helps children become self-directed learners. As such, we design assessments with clarity of purpose, to provide our learners and us with feedback to address learning gaps and improve teaching practices.

Reference: <https://www.moe.gov.sg/about/singapore-teaching-practice>

APPENDIX G: INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Research title: Perceptions of primary school principals in Singapore about their role as justice agents.

In this study, the definition of ‘justice in school’ has two components:

- (a) Equality and equity in educational provision, requiring that the same resources are made available to all students and schools, and more resources are intentionally provided to better serve the students with the highest need.
- (b) Action grounded in a commitment to inclusion, valuing Singapore’s sociocultural diversity, and promoting social cohesion and harmony.

Interview Questions:

- a) In relation to Singapore’s national values of justice, equality, and meritocracy, to what extent do you agree with the definition of justice in school? Would you suggest other ways to define justice in school?
- b) As a primary school principal in Singapore, in what ways do you put into practice the concept of leadership for justice?
- c) To what extent do you consider yourself an ethical leader? In what ways do your beliefs about justice influence your practice as an ethical leader? (The MOE document, *Leader Growth Model*, describes an ethical school leader as one whose leadership is values-driven and undergirded by the Singapore education system’s ethos of the teaching profession and philosophy for educational leadership.)
- d) Who or what are the sources of influence on your beliefs about justice in schools?

- e) In what ways do the Ministry of Education's philosophy for educational leadership and leader growth model influence your beliefs about justice in schools?
- f) How do your beliefs about justice influence your practice as a culture builder? Please give some examples.
- g) Please give examples of ways in which your school culture advances justice.
- h) What are the key success factors to culture building in your school?
- i) What are the challenges and barriers to culture building in your school?
- j) What are some ways in which your beliefs about justice influence your practice as an educational leader of curriculum and instruction?
- k) What policies and programs have you put in place in your school to make it a more just educational institution?