



## Comparative leadership: pathways, scope and values in DRC-English 'urban' schools

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# **Comparative Leadership: Pathways, Scope and Values in DRC-English 'Urban' Schools**

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

TABLE OF CONTENTS .....	1
TABLE OF FIGURES .....	4
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT .....	5
DEDICATION .....	6
ABSTRACT .....	7
ABBREVIATIONS .....	8
<b>CHAPTER 1 Introduction</b> .....	10
1.1 The focus and uniqueness of this work.....	10
1.2 A brief historical, contextual, literature-based and personal rationale.....	12
1.3 Outline of the study .....	14
1.4 General remarks .....	15
<b>CHAPTER 2 Education, Schools and School Leadership in the DRC and England:</b> Framing the contextual stories so far .....	17
2.1 Introduction .....	17
2.2 National contexts .....	18
2.3 'Urban' contexts .....	22
2.4 Historical context of education.....	25
2.4.1 DRC: the rise of formal education.....	26
2.4.2 England: the rise of formal education.....	28
2.5 Education systems .....	31
2.5.1 DRC Schools.....	32
2.5.2 English schools.....	35
2.5.3 Ensuring quality of education systems: inspection regimes .....	38
2.6 Conclusion .....	40
<b>CHAPTER 3 School Leadership Literature and Theoretical Framework for the Study: A</b> review blending relevant Western, African, urban and cross-context theories.....	45
Part I: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP LITERATURE REVIEW .....	45
3.1 Introduction .....	45
3.2 Leadership and other related terms: clarity .....	45
3.3 Interest in leadership.....	48
3.4 The centrality of leadership.....	49
3.5 Styles, models, and/or knowledge basis of school leadership .....	50

3.5.1 Ideal leadership style?.....	51
3.5.2 Western models.....	51
3.5.3 African-centred leadership models: Authentic or African Authentic?.....	55
3.5.4 'Urban' school leadership perspectives .....	61
Part II: TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY.....	65
3.6 Introduction.....	65
3.7 Leadership knowledge domains.....	65
3.8 Comparative knowledge domain: multiple perspectives for multicultural urban settings .....	68
3.9 Examples of studies/literatures with a comparative knowledge domain agenda: a critique.....	70
3.10 Conclusion.....	75
<b>CHAPTER 4 Methodology: concept, approach and tools for research .....</b>	<b>77</b>
4.1 Introduction.....	77
4.2 Research question, aims/interests and objectives .....	78
4.3 Researcher's positionality and bias .....	79
4.4 Ontology: a brief discussion.....	81
4.5 Epistemology.....	83
4.6 Comparative research as a methodological concept.....	84
4.6.1 Narratives as a methodological research approach .....	89
4.6.2 'Leadership conversations' as a research tool.....	92
4.6.3 Identification of participants: Convenience sampling.....	95
4.6.4 Leadership conversations' arrangements .....	98
4.6.5 Ethics.....	100
4.6.6 Data process: From collection to analysis.....	102
4.6.7 Research validity .....	109
4.7 Conclusion .....	110
<b>CHAPTER 5 Research Findings and Discussion: pathways, challenges, actions, scope, metaphor and values. ....</b>	<b>111</b>
5.1 Introduction.....	111
Part I 'IN A NUTSHELL' .....	113
5.2 Participants' profiles and findings: a visual mapping .....	113
Part II ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: phase one.....	116
5.3 Findings: a detailed comparatively thematic analysis.....	116
5.3.1 Pathway to headship.....	116

5.3.2 Leadership challenges.....	124
5.3.3 Good school leadership practice.....	140
Part III ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: Phase Two.....	155
5.4 Eclectic or comparative leadership: Scratching beneath the surface.....	155
5.4.1 Scope .....	156
5.4.2 Metaphor: 'It's the gospel according to the head teacher' .....	162
5.4.3 Leadership values .....	165
Part IV CHAPTER THEORISED SUMMARY .....	178
5.5: Developing a comparative leadership framework .....	178
5.5.1 The challenge of developing a framework for diverse contexts .....	178
5.5.2 The comparative leadership framework: a summative cross-case analysis .....	179
<b>CHAPTER 6 Concluding Remarks:</b> Research limitations, personal reflection, recommendations and, research summary and knowledge claims .....	186
6.1 Limitations.....	186
6.2 Personal Reflection: learning from the research .....	189
6.3 Wider implication and recommendations:.....	192
6.4 Research summary and claims to knowledge .....	197
REFERENCES .....	202
APPENDICES 1 .....	232
APPENDICES 2 – DATA SETS.....	239

## TABLE OF FIGURES

Figure 1 DRC-England's comparison table of context, education and school leadership trends .....	41
Figure 2 'Identity of African management research choices' - Adapted from Zoogah and Nkomo's (2012) .....	56
Figure 3 Laying the foundation for 'comparative research' as a concept... ..	87
Figure 4 Length and frequency of conversations.....	98
Figure 5 Approaches to narrative thematic analysis. Adapted from Riesman 2008.....	106
Figure 6 Participants and findings in a nutshell.....	113
Figure 7 Leadership challenges framing pattern (DRC vs England).....	139
Figure 8 Leadership knowledge conduits-DRC .....	147
Figure 9 Types of accountabilities - Adapted from Hooge et al. (2012).....	156
Figure 10 Imaging expected effect of increased/decreased vertical scope on horizontal scope .....	157
Figure 11 Snapshot of primary curriculum provision (DRC vs England).....	174
Figure 12 Comparative leadership framework .....	185
Figure 13 Comparative framework: simplified practitioner's guide.....	195

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## DEDICATION

To:

Marina Elonga, Verison Elonga, Fasia Elonga, Tyrell Elonga, Anastasie Iyatu, Jérôme Mboyo, Balthazar Mboyo, Godelive Mputsu, Annie Lokuli, Madeleine Lifofi, Godefroid Mboyo, Marius Lokuli, Jean Pierre Elonga (my dear brother), Mifi Mboyo, Ornéla Bemboli, Antoine Balvi Loola, Jean Pierre Iyatu, Marceline Towela, Charlène Bayato, Joyce Lokuli, Jeancy Lokuli, Joel Bitalo, Karmelle Mputsu, Bernard Isek'Osombo, Marianne Lilembo, Jean Bosco Botendi, Jolie Apalamonganzi, Paulin Apalamonganzi, Ryan Apalamonganzi, Julio Botendi and family, Christian Botendi, Marthe Botendi, Jean Yves Botendi, Rose Kandukulu and the Mossimbia family, Côme Fidèle Bamene and family, Vincent Asambom and family, Nicholas Oyugi and family, Jeanette De Souza and family, Maria Silva Rosa and Godefroid Sanyui.

Departed with unforgotten loving memories:

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## ABSTRACT

**Purpose/context:** This research compares the accounts of two experienced urban primary heads based in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo-DRC) with two others based in Sheffield/Doncaster (England), in order to make sense of their leadership pathways, challenges and actions. Despite the differences in educational reforms, research, investment, and staff competencies etc., the two settings are diverse, have 'similar' stages of development of formal education and relative pupil outcome challenges.

**Literature/Methodology:** Following a critique of relevant literature, 'comparative knowledge domain' is proposed as a theoretical basis for researching practice in the above (similar) contexts. The study also utilises a consistent multi-perspective 'comparative research methodology' that, in this case, uses 'leadership conversations' within narrative research traditions to extract data that is analysed thematically and using Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA).

**Findings:** In DRC, headship is experienced as an innate vocation; challenges include corruption, poor working conditions and poorly trained workforce operating in a centralised system. Whereas in England, headship is experienced as an exploratory journey; challenges are systemic: people versus policy-centred styles and fractured social and institutional entities. Heads here operate within a decentralised system. However, all four heads enact not only the literal and organisational but also the comparative meaning of the 'gospel according to the head' metaphor, which is driven by core values of risk-taking, inclusivity, integrity and success-mindedness.

**Originality/contribution:** The study makes a rich contribution to school leadership in the DRC and adds to the limited body of research in educational leadership comparing the DRC (Africa) with England (West). As well as arguing for 'comparative knowledge', as a unique domain in educational leadership, and proposing 'comparative research', as a methodological research concept, the findings offer an overall empirically-based comparative leadership framework that is recommended to further develop theory, practice, policy and research.

**Key words:** Comparative leadership; DRC; England; Scope; Urban Schools; Values.

## ABBREVIATIONS

ADB: Africa Development Bank

ANAPI: Agence Nationale de la Promotion des Investissements (National Agency for the Promotion of Investment)

BBC: British Broadcasting Cooperation

BERA: British Educational Research Association

CATE: Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education

CfBT: Centre for British Teachers Education Trust

COMESA: Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa

CTSE: Cellule Technique pour les Statistiques de l'Education (Technical Unit for Educational Statistics)

IPA: Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis

ISP: International School Partnership

ISSP: International Successful School Principalship Project

LA: Local Authority

MICS: Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey

MoE: Ministry of Education (DRC)

NCSL: National College for School Leadership

NPQH: National P Qualification for Headship

OECD: Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development

Ofsted: Office for Standards in Education

DfE (E): Department for Education (and Employment)

DfES: Department for Education and Skills

DESTA: Department for Education, Standard and Testing Agency

DRC: Democratic Republic of Congo

ECCAS: Economic Community of Central African States

ECGLC: Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries

ENA: Ecole Nationale Administrative (National School of Administration)

HMI: Her Majesty's Inspectorate

ICT: Information and Communications Technologies

ONS: Office for National Statistics

PGCE: Post Graduate Certificate in Education

PISA: Programme for International Student Assessment

RTP: Registered Teacher Programme

SADEC: Southern African Development Community

SCITT: School-Centred Initial Teacher Training

SCR: Sheffield City Region

SHU: Sheffield Hallam University

SSA: Sub-Saharan Africa

TDA: Training and Development agency

TTA: Teacher Training Agency

UNESCO: United Nations Educational,  
UK: United Kingdom

Scientific and Cultural Organisation  
US: United States

## CHAPTER 1 Introduction

The individual nature of identities, cultures, values, knowledge, methodologies, education, (school) leadership, etc., can be defended using the following maxim:

‘You have your way. I have my way. As for the right way, the correct way, and the only way, it does not exist’ Friedrich Nietzsche (1883).

However, the realisation of the interconnectedness of the above aspects of life has led to assertions such as:

‘We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly’ Martin Luther King Jr. (1963).

It is against these conflicting global currents of philosophies that this work finds its pertinence, especially in the area of comparative school leadership, whose focus, uniqueness, specific rationales, structure and general remarks I outline next.

### 1.1 The focus and uniqueness of this work

This work reports on a cross-context comparative study of primary head teachers’ experiences of leadership in ‘urban’ schools in both the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and England. The research question that drove the study was framed as follows:

*‘What can comparing urban DRC and English primary head teachers’ experiences offer in terms of deepening our understanding and practice of school leadership?’*

The open-ended nature of the above question was refined into a set of specific research questions listed here below:

- How are journeys/pathways to school leadership described?
- What are the leadership challenges that DRC/England head teachers face as they go about their work?
- How do they go about responding to those challenges?
- What do DRC/England urban primary school heads believe defines a good school leader?

The above questions were reformulated into a set of objectives, although the gathered data that are discussed in this piece cover more ground than I had anticipated. The main objectives were:

- To learn about the different journeys/pathways to school leadership
- To identify the challenges of school leadership faced by certain urban head teachers in the DRC and England
- To gain an understanding of the research participants' approaches to overcoming individual challenges, as well as their overall perceptions of what constitutes good school leadership.
- To compare the different challenges and approaches to leadership in DRC and England and begin reflecting on what they tell us about school leadership.

Given the international nature of the experiences to be compared, the study adds to the blurred boundary between the terms 'international' and 'comparative' (Marshall, 2014). Although I am less concerned about the above blurring of the boundaries between 'international' and 'comparative', the uniqueness of this comparative study can be clearly demarked.

The uniqueness of the work is primarily drawn from the fact that, this, to the best of my knowledge, is the first major study to thoroughly discuss educational contexts, systems and school leadership experiences of urban primary head teachers both in the DRC and England.

In doing so, it proposes parallel contextual frameworks that can generate further reflections and enrich our conceptualisation of the differences and similarities of educational contexts in a 21<sup>st</sup> century Western country, such as England, and that of the DRC with its African and colonial histories. The limitations of current school leadership literature, in adequately informing the urban contexts being studied, also prompted me to advance a unique theoretical frame (comparative knowledge domain) to conceptualise school leadership.

Amidst contrastingly contested ontologies and epistemologies in multicultural settings, the research defends a unique approach to methodology, called 'comparative research methodology', as a concept of research that accommodates a multiplicity of approaches without necessarily adopting a mixed-methods approach.

The unique wider implication of this study, beyond the DRC and England parameters, is the empirically-based comparative school leadership framework it proposes, on the basis of the knowledge claims it makes with regard to leadership pathways, challenges, actions, scope, metaphors and values. It gives a diagnosis of the status of school leadership when DRC/English-based, 'indigenised' and 'local', northern and southern knowledge, are brought together to develop a 'macro level comparative model' (Stevens, 2012, p.47) for school leadership.

## **1.2 A brief historical, contextual, literature-based and personal rationale**

This section is further developed throughout the work. That said, hereafter, a brief historical, contextual, school leadership literature-based and personal rationale that ignited/warranted an interest in such a field is provided before outlining the main parts of the study.

*The historical rationale:* The history of (formal) education is associated with:

Theories about social control and social reproduction, mono-integration and the subordination of dominant and exogenous groups, the systematisation and segmentation of social classes, autopoietic de-differentiation of social subsystems, neo-institutional views of consolidating the modern nation-state using education, the extension of the so-called world system and the decisive role of school therein (Depaepe & Hulstaert, 2015, p.13).

*The contextual rationale for England and the DRC:* Despite the above disempowering history of education, the claim that education is essential in lifting people out of poverty cannot be denied (Hargreaves, 2003; Hatipler, 2014). However, the widening gap between low and high achievers is still a concern (Ofsted 2013), as is the fact that those from disadvantaged backgrounds - a feature of urban city schools that are the focus of this study - have not performed well compared to their peers from other backgrounds in England (Mortimore & Whitty, 2000).

Although the DRC's education system continues to falter in terms of the quality of its education at all levels (World Bank, 2005), perhaps due to lack of investment amidst endless episodes of political and social instabilities, the enthusiasm of parents to send their children to school in order to give them some form of chance to end the poverty cycle have been documented (De Herdt et al.,

2012). While the English education system has benefitted from sustained investment and is well regarded, in terms of quality, particularly in comparison to the DRC, the increase in home-schooling, for example, highlights a common theme that the education systems are perceived to be failing children (Hosterman & Kottkamp, 2004; Mansell & Edwards, 2016). The fact that both the DRC and the English educational systems are immersed in settings where there are ongoing narratives of reclaiming national identities, values and territories (Brexit in England and independent statehood in the DRC, for example) over a perceived threat that comes with globalisation, cannot be ignored.

*The literature-based rationale:* The above historical and contextual trends are bound to put even more pressure on schools, whose effectiveness, to a large extent, depends on head teachers' leadership (Leithwood et al., 1994). A formula for success will have to take into account the different aspirations of peoples in the context of (embraced as well as contested) diversity fraught with inequalities, while enduring the pressures of constantly changing reforms on the one hand and state abandonment on the other. Either way, the internationalisation of policy and practice has, for better or for worse, never lacked its breeding ground amidst shifting emphasis on the type of leadership approach that is to yield results based on research carried out in different contexts (Bush, 2011; Hartley, 2010). As well as filling a gap in the paucity of school leadership literature emerging from the DRC, in particular, and Africa, in general, this research also seeks to make sense of cross-context leadership practices within what I later (see chapter 5.5.1) describe as a 'homogenous multiplicity' comparative leadership framework.

*The personal rationale:* I am a Congolese by birth whose secondary school teaching career in England has piqued my interest in trying to understand various realities and practices of education and school leadership in both contexts. This personal and professional life trajectory has made me aware of the different perspectives that I later argue in chapter 4.2 are philosophically and sociologically fundamental to the comparative nature of all humans, especially in a more globalised society.

### **1.3 Outline of the study**

It is against the above abridged background or rationale - to be fully unpacked throughout the upcoming chapters - that this study seeks to add its voice on the nature of school leadership that has the potential to yield results in 'urban' settings. The work is presented as follows:

*Chapter one* is this introductory narrative that first shares the research questions and objectives, discusses the uniqueness/originality of the research, outlines themed rationale and layout of the study before making a couple of general remarks relating to the clarification of terms and our collective moral responsibility as readers of this work.

*Chapter two* offers national contextual analyses of both the DRC and England before narrowing them down to the urban cities in question (Sheffield/Doncaster and Kinshasa). Here, the reader is given, inter alia, a flavour of the literature-based framing of the historical context of education and the education systems out of which converging and diverging patterns of social, economic, ethnic, school leadership etc. lives and practices are identified.

*Chapter three* reviews the literature on school leadership, to assess its adequacy in meeting the needs of the 'urban' contexts as described in the first chapter. After carefully looking at the current relevant Western, African, urban and cross-context literature on school leadership, a case is made about the theoretical gap to account for the kind of leadership where knowledge is multidirectional and inequalities are challenged, to respond to pertinent features of diversity in the contexts of this research. This was a case warranting investigation that has made it possible to make claims based on empirical findings emerging from the under-investigated settings: the DRC and England combined.

*Chapter four*, then, formally states the main research question, before identifying, through research objectives, some specific areas of interest. It shares the researcher's positionality before outlining the methodological concept (comparative research), the approach to enquiry (narrative), research tool (leadership conversations) and other procedural issues (identification of participants, leadership conversations' arrangements, ethics, and the collecting, storing, transcribing, translating, presenting, analysing of data and research validity) that could have a



wider resonance. Since the research recommendations (see chapter 6) discuss further avenues for research, this chapter is further complemented by an exploration of how this study could have been undertaken or be further developed methodologically.

*Chapter five* profiles the participants and their schools before discussing the findings, which are presented in various tables framing the major themes of pathways to leadership, leadership challenges, scope, metaphor and values. When compared, contrasted and further critiqued within a broad range of other research claims, these themes offer an empirically-based framework for comparative school leadership that this research project uses to make some pertinent recommendations to those involved in the research, policy, theory and practice of school leadership in both the DRC and England primarily and other contexts with similar features at large. The general explanation of the framework at this stage counts as a cross-case theorised summary/analysis of the major research claims.

*Chapter six* not only summarises but also theorises the entire work in a set of propositions, culminating in the identification of its claims to knowledge in response to the research questions. Beyond that, it discusses the research limitations and shares the researcher's personal thoughts, while articulating the wider implication of the research and making some pertinent non-exhaustive recommendations for the DRC, England and other similar contexts.

#### **1.4 General remarks**

*Proximate terms:* There are two general remarks that I wish to draw to the attention of the reader. The first remark will focus on clarifying some key words, not only for their centrality in this research but also for their proximity. One term to look out for is humanism (humanistic). *Humanism* can mean a lot of things. I do not use it here in the sense of secular philosophy relying on morality and reason to justify human behaviour rather than ascribing reason for human existence and the universe as a whole to a deity (Gruchy, 2015). However, the term is sometimes used here to refer to the humanitarian aspects of the well-known African social concept of Ubuntu (Littrell et al., 2012). When 'humanistic' is used, according to Ribbins and Gunter (2002), it represents a strand of school leadership knowledge that privileges people's experiences (of school leadership).

There are two sources that use the term 'instrumental' to mean two different things. *Instrumental* research, in the context that Ribbins and Gunter (2002) use it, refers to the transferable tried and tested leadership knowledge from one context to another, on the grounds that if it has worked here, it will work there. When Zoogah and Nkomo (2013) use it, it represents studies that seek to explore the similarities and differences between leadership theories and practices between Africa and the West. Zoogah and Nkomo's usage of 'instrumental' is called 'comparative' here.

The deliberate inflation in the use of the term 'comparative' in this study requires an advance warning and clarification at this stage. Over and above this being an exercise in comparing experiences of primary school head teachers in two countries, I discuss the 'comparative' knowledge domain in chapter 3 (part II) as a theoretical framework for the study. 'Comparative' research in chapter 4 is posited as a methodological concept for converging and contrasting ontological, epistemological and methodological foundations. On the basis of data discussion in chapter 5, I propose an approach called 'comparative' leadership, which, in my view, goes beyond a straightforward comparison of A with B, whatever they (A and B) represent, to a mixing and inclusion of diverse perspectives. On that basis, 'comparative' and 'eclectic' leadership are used interchangeably here. Although central to this research, I do not equate comparative/eclectic leadership with inclusive leadership, since inclusivity is just one of the many interlinked and nuanced values here (see section 5.4.3).

*The collective moral responsibility:* The second remark is concerned with the collective moral responsibility of readers of this report. More or less half of the data that make up this study was narrated in French, which put my bilingual skills to the test to ensure that as little as possible is lost in translation. Hence, the debates, ideas and questions that could be generated, as you ruminate on the substance of this report, come with a collective moral responsibility to help to make it accessible, through translation, to a French-speaking Congolese audience, whose education environment is scarcely researched and is in need of transformation.

# **CHAPTER 2 Education, Schools and School Leadership in the DRC and England:** Framing the contextual stories so far

## **2.1 Introduction**

When announcing the ‘Breakthrough initiative’ designed to find extra-terrestrial intelligence, the science and environment section of the British Broadcasting Cooperation (BBC) reported Prof. Stephen Hawking to have said the following ‘we are intelligent, we are alive and we must know’ (Ghosh, 2015). There is a sense here that pure science is driven by the urge to know for knowing’s sake. While this research leads to increased knowledge about school leadership, my interest in researching primary head teachers’ professional lives is coupled with the intention of improving practice. Hence, the guiding research question for this study is framed in the following terms: ‘What could comparing urban DRC and English primary head teachers’ experiences offer in terms of deepening our understanding and practice of school leadership?’ The aims are to grasp the nature of the problems that school leaders face in the ‘urban’ contexts of Sheffield/Doncaster<sup>1</sup> and Kinshasa, understand how different leaders attempt to resolve them and, ultimately, frame as well as interrogate the similarities and differences in leaders’ understanding of good leadership.

In this chapter, I engage in a parallel discussion of the national contexts in the DRC and England. A similar analysis is then extended to the two main urban cities in question here: Kinshasa and Sheffield/Doncaster. I later frame (in the case of the DRC) and present (in the case of England) the historical contexts of education and school leadership trends within their respective education systems. Various issues are highlighted along the way and these lead to concluding remarks that warrant the above research question.

---

<sup>1</sup> The freedom/choice to select participants from both Sheffield and Doncaster (see Chapter 5.1) is because the two urban cities/towns are the biggest that belong to the total of nine local authority areas making up the Sheffield City Region within the Yorkshire and Humber Region (Williams & Vorley, 2014; Sheffield City Region, 2013; Sheffield City Region, 2016). Besides, there is this idea that the urbanisation of rural areas in England (Pulgaris, 2015 see section 2.3) has spread educational challenges of poverty; racial, ethnic, language and cultural diversity; underachievement; dysfunctional homes etc., (Kezar, 2012; Raffo, 2014; Reed & Swaminathan, 2014; Rury, 2012) that are associated with ‘urban’ schools. Most of these features are present in both English schools and DRC ones.

## **2.2 National contexts**

In both the national (The DRC and England) and 'urban' (Kinshasa and Sheffield/Doncaster) context sections, I construct an evidence-based narrative that focuses on the cultural demography and economic situation of the two settings. At each stage, I reflect on the implications my analysis could have on education and school leadership.

DRC: Located in central Africa, the Democratic Republic of Congo - DRC (formerly called Zaire) occupies an area of 2,345,408 square kilometers (905,567 sq. miles). With the last census carried out in 1984, the DRC's population is currently estimated at 62-80 million people (AFDB/OECD, 2008; World Bank, 2005) spread across what used to be 11 provinces that have now been transformed into 26, in keeping with the decentralisation enshrined in the country's 2006 constitution. Of the above population estimates, only 2.9% are over 65 years of age while 45-48% are under 15 years of age (ADB, 2014; World Bank, 2005). The ethnic make-up is predominantly Bantu with pygmies taking a fractional 1-3%. However, it is culturally and linguistically diverse with the Bakongo, Baluba, Ba Swahili and Bangala as the main groups located in different parts of the country (Bokamba, 2008; World Bank, 2005).

The DRC's colonial history is extremely brutal and independence from Belgium in 1960 was hard won after 'bloody anti-colonial struggles' (Giddens, 2001, p.37). Since then, the country's modern history has been the continuation of tragedy and farce littered with tales of violence and degradation, both humanly and materially (Crawford, 1978). The post-independence troubles began with secessionist struggles of the Katanga and South Kasai provinces. These struggles were quickly quashed by Mobutu whose subsequent 32 years of dictatorial rule came to an abrupt end in 1997 after a short rebellion led by Laurent Kabila, who was subsequently assassinated in 2001. Joseph Kabila took over and has been the Head of State since then, following two disputed electoral cycles. Having failed to organise any elections, at the end of the current president's final term in office, the DRC is headed for political instability just as the country tries to heal the wounds of the so called 'Congo wars', or as Clark (2008, p. 4) would put it 'continental wars in the DRC'. These wars, that started towards the end of Mobutu's reign, continued directly or indirectly claiming the lives of at least 5.4 million people (Coghlan et al., 2006; Jones & Naylor, 2014). Despite

the lack of concrete figures, one can only imagine the huge amount of resources that have been diverted to the 'military' allegedly to preserve the country's integrity and deny other sectors the investment they desperately need.

Social indicators are among the lowest in the world: infant mortality rate of 108.1 per 1000 in 2013, drinking water access rate of 46.5% in 2012 and an adult literacy rate of 61.2% in 2012, approximately 70% of its population lives below the poverty line (ADB, 2014).

Like other public services, education has not only suffered from a lack of direct funding, its meagre resources have also been subject to vandalism. Jones and Naylor (2014) contend that, due to war, a total of 2.5 million children aged 6-11 were out of school; a total of 724 schools were damaged; and 460 thousand teaching days were lost between 2009 and 2012.

England: England is one of the constituent countries of the United Kingdom (UK), which is home to 84% of the total population of 64 million, an estimated 53 million in 2011 (ONS, 2014). With varying degrees of concentration from one city to another, the 53 million population is diverse in its ethnic and religious backgrounds. Alongside the 86% of the English population of white ethnicity (in 2011), England is also home to culturally, linguistically and religiously diverse groups of people who have migrated because of renewed industrial expansion in Europe (Rury, 2012).

Since the end of the Second World War, Britain (encompassing England) has been on a better economic standing compared to the DRC. However, it has not been a smooth trajectory all the same. The cold war had come to an end but Britain still had to maintain its image of a great power with colonies overseas and a military power able to deter would-be warmongers. At some point, the country could afford to mount overseas' expenditure as its 'industry was becoming less competitive internationally' with manufacturing exports dropping from about 28% in 1948 to just over 10% in 1968 (Penden, 2013, pp.62-63).

The decline, it would seem, was quickly supplanted by the 'Golden Age', where there was 'occupational change with a shift from mining, manufacturing and agriculture to service occupations and decline in the availability of unskilled jobs' (Jones, 2003, p.40). The golden age, according to Jones, was followed by an era of even greater economic expansion, which afforded Britain (encompassing England)

an opportunity for experimentation and further change in various fields, including education.

The transformation into a service economy was accelerated during the Thatcher years (late 1970s-late 1980s) when privatisation was the norm, resulting in more people who were still in the old economy losing their jobs, labour becoming cheap and less money being spent on public services. That trend seemed to have been reversed with the New Labour turn (1997-2010) that brought Tony Blair into power. He oversaw British economic boom until the global market contraction (in 2007/2008) resulting into many western countries, including Britain, going into recession.

Not being a military battle field since the times of the Second World War does not necessarily translate into Britain (encompassing England) being at peace with itself socially at home and militarily abroad. There is a view that, despite its diminishing influence as a 'great power' right up to the cold war and now its withdrawal from the European union following the 2016 referendum, Britain has sought to regain its global influence as the defender of the law and/or as opportunist-interventionist. As a result, Britain has engaged in wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, Kosovo, Sierra Leone, Libya and many others that have potentially diverted huge resources away from productive projects, such as education (Gaskarth, 2014). With rising unemployment in the 1970s, there was a certain social militancy that emerged across Britain and the rest of Europe seeking to challenge inequalities in many spheres of life, including education (Jones, 2003). Unlike in the DRC, where political militancy led to the destruction of some school structures, it was more a case of demand for inclusion, participation that would lead to greater reflection and radical changes in British educational landscape.

**Implications:** The national contexts of both the DRC and England tell a story about the wider cultural and economic context within which education and school leadership are to be performed.

After independence, school leadership in the DRC, would have been set against the backdrop of the search for national identity and self-determination. Those ambitions would later be knocked down and bruised by continuous violence and poverty. The state's increasing inability to provide for public services, including

education, puts it under the category of failed state (Titeca & De Herdt, 2011) or conflict state, which, anecdotally here but essential to mention for the rest of the research, makes it difficult to get up-to-date and accurate data (Montjourides, 2013). Some might dispute the characterisation of failed state and instead prefer to speak of the country as an emergent post-conflict entity in terms of infrastructure and regional cooperation but 'one consequence of all this turmoil is that the country's economy remains in very poor shape (Shapiro & Tambesha, 2001) and the extent of scarcity of resources during decades of hardship are likely to run deep (De Herdt et al., 2012) and impact on school leadership. In what appears to be the fulfilment of its global inherent identity, as well as overcoming its economic woes, according to the DRC's national agency for the promotion of investment (ANAPI, 2016), the country is a member to a number of regional and international organisations, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Southern African Development Community (SADEC) and the Economic Community of the Great Lakes Countries (ECGLC). This diversity and outward looking dimension amidst economic, social, political instability and the traumas of wars at the national context are essential aspects for consideration when thinking about school leadership.

There are differences between England and the DRC, in terms of economic capabilities. At home, England has enjoyed a relatively long period of peace and, despite fluctuating economic situations, its political and economic reforms over the years have not only maintained its vitality as one of the world's leading economies (Penden, 2013), they have also bolstered its infrastructure and public services' provisions including education. However, the English national context bears some resemblance with that of the DRC. They both have culturally and linguistically diverse populations in need of skills to be able to be productive in the competitive global market. The tension between whether to reclaim national identities over colonisation in the DRC/Africa is, somehow, being replicated in England following the popular vote to leave the European Union that epitomises the contested claims about the impact that the diversity that comes with immigration on social cohesion, values, and resources (Coleman & Rowthorn, 2004; McLaren & Johnson, 2007). Therefore, school leadership in both England and the DRC is bound to have an element that does not shy away from but rather engages with this multilayered

cultural, religious and linguistic diversity lived out in poverty and the potential tensions that arise thereof.

In the next section, I discuss how the above national characteristics are reflected in the more local and yet 'urban' settings of Kinshasa and Sheffield/Doncaster, where this study is based, and how these could impact on school leadership.

### **2.3 'Urban' contexts**

Kinshasa: Kinshasa is both the biggest city and political capital of the DRC. While the DRC's mostly Bangala, Baluba, Bakongo and Ba Swahili speaking population can be associated with particular parts of the country, Kinshasa is different in that it brings those diverse cultural and linguistic dimensions together in one place. While the 'war provinces' in the eastern part of the country have endured more atrocities (Jacquemont, 2010), Kinshasa has not had to live with the constant sound of gunfire. As the country's political capital, there is a concentration of central government, regional and international institutions, which increase the level of economic, political, social and, most importantly, educational activities relatively speaking in comparison to many rural places that are difficult to reach due to poor infrastructure. It is arguable that the above could be contributing factors to the rise in the city's population, which is now estimated at more than 6 million, making it one of the 25 most populated cities in the world (De Boeck & Plissart, 2004; World Bank, 2005).

It must be said that the intensity of economic activities is rather limited as the majority of people live below the poverty line. Despite such a predicament, the city's residents are:

Driven by commercial ambitions and social practices of all kinds occupy every disposable inch of the capital. In a gradual and individual way, inhabitants have literally invaded the urban margins, the grey area between buildings and streets. Stalls selling telephone cards and stationery, workshops and garages, bars and brothels all drive on the sidewalks with minimal infrastructure, if any at all (Geenen, 2009).

Linking poverty to the poor quality of education, Shapiro and Tambesha (2001) argue that there is an intergenerational transmission of poverty in Kinshasa, due to the impact that poor economic standing has had on educational attainment. The dysfunctionality of the country's national institutions, compounded by years of war, has not only impacted on the economic well-being of the Kinshasa residents, it has



also had a devastating effect on the situation of school age children. In addition to the depressing figures for child mortality and development, net attendance at primary school is at 90% and only 64% at secondary. 28% of 5-14 year olds are involved in child labour activities, while 96% of the same age is subject to violent discipline in Kinshasa (Multiple Indicator Cluster Survey – MICS, 2010). With the latest estimates of street children running in their tens of thousands, Kinshasa still harbours a high number of children not receiving any schooling (Hendriks et al., 2012).

A Kinshasa resident is reported to have said “Kids, when is independence going to come to an end?” “Why would you want independence to come to an end papa?” they replied. “So the Belgians (les nokos) can return” (Bilakila, 2004, p.29). This is more or less the situation in which school heads in the DRC find themselves. Although there is a growing number of Africanists who are insistent on an African-centred education, matched by an equally strong sentiment of African educational identities and concepts (Bolden & Kirk, 2009; Hopson et al., 2010 and see chapter 3.5.3.2 for further discussion), the level of desperation expressed in the above citation unmasks two things. There is the irony that, on the one hand, given the level of degradation, colonial time may have been the golden age. On the other hand, however, the questionable nostalgia for colonial times highlights the face of a community eager to embrace modernity with its promise of urbanisation and modernisation. The urge to thrive is further evidenced by the advent of internet technology that is deemed to have ‘enabled it to rank among the growth sectors of the Congolese economy’, with at least 14 nation-wide ICT service providers (ANAPI, 2016).

Sheffield: Like Barnsley, Bassetlaw, Bolsover, Chesterfield, Derbyshire Dales, North East Derbyshire and Rotherham, both Doncaster and Sheffield are urban areas within the Sheffield City Region (SCR) in the Humber and Yorkshire region in the North of England (Sheffield City Region, 2016; Williams & Vorley, 2014). The SCR has an estimated ethnically and culturally diverse population of 1.8 million (ONS, 2015), whose inequalities have implications on the local education authority to adhere to a policy of integration rather than assimilation (Jones, 2003).

The North-South divide in England - where the North was (and still is) associated with deprivation and unemployment and the South with greater prosperity - was

disputed by Martin (1988). It has nevertheless been consistently argued that the decline and privatisation periods seemed to have created a North-South divide and that, even in the boom years (1996-2006), the North of England (hence Sheffield/Doncaster) still lagged behind the South in economic terms (Ress & Hudson, 2013). Sheffield/Doncaster, 'for much of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, could reasonably accurately be described as a manufacturing city' (Lawless & Ramsden, 1990, p.202; Williams & Vorley, 2014). During difficult economic times, Sheffield required an urgent urban regeneration, which, according to Lawless and Ramsden (1990), was shown through public and private partnership. Focusing on the period between 2000 and 2007, the SCR witnessed an increase in businesses from 278 to 305 per 10,000 adults. Compared to other city regions, however, it still fell short of the national average in England of 419 businesses per 10,000 adults, which places it in the less competitive cities category in the UK (Huggins & Thompson, 2010; Williams & Vorley, 2014).

**Implications:** consistent with Kezar's (2012) description of urban education, Sheffield/Doncaster and Kinshasa are commonly overshadowed by diverse demographics, vastly different value systems and economic deprivation. Pugalis (2015), however, revives Blackman's (1995) questioning of the existence of certain socio-geographical spaces as 'urban', given intense sociopatial relationships, which are believed to be a characteristic of British society and other developed nations rather than being confined to one place. The advent of cyberspace adds another layer of understanding, deconstructs the dichotomy of 'over- versus under-urbanised' parts of Africa and endows every physical space with the potential to belong to the virtual urban map (Gottdiener & Hutchison, 2006).

The above remarks, and especially Pugalis' question, has three implications; social, educational/leadership-related and knowledge-related. The social implication can be detected in that it deconstructs the popular assumption with urban life in the Western world, where 'native residents moved out of the cities, immigrant families moved into them' (Rury, 2012, p.15). The educational/leadership implication is in so far as it provides, at least for the short term, an explanation for certain changes in the education system, especially in England. Gunter (2008), for example, recommends further research on a shift from the original city academy in disadvantaged urban areas to academies in what were previously considered as rural areas. The

urbanisation of rural Britain does explain it somehow and in bridging social and academic inequalities, the urban-rural boundaries are blurred. The choice for one of the head teachers in this study, who was then working in an urbanised-rural area of Doncaster rather than Sheffield, is partly owing to these changing dynamics in British social spaces. It also begs the question whether, in terms of school leadership approach/knowledge, one can possibly defend certain leadership practices as pertaining specifically to 'urban' areas.

Sheffield, and its surrounding localities such as Doncaster, may be seen as economically less competitive in the North-South divide argument in England but compared to the above description of Kinshasa, within its DRC national context, one can safely assume that it occupies a better economic standing. However, having come second (Doncaster) and ninth (Sheffield) from bottom of out the 149 surveyed education authorities in terms of the percentage of pupils in good or outstanding schools (Ofsted, 2015), more needs to be done to ensure that education as a tool that raises people out of poverty (Hatipler, 2014; Lloyd et al., 2000; Lucas, 2002) delivers. School leadership, therefore, is deemed crucial in breaking the poverty cycle and bridging the urge for national identity, while fostering the values of an open and tolerant society, as shall be argued in the next chapter.

## **2.4 Historical context of education**

Unlike in England, the historical context of education in the DRC has not been subject to intense academic discussion. However, the reliability of the few commentators, whose works are cited in this section and throughout this work, is enhanced by their in-depth knowledge of the DRC acquired either from birth or working mainly as missionaries. I use their literature to frame the historical context of education as moving from the stages of 'colonial education' through 'sovereign state absence' to renewed 'capacity building'. There are features of this framing that bear a strong resemblance to the narrative across the East African region and the wider continent (Zuze & Leibbrandt, 2011). Using existing literature for the case of England, I draw from Hargreaves' (2009) concepts of first, second, third and fourth way, not only to reflect on their implications on school leadership but also to help to understand the education systems as they are organised today in both countries. It needs to be noted that, alongside formal education, Brock and Alexiadou (2013) add non-formal and informal education as other forms of learning, especially in conflict

areas. Due to high demand for education, the recent phenomenon called 'spontaneous schools', referred to by some authorities as 'clandestine schools', have also emerged (Martin, 2003). I focus my analysis on formal education as a state organised apparatus for the education of its citizens.

#### **2.4.1 DRC: the rise of formal education**

##### **2.4.1.1 Colonial education**

There were already traces of formal education in the Congo prior to colonisation especially with regard to initiation rites (MacGaffey, 1982), as is the case for the rest of sub-Saharan Africa (Brock & Alexiadou, 2013). However, formal and mass public schooling has been regarded as a western mono-cultural import (Lloyd et al., 2000) since the late 1800s in the former Belgian colony (now the DRC). This formal schooling was also 'urban' in nature in that, like in the United States (US) and Europe (Ruly, 2012), the missionaries and their colonial partners tended to settle in big coastal cities (Boma and Moanda, for example) where they set up their education activities (Masandi, 2004). Yates (1978) contends that colonial education had evidence of producing highly trained craftsmen for missionary service, albeit limited in scope. However, the (dis) value of colonial education was mainly to produce the states' soldiers, teachers, nurses, clerks and catechists (Masandi, 2004), and like in other parts of Africa, to proselytise and convert (Brock & Alexiadou, 2013). While this may have had a functional value in the day-to-day running of the colony, it did not have the economically liberating power and self-actualisation dimension, as the Belgians in Congo are reported to have been wary of promoting a generation of subversive literate Congolese (Dunkerley, 2009). This is consistent with the narrative from education historians, linking education to power (Dapaepe & Hulstaert, 2015) and favouring the maintenance instead of breaking of social barriers (Bourdieu, 1994; Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990).

It is nevertheless the case that with the 1948 plan for the economic and social development by Belgium of the Belgian Congo, education was structured at three levels: primaire, périprimaire et postprimaire complémentaire, enfin secondaire [primary, peri-primary/post primary, and secondary] (Masandi, 2004, p.487). The stages to be undertaken, the number of years spent at each stage and the subject to be studied depended on one's sex (boy or girl) and social class (part of the masses or élite). Despite a colonial educational class system, the current use of the terms

and educational structuring from primary (which lasts six years), secondary (also six years) and higher education in the DRC would have drawn their roots from the 1948 plan, believed to be the most significant reform in colonial times for the then Belgian Congo.

#### **2.4.1.2 Sovereign state absence**

Since gaining (political) independence in 1960, there have been some attempts to reorganise education, despite many years of instability. The official Ministry of Education website (MoE, 2016) only gives brief historical changes, for example, when in 1962 the Ministry of Education was renamed the Ministry of National Education. Then in 1983, the Ministry of Education was split in two: nursery, primary and secondary education on the one hand and higher education and universities on the other, which was broken down and then split into its current form. Those changes, one could argue, have remained limited in nature as they have focused mainly on name and ministerial portfolios.

Little has happened in terms of an ideological shift with regard to internal structuring and running of schools, the nature and quality of education. This is consistent with years of instability talked about earlier and a decline in spending on education, which De Herdt (2012, p.683) termed as 'state withdrawal from education', although the official Ministry of Education website prefers a much neutral phrasing 'period of mutations'. However, the year 1977 is recognised as a key moment with a more than 30-year legacy visible in the education system today, a topic to be expanded on in the next section. The 1977 convention resulted in the state handing over control of a significant number of schools to religious groups. Suffice to say that, after 1977, there has only been the 1986 legal framework for education, which became out-dated and gave way to a new framework in 2014 (see next section).

#### **2.4.1.3 Capacity building**

Despite the wars during the 'sovereign state absence' era, some semblance of education still continued. The possible reasons for that will be discussed in the management of education section. However, as the major wars were winding down and agreement between warring parties needed to be worked out, around 2001, the new political establishment felt the need to update the old education legal framework in 2014 (Loi-cadre No.14/004) to reflect the country's constitutional move from highly

centralised to decentralised administrations and other international accords to which the DRC is party.

Both frameworks (Loi-cadre) stipulate that pre-primary education lasts for three years. At the age of 5, all children are expected to begin their six-year primary education, which, officially, is supposed to be compulsory and free in public schools. Free education is also an entitlement to those in their first two years of secondary education, where learning is understood to be general before students choose to follow either a technical (understood as academic route in the English context) or a professional option, lasting 4 years for the former and 3 for the latter.

With the battle of independence won, one would assume that education was going to be the driving force for the aspirations of this new and independent nation. On the contrary, education standards have not only fallen (De Herdt, 2012), but colonial infrastructure has remained largely unchanged with a degree of dependency that partly afforded its continuity (Depaepe & Hulstaert, 2015). I take the view here that stagnancy seems to have given way to intensely frantic educational activity in the form of capacity building, reflected by the following objectives of education in the DRC as set out by the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2016):

Expand education of the youth, develop functional skills of literacy and numeracy, multiply/create new educational institutions, equip schools with adequate resources and promote diverse local and African values through the use of local languages.

Despite the lack of state investment in education, people, especially in Kinshasa, still continue to invest in their children's education, since it is regarded as 'one of the major keys to economic success' (De Herdt et al., 2012, p.688).

## **2.4.2 England: the rise of formal education**

### **2.4.2.1 First way**

Post-WWII England, like Belgium, was ahead in terms of reconstructing its state education system. Compulsory education was a gradual process that began before 1944 (Coldron, 2014). It began with the practice of elementary schools, which eventually gave way to the formal primary school (seven years) right through to secondary school (five followed by two non-compulsory years then), as a result of the 1944 Education Reform Act, which followed discussions initiated by 'the Green Book' three years earlier (Richards, 2006). The Act instituted the stages of learning

from primary and secondary education for all and further education. With the post-war Golden Age came an atmosphere of flexibility and innovation in the area of education (Hargreaves, 2009). Even though primary education in England was still heavily influenced by the elementary legacy, with an emphasis on the 3Rs (reading, writing and arithmetic) and testing at the age of 11, it was a period of curricular and pedagogical experimentation... 'with an emphasis on child-centred-ness, learning through discovery and experience' (Webb, 2009, p.45) and learning more than the basics in preparation for secondary education (Coldron, 2014). More so between the 1950s and mid 1970s than any other time, the teaching profession 'experienced a considerable degree of de facto autonomy' (Whitty, 2008). However, 'a declining economy quelled the thirst for innovation while encouraging a focus on market-driven competition among schools' in England from the 1970s to 1980s (Hargreaves, 2009, p.16).

#### **2.4.2.2 Second way**

The above first way, according to Andy Hargreaves, was supplanted by the second way, which, following the 1988 Education Reform Act, granted more autonomy and resources to schools. It also meant the introduction of national curriculum, attainment tests and more intrusive school inspections. While the move was welcomed by some - on the basis of restoring consistency, urgency, accountability - others claimed 'that the same goals could have been achieved by less punitive, prescriptive and pejorative means' (Hargreaves, 2009, p.18). It is worth noting the withdrawal-control paradox that is less talked about. The state withdrew, not only in terms of the level of resource investment in schools, but also in relation to the greater degree of autonomy accorded to schools. Control in that, in the Thatcher years (1970s-1980s), the second way led to 'managerialism and the development of distinct managerial tiers within schools...increased fragmentation of the profession' (Whitty, 2008, p.33) although Collet (2017, p.141) sees in 'the retreat of the state...the positive and productive, in the Foucauldian sense, effects on education and, specifically, on head teachers'. Increasing distant management technologies also led to debates and division over the state in which the national education system was, at a time, prompting a degree of grass root militancy and a radical shift in thinking. For instance, the talk moved from 'equality of access to equality of achievement' in education (Jones, 2003, p.89).

### 2.4.2.3 Third way

The third way that came into being during the New Labour years (1997-2010) sought to devolve power in exchange for further accountability and evidence-based decision making, de-isolate teachers and head teachers through school based-based networking and involve parents and other stakeholders (private sector) in developing schools (DfEE, 1998). Although this era has been criticised for instituting testing and data collection as part of an education system inclined to endless surveillance, it is credited for investing in education by making 'additional resources available to schools in socio-economically disadvantaged, mainly urban, areas to improve standards of teaching and learning' (Chapman & Gunter, 2009, p.221). Andy Hargreaves goes on to make an aspirational case for the fourth way, inspired by a more autonomous Finnish system. Some might argue that the conservative political belief about pushing powers back to local institutions and the drive to turn more schools into academies and the promotion of parent-owned/run 'free schools' are significant reasons to argue for a fourth way. I see in the free-school initiative and academy movement an intensification of Blair's centrist principles of 'choice', 'diversity', 'one nation', 'fairness' and 'inclusion' (Gilliat-Ray, 2004), alongside the privately run and market-influenced school institutions that are believed to offer opportunity and break generations away from poverty (Hall & Raffo, 2009). The apparent autonomy accorded to professionals by the 1988 Education Reform Act and the 2010 coalition government white paper, is viewed as re-regulation under the guise of deregulation (Ball, 2003; Glatter, 2012; Hammersley, 2015), which is shown through top-down inspection regimes (see section 2.5.3 although that is nuanced using evidence from this study – see chapter sections 5.3.3 and 5.4.3.4)

**Implication:** At first a comparison appears far-fetched, given the differences in educational activities in the two countries. However, in light of the above discussion, I will attempt to draw some parallels on the basis of certain aspects. Colonial education, in colonial times in the DRC, was not emancipatory. However, given the DRC's 'state absence' in the running of education, it is not surprising that residents would retrospectively view colonial education as that of a 'golden age', just as the first way might similarly be viewed in the English Golden Age (Jones, 2003). The diminishing availability of resources from the state during the second way in England bears some resemblance, albeit to a greater extent, in the sovereign state



withdrawal/absence stage in the DRC. The third way in England, which brought with it more resources, can be likened to a renewed energy in the DRC, with the help of multinational partners (MoE, 2016; UNOPS, 2010-13), to engage in capacity building.

More generally, the intensity of educational activities in Sheffield-Doncaster/England or lack of them in Kinshasa/DRC can be attributed to the availability of resources at different economic times. This view is held by Mokonzi (2010), who suggests that lack of political will, in the case of the DRC, is responsible for degrading standards in the DRC's schools. It is worth noting that the lack of resources can impact on the setting up and sustenance of schools' internal systems or any other form of leadership mechanism. However, the availability of resources should not automatically trigger capacity building without a vision of the future, especially in terms of school leadership. Therefore, perhaps the fourth way, beyond capacity building (the third way in the context of England), that focuses on the question of school leadership, needs to be envisaged. The choice element, that English parents were promised in the 'third way' era, has some resonance with the choice that DRC parents continue to make by sending their children to schools despite lack of investment. However, the issue is not only that the link between choice and pupil outcomes is contested (Gibbons et al., 2008); as Reay and Lucey's (2003) study has revealed, it is also the suggestion that parents of disadvantaged children 'had no real choice but to make a virtue out of necessity'. This shows that even socially equalising terms like choice, diversity, fairness etc. can be power-laden and head teachers working in such contexts need to assess their practice continually.

## **2.5 Education systems**

This section looks at the education systems of the DRC and England. Without downplaying the importance of various other areas not included in this section, I focus my analysis mainly on the types of schools for students, the state of the teaching staff and the leadership structures. The structure is deemed workable and covers relevant aspects to this study of what Hooge et al. (2012) categorise as primary, internal, vertical, and horizontal stakeholders (see chapter 5.4.1 for further explanation). Emerging key features will then be used when drawing the overall conclusion for this chapter.

### 2.5.1 DRC Schools

**Types of schools:** Besides the pre-primary, primary and secondary age range already explained in the historical context of education, schools in the DRC can be said to be divided into three main categories. As a result of the 1977 convention between the state and religious networks, the latter are reported to educate three quarters of all primary school children across the country (De Herdt et al., 2012) in almost a quarter (24.1%) of existing schools that they run (CTSE, 2015). The state provides the legal framework, laying out the organisation of educational administration, inspections and remuneration of staff, while the religious networks manage the educational institutions that they built, resourced, populated with teachers and also inspected according to their own internal criteria (De Herdt et al., 2010). These denominational schools are also known as state-private schools. Alongside these are schools that are completely dependent on the state. The third category is private or independent schools.

In 2009, there were 2,428 private pre-primary schools, 29,420 primary and 14,162 secondary schools serving 6.5 million children of pre-primary age, 10.6 million of primary age and 7.2 million of secondary age. A greater proportion of these schools are in cities, hence leaving the rural areas underserved (De Herdt et al., 2010). As recently reported by a DRC government financed survey (CTSE, 2015), the total number of schools rose to 48,147 - 8.5% of them in Kinshasa, highlighting an explosion in demand not only for education but also for well-led, quality education, which is not helped by the quality of teaching staff as presented below.

**Teaching staff:** The student population on a pedagogical course in higher education was estimated at 15% in 2009. Yet, the DRC education system finds itself inundated with unqualified teaching staff (Mokonzi, 2010), with 96.6% of primary and over 50% of secondary teaching staff having only achieved a secondary school level qualification: the State Diploma (CTSE 2015). Out of desperation, some head teachers use pupils in the final year of primary school to teach in the first and second years of primary education (Radio Okapi, 25/9/2012).

Judging from Dias' (1976) report, one can conclude that despite the DRC being in the 'capacity building' era, the competency configuration of its teaching staff still resembles (if not worse in comparison) that of the 'colonial' and 'sovereign state

absence' education eras. The DRC government might point to the rehabilitation of some old schools, construction of new ones and the paying of teachers' salaries through banks as evidence of 'capacity building' (Radio Okapi, 3/9/2012). However, this single issue challenges the political slogan 'revolution de la modernité' [revolution of modernity] that has been popularised since 2011. While it is essential to get head teachers' view on this, one cannot fail to work out the correlation between the poorly qualified, trained, paid and supported teachers and the falling quality of education across the country (Mokonzi, 2010).

**School Leadership in the DRC:** Primary schools are led by what is called either '*chef d'établissement*' (head of the establishment' or '*directeur*' (director). They work directly for the Ministry of Education at the national level, the education ministry at the provincial level, and through their representatives at the sub-provincial, district and communal levels.

School leadership, in the colonial era, cannot be divorced from the whole agenda of colonisation as the following citation shows:

Even though some Europeans in the Congo (for instance the "indigenist" missionaries like Hulstaert, referred to earlier) tried to dissociate themselves from the colonial state, even their presence and actions in the Congo can hardly be seen as separate from the European presence and the superiority and civilisation discourse (Depaepe and Hulstaert, 2015, p.19).

The head teacher, or the '*directeur*', in colonial education, would have been a utilitarian agent. I use this term 'utilitarian' with a double meaning from the point of view of both the coloniser and the colonised. Although not widely shared, there is a view that colonisation, with its system of education, was either intended for or resulted in 'humanising' the colonised (Cooper, 2006). This is contrasted with my view and that of many people in the former colonies and Western scholars (as the references in this section show), that the utility of colonisation was to dominate in order to meet Western economic ends. Exercised alongside early Western missionary activities, it is legitimate to argue for highly religiously-submissive educational leadership practices with a utilitarian purpose. In the sovereign state absence era, financial contributions from international non-governmental

organisations such as UNESCO, foreign government aid and parents<sup>2</sup> supplanted increasingly less involved state structures, which somewhat explains the resilience of the DRC's education system (De Herdt et al., 2012). Such third party involvement accounts for the negotiated nature of school leadership in this era (De Herdt et al., 2012), although others (Depaepe & Hulstaert, 2015) use the more nuanced term 'dependency' to account for increased decision-making powers of foreign contributors.

It can be argued that primary school leadership during the ongoing capacity building era, was (and continues to be) prescriptive in nature. Kamalandua's (2012) unpublished work can be used as a clear example to illustrate the nature of school leadership in the DRC context. Aimed at Catholic school heads, Kamalandua's work is a summative account of all the state/ministerial and Catholic directives about what head teachers at both primary and secondary level need to do in order to lead their schools effectively. Similar daily, weekly, monthly, trimestral and yearly tasks are clearly laid out in the official ministry of education website. It flies in the face of individual school contexts and its top-down nature only underscores the dominance of the managerial nature (Bush, 2011; Northouse, 2013) of school leadership in the DRC, although that is yet to be confirmed or rather not at this stage of the report (research).

Bolam (2004, p.251) argues that

Models of preparatory training, certification, selection, assessment, induction and ongoing development for school leaders are necessarily rooted in specific national conditions and contexts. They are the product of unique, and dynamically changing, sets of circumstances – political, economic, social, cultural, historical, professional and technical in that country.

With a long history of instability which resulted in state absence, especially in education, it is understandable that (leadership) capacity building could become high on the agenda. In the area of public administration, ENA (Ecole nationale d'administration meaning 'the national school for administration') is one such example. Started in the colonial era, the institution was dysfunctional around 1971 (sovereign state withdrawal time). More recently, it saw 60 candidates graduate in

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<sup>2</sup> School fees and charges are paid by parents annually or termly. They are variably fixed and shared by central, provincial governments, schools and other entities and range from main tuition fees, running cost charges, teachers' motivational charges, insurance, school promotion charges, printing costs, travel costs, exam costs, technical costs and emergency costs. Source (World Bank, 2012).

2015 (Radio Okapi, 09/07/2017). While higher education in the DRC has some provision for (financial, business) management courses (CTSE, 2010), there is no sign of formal training being a mandatory requirement for school leadership.

For Bush and Oduro (2006, p.359) head teachers in Africa 'often work in poorly equipped schools with inadequately trained staff. There is rarely any formal leadership training and principals are appointed on the basis of their teaching record rather than their leadership potential'.

As in Kenya (Kitavi & Van der Westhuizen, 2002) and Ghana (Zame et al., 2008), most DRC head teachers' accession to that leadership position is usually on the basis of their experience as teachers deemed to be better than the rest. Evidence from this study corroborates that assertion. This gives the impression that teaching is the main activity of school leadership (Bush, 2010). As shall be shown when reviewing the literature in the next chapter, school leadership is a more complex enterprise requiring specialist expertise. It is in that spirit that Zame et al. (2008, p.117) have called for a 'comprehensive reform initiative that addresses the need to develop head teachers' leadership proficiencies' for the Ghanaian education system, but the same can be said of the DRC and Africa in general. Such initiatives should not only aim to get heads to comply with hierarchical directives, as is reportedly the case in Kenya (Okoko et al., 2014), or focus mainly on administration for a country like South Africa (Bush & Glover, 2016) that is known to be the first to have introduced formal school leadership training on the African continent (Kiggundu & Moorosi, 2012). They should also develop other approaches including the comparative perspective that this study seeks to defend.

### **2.5.2 English schools**

**Types of schools:** There is a specific categorisation of schools in terms of age.

While primary education encompasses ages 5 to 11 and secondary from 12 to 16 formally, the age limit difficulty led to the creation, through the 1988 Education Act (Bennet & Desforges, 1991), of other types of schools: infant (5-7), junior (8-11), primary (5-11), first (5-8/9) and middle (8-12 or 9-13) and secondary schools (11-19), which can still be seen in England today. According to the Education and Skills Act 2008, students can leave compulsory full-time education at the age of 16. They must, however, follow some form of training, part-time or full-time education until they reach the age of 18.

To respond to various demands ranging from academic excellence, diversity, competition, collegiality, choice, special needs of pupils, one can identify different types of schools in the English educational landscape. As well as grammar schools, which are selective in their admission procedures and academically oriented, there are also specialist schools, academies, trust schools, special schools and free schools (Mongon & Chapman, 2009).

Following the 1988 Education Reform Act, the above demands have shifted much of school administration powers from Local Authorities (LAs) to head teachers and school governors (Woods et al., 2012). The conservative/liberal democrat coalition government introduced a white paper in 2010, which slightly altered the school powers and how they functioned. The self-improving school agenda meant that stand alone self-governing schools became self-governing systems in clusters of schools (Hargreaves, 2014). A resulting research-based leadership approach called system leadership will be discussed in Chapter 2 and further discussed in relation to findings from research in Chapter Four. Suffice to say that, despite those changes to the governance of schools, LAs still retained their responsibility to ensure that every child gets a place in existing or newly created schools within the catchment. School place allocation is in accordance with the choices of the parents, even though there is still inconclusive evidence for the value of the choice parents are given (Exley, 2014). 8.3 million pupils were educated at a teacher pupil ratio of 27.4 across the 18,000 state-funded primary schools and other private schools across England (Department of Education-DoE, 2014).

**Teaching staff:** Concerns about the state of teacher education in England led to the creation of the Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (CATE), which was morphed into the Teacher Training Agency (TTA) re-launched at a later stage as Training and Development Agency for schools (TDA) (McNamara 2009). During this time of change, not only has the content, length and routes to teaching (PGCE, SCITT, RTP and Teach First) diversified, teachers' professional development has been centred around national professional standards.

The TDA can be seen as a policy response to the evidence-based claim that a good teaching qualification does not necessarily forecast teacher effectiveness in relation to student outcomes. Slater et al. (2012) examine secondary students' data in relation to their individual teachers and make some recommendations that cannot be ignored by primary schools. They argue that there is variability in teacher's

effectiveness, which is another reminder to school leaders and policy makers about what needs to be done to raise standards across the board.

**School leadership in England:** Head teacher or principal are the terms commonly used for those leading (primary) schools in England. When surveying the context of headship in England, Simkins (2012) notes a steady progress (evolution) from the era of administration (1944-1980s), through the era of management (1980s-1997) to the era of leadership (since 1997), which recognises the situational experiences of school heads and their agency in driving change that would lead to better performance of students in a globalised world. This may be held in contrast with a view of administration, which is perceived as policy formulation (philosophy, planning and politics) and policy implementation (mobilising, managing and monitoring) (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002 citing Hodgkinson, 1980 – see chapter section 3.2 for further nuanced discussion). These conceptualisations of leadership can be matched with the first, second and third way within the historical context of education in England. According to Simkins, the National College for School Leadership (NCSL), which introduced flagship programmes for middle and senior leaders, aspiring and existing heads encapsulated this recognition of the pivotal role of leadership.

One of those programmes is the National Qualification for Headship (NPQH), which has been made non-compulsory since 2012, leaving some worried that it will have an adverse effect on the profession. The shortage of that craft has opened up several possibilities in the English school leadership landscape. For example, a federation of schools under an executive head has been implemented, while the appointment of heads with no teaching qualification has been considered (Forrester & Gunter, 2009). In the interest of distributing school leadership, the financial issues have been handed to school business managers (Woods, 2009).

Higham et al. (2015) draw attention to three accelerated development programmes to headship (fast trackers, young heads and career changers) that, according to the authors, did not display a distinct style of leadership but nevertheless placed a focus on impacting change in classrooms, among other things. The impact of school leadership in classrooms cannot be overstated given growing disparities in achievement, especially in urban areas (Ofsted, 2013). The quality of school leadership, and that of schools in general, is ensured by the Office for standards in Education (Ofsted).

### **2.5.3 Ensuring quality of education systems: inspection regimes**

Most countries, including the DRC and England, have their own inspection bodies to ensure that school systems work as they should. In England and Wales, the centralised body that is tasked to inspect schools is Ofsted. Ofsted has its permanent team of trained inspectors called Her Majesty's Inspectors (HMI), who monitor the inspection work contracted out to three agencies: Centre for British teachers (CfBT) Education Trust, SERCO children 'services and Tribal group (Baxter, 2014). When inspecting a school, Ofsted inspectors make a graded judgement on pupils' achievement, quality of teaching, behaviour/safety of pupils, and the quality of leadership and management of the school (Ofsted, 2012).

Despite being one of the oldest in Western Europe (Dedering & Muller, 2011; Gurkan & Deveci, 2012), with extensive statistical data (Baxter & Clarke, 2013), esteemed international reputation (CfBT, 2015), and applauded for ensuring accountability (Chapman, 2001) based on constantly changing frameworks (Ofsted, 1999b; 2012a), there are other aspects of its work, ranging from its negative emotional impact on those inspected (Perryman, 2007; 2009), to its independence (Clarke 2008) and ability to drive up achievement (Chapman, 2001), among others, that are contested. In response, inspection methodologies have been the main focus of many scholars (Dedering & Muller, 2011; Ehren et al., 2013; Jones & Tymms, 2014).

According to Loi-cadre (2014), the white paper that gives the major guidelines for the functioning and running of the DRC's education system, the Congolese government professes its commitment to quality education. To ensure it delivers on its promise, it recognises the role of school inspectors, whose focus, according to the above official document, is on pedagogy, administration, finance and the schools' hygiene. Since these tasks are clearly stipulated and, in the absence of up-to-date empirical research in this area to suggest otherwise, it can be argued that school inspections in the DRC are a governmental strategy to ascertain if individual schools are conforming to its prescriptions.

However, having gone through a prolonged era of state absence, unpaid local and national officials, including inspectors, have resorted to levying various fees on schools that, on that basis, are described by De Herdt et al. (2012) as tax units. Besides, as reported in 2009, there were only:



66 inspectors for pre-primary level, 408 at primary level and 1,650 for secondary schools, unevenly deployed across the vast territory of the DRC and concentrated in urban areas. These inspectors are poorly trained, while information from their reports is often incomplete, and is not integrated into a single national report that could be effectively used by education policy-makers – or published at all (AfriMAP, 2009, p.4).

Even if the above situation has improved since 2009, it is still legitimate to recommend further recruitment, adequate training of inspectors, review of the inspection remit, resources, methodologies and capacity, as possible foci for policy makers. I return to this issue in chapter sections 5.3.3 and 5.4.3.4.

Despite the difference in terms of inspectorate historical longevity, mandate and professionalism, both countries follow a centralised standards-based model to ensure quality. Educational practices in other places, however, show that there are other ways of ensuring quality without the top-down approach that is common in the rest of the Western world, in the DRC and in most other countries (CfBT, 2015). Finland, for example, adopted a more flexible teacher-based quality assurance approach that focused on a pupil's development as a whole person. The results ranked highly in the Programme for International Students Assessment's (PISA) performance tables (2003, 2006, and 2009) and won the esteem of the rest of the Western world (Kupiainen et al., 2009).

Although, like the DRC, England is heading in the same direction in terms of inspection regime as opposed to Finland (Webb et al., 1998), England did introduce a self-assessment/inspection regime, for schools, which, for McBeath (2008, p.385), became a 'form of ritual inspection ...that tended to disempower rather than empower schools'. Through self-evaluation, schools are reported to not only carry out a superficial evaluation activity in light of external inspections, but tend to account for actions to the detriment of reflections that are needed to generate innovative insights (Bubb & Earley, 2009; Schildkamp & Visscher, 2010). Van der Bij et al. (2016) propose a combination of an effective process and content of self-evaluation.

Without downplaying the importance of (internal or external) inspection/evaluation, which is a constitutive element of any (leadership) activity, but it is the very activity of leading that comes first in the sequential order of activities. This highlights the pertinence of getting it right in the leadership of schools, to which this study hopes to contribute. Besides, the required level of government trust in

professionals on the ground to self-inspect, I argue, depends on resources, training and must be met with a certain degree of displayable self-confidence of comparative school leaders to engage dialogically with local and international realities/perspectives.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

In light of the above discussion, the socio-economic trends, the rise of education and the state of educational leadership in both the DRC (with parallels in the rest of Africa, see Zuze & Leibbrandt, 2011) and England (which is similar to the US and Canadian contexts, see Hargreaves, 2009) can be summarised with the following figure (1) below.

Socio-economic trends		Historical context of education		Management/leadership trends	
Kinshasa/ DRC	Sheffield/Doncaster England	DRC	England	DRC	England
<p><b>DRC</b> + - 80million people; young: 45-48% below 15 years old Officially: French speaking; but culturally and linguistically diverse; colonisation; independence; Wars and conflicts (725 schools damaged, 460,000 days lost between 2009-2012); political instability; poverty (indicators among lowest in the world with 70% below poverty lines, ADB, 2014), poor educational attainments (58, 56% in French and Maths; 61% adult literacy; 2.5million 6-11 years old out of school). Ties with international organisations for improvement.</p> <p><b>Kinshasa:</b> Diverse, 6million + people, commercial city, 90% prim attendance (4-11); 28% child labour; 96% violent discipline.</p>	<p><b>England</b> 53 million people; Officially: English speaking; but culturally and linguistically diverse; Wars-abroad; manufacturing-service; unskilled-skills workers; increased funding; urban deprivation; educational inequalities. Yet one of the world's biggest economies with complex international ties that has benefited from more investment in education (Penden, 2013) yet with an insular tendency following the Brexit vote.</p> <p><b>SCR (Sheffield City Region)</b> Diverse, 1.8 million people, deprived (North-South divide),</p>	<p><b>Colonial Education</b> -1960? Western import, non-emancipatory, 'Golden Age' in hindsight (Dunkerley, 2009; Lloyd et al., 2000 ; Masandi, 2006) ; Yates, 1978</p>	<p><b>First Way</b> 1944 Education Reform Act, flexible and innovative, child-centred, 'Golden Age', economic decline Hargreaves, 2009</p>	<p><b>Religiously submissive, politically utilitarian</b> Top-down (Dunkerley, 2009; Masandi, 2006)</p>	<p><b>Administration</b> 1944-1980s, bureaucratic, national system locally administered (LA and schools), poor training, more experienced teachers were promoted Simkins, 2012; Policy formulation? Hodgkinson, 1980</p>
		<p><b>Sovereign State Absence</b> 1983, 1977 convention-early 2000s. Lack of resources, although at breaking point, education is still seen as viable option (De Herdt et al., 2012)</p>	<p><b>Second Way</b> 1988 ERA, 'Retreat of state' autonomy for accountability, national curriculum, resources worries, huge debates regarding access and inequalities. Hargreaves, 2009; fragmentation of profession (Whitty, 2008); opportunity for productive identity? (Collet, 2017)</p>	<p><b>Negotiated control</b> Different stakeholders, State outsourcing control, wars, mismanagement (De Herdt et al., 2012)</p>	<p><b>Management</b> 1980s-1977. 1988 Education Act, redistribution of powers, staffing and finance under schools, standards and appraisals of competencies. Managerialism, tension between centralised and market based management provisions, Simkins, 2012; Policy implementation? Hodgkinson, 1980.</p>
		<p><b>Capacity Building</b> Early 2000s-now? Renovation and building of schools, more political interest (Kamalandua, 2012; MoE, 2016)</p>	<p><b>Third Way</b> 1988 ERA and 2010 white paper. More investment, choice, self-improving. Hargreaves, 2009</p>	<p><b>Management</b> Top-down, technician (Kamalandua, 2012; MoE, 2016)</p>	<p><b>Leadership</b> 1977-Now. Management of devolved responsibilities gave way to leadership, more autonomy and accountability. NCSL 2000 and various leadership courses, Simkins, 2012. Partial models-Lit Review</p>
<p>Paradoxes/ binaries: local versus outside innovation, micro versus macro etc., Outward looking while preserving local knowledges, identities.</p>		<p><b>Quality assurance:</b> Standardisation model of inspection as opposed to flexible (head) teacher based inspections (Kupiainen et al., 2009)</p>			

Figure 1 DRC-England's comparison table of context, education and school leadership trends

Although my categorisation of the historical trends in education and school leadership in the DRC is literature-based and more focused on approaches rather than debatable distinct temporal dates, I would recommend further studies that could afford a consensual understanding around the nature, complexities and perhaps 'exact' timings of those eras. The pertinence of the above analytical summary table is not only in the way it captures the past up to the present, but also its attempt to prompt reflections with regard to the future direction for school leadership in the light of the leadership approaches of head teachers in this study within their diverse contexts.

Overall, as already discussed, Dunkerley (2009) and Yates (1978) seem to highlight somewhat conflicting perceptions of colonial education in the DRC. While Dunkerley is talking about the Belgians fearing a subversive, highly-educated Congolese, Yates speaks of highly trained 'craftsmen'. Meeuwis (2011) has also noted a 'shifting' colonial linguistic policy of assimilation and adaptation, where Congolese schools were forced to use only French in certain circumstances, and their indigenous languages at other times. These commentaries raise questions about all the framed eras, particularly the non-emancipatory nature of school leadership during the colonial education era and the 'negotiated' nature of school leadership during 'sovereign state absence' era. 'Negotiated' brings to mind concepts like consensus and collaboration. However, with the reality of 'contrived collegiality' (Hargreaves, 1994), more studies are warranted.

For the purpose of this study, one needs to reflect on what extent leadership trends affect students' achievement and their performance in the overall job market. Although it may be difficult to quantify the individual and social return to educational investment in any given context, there is a view that England has had higher economic return compared to other developed nations due to its skilled human capital (Johnson, 2004), on the one hand, on the other hand, the general lack of confidence nationally and internationally in an education qualification from the DRC, given the poor quality of education (Mokonzi, 2010).

The focus on leadership experiences of school heads in Sheffield/Doncaster and Kinshasa, therefore, is in keeping with the belief internationally that the quality of leadership makes a positive difference to students' achievement and the school as a whole (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003a). This view is increasingly accepted in Africa (Bush, 2007). However, why can it not simply be a case of espousing some of the

best practices to have stood the test of time in England and applying them to the DRC situation?

It may be tempting to adopt a linear approach to school leadership, where DRC school heads will simply have to follow in the footsteps of their English counterparts if they are to succeed. After all, this chapter has shown certain national and urban similarities in the two contexts. There is diverse linguistic and cultural demography that needs skilled human capital to break the cycle of poverty.

In response, I would put forward the following arguments to justify the worthwhileness of this research. Funding to replicate the English educational scenario in the DRC is clearly a major practical constraint. Besides, 'high levels of subsidies do not imply equal opportunities' (Vawda, 2003) and, as a matter of fact, there are still inequalities in English schools (Machin & McNally, 2012), particularly in disadvantaged areas (Mortimore & Whitty, 2000). Despite evidence-based changes in teachers' professionalism and diverse head teachers' pathways, schools still underperform (Ofsted, 2013). Stress-related illnesses and absences in England (Bower 2007) are a sign of frustrations (Pinkley, 1990), that could lead to negative performance (Argyris, 1962) and lack of trust, respect and cohesion (Mannix & Jehn, 2004).

While being aware of the problems that the English education system may be facing, they are unparalleled compared to those faced by the DRC. A pass rate of 58% in French and 56% in Mathematics in 2012 of targeted schools in certain DRC provinces (World Bank, 2012) represent a significant improvement from 40% and 45% respectively in 2001 (World Bank, 2005). These figures are subject to public trust, the quality of education and skills being tested. On those grounds, they may score relatively low compared to the 53%, 66%, 70%, 72%, and 74% of Key Stage 2 pupils in England respectively, meeting the new expected standards in reading, writing and mathematics; reading; mathematics; grammar, punctuation, and spelling; and writing (DESTA, 2016).

As a result, a tendency for policy replication might be envisaged. I hold the view that the development of education should follow a variational (branching off) instead of a linear evolutionary process (Baum & Smith, 2013). In this understanding, a grasp of and sensitivity to the way that historical as well as globalised developments have affected (or can affect) a Congolese and English primary head teacher (and other stakeholders such as pupils) are essential in developing a

context-based evolving leadership proficiency that can benefit all those for whom this research is intended: starting with DRC head teachers, English heads and, ultimately, the pupils they serve. This chapter has come to highlight a value-laden local context that cannot be ignored. I frame it as a paradox that is not exclusive to the DRC. There is the colonial history (or other variations of domination) that requires the emergence of local knowledge on the one hand. And yet, the need to break the cycle of poverty by developing a skilled-based education requires a reaching out to the outside world, on the other hand. The micro (local) face of education cannot be complete without the macro (outside knowledge) dimension and vice versa. I develop these ideas further in the next chapter (part II).

What also comes out of the above table is the sense that, despite education being viewed as a way of expressing nationalistic identity and a springboard for economic development, there is a systemic value system, especially in the DRC, that such development can be safely arrived at through stable top-down state structures. However, we live in an era where there is 'increasing cross-national mobility of people and the transnational communication of ideas that took place in the twenty-first century has fed into the contours of diversity around the world' (Faas, 2010; Gluchmanova, 2015, p.510). Added to that is the capacity for teachers (and head teacher) to develop their own practice (Hargreaves, 1994). It, therefore, becomes legitimate to ask 'What could comparing urban DRC and English primary head teachers' experiences offer in terms of deepening our understanding and practice of school leadership?'

# **CHAPTER 3 School Leadership Literature and Theoretical Framework for the Study:** A review blending relevant Western, African, urban and cross-context theories

## **Part I: SCHOOL LEADERSHIP LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The concept of leadership has not only gained currency, it is interlaced with other proximate terms. Hence, a clearing of the ground discussion is necessary before considering the adequacy of the different pertinent leadership models, in relation to the diverse contexts (see Chapter 2) of this research.

This part of the literature review, therefore, focuses on answering four pertinent questions. The first question is ‘what is leadership?’ This section discusses various understandings of leadership and clarifies other related terms before opting for a specific understanding of leadership that will be used in this research.

The second question is ‘when did we develop an interest in leadership?’ This section gives a brief historical account of humanity’s leadership activities, in general, and interest in the subject of school leadership, in particular. Such a narrative will help to locate the DRC and England in the debate.

‘Why does leadership matter?’ is the third question, which provides an evidence-based justification for the above historical growth of interest in leadership.

The last question is ‘What style, model and knowledge domain of leadership would appropriately respond to issues raised in the context chapter?’ This section provides an in-depth review of selected current cross-context thinking in (Western, African and urban) school leadership approaches, identifying gaps in knowledge to warrant a research project of this kind.

### **3.2 Leadership and other related terms: clarity**

*What is leadership?* This question is best answered by articulating some positions and clarifying certain assumptions around leadership-related concepts, such as management and culture, before opting for an understanding of leadership that will guide this research.

There are those who conceive of management and leadership as two distinct concepts pointing to separate activities (Kotter, 1990; Kotterman, 2006; Louis &

Miles, 1990). Coordination of organisational activities, ensuring that resources are distributed so that work can proceed smoothly, according to the above authors, is deemed to be the concern of an administrator or manager. In contrast, leaders set deliberate goals, adjust them in relation to situational challenges in order to influence and motivate people using various creative ways such as promoting conducive environment and culture.

There are also those who perceive the two concepts as overlapping, two sides of the same coin (Bush, 2008; Imants & De Jong, 1999; Northouse, 2013). It is not surprising that management activities have been conceptualised as 'transactional leadership' (Huber, 2004) or 'managerial leadership' (Bush, 2011) in the sense that the leader is the manager of the daily transactions to do with resources, staff, pupils et., in a way that is often pre-planned without a long-term vision of a school as an organisation. This conceptual analysis frees the DRC's management nature of school leadership, as framed in the context chapter, from any subordination and, theoretically, puts it on the same level as England, where Simkins (2012) describes it as revolving around leadership instead of management. Despite the apparent conflation between management and leadership, the assertion that managers seek to do things correctly while leaders do the right thing (Slaughter, 2012) does highlight a subtle distinction between the two concepts.

However, the quest for a consensual definition is as old as the subject itself as shall be discussed in the next section. Northouse's (2013) historical analysis of the subject highlights changing concerns from issues of power, group interactions, followers' responding to the leaders' wishes, and leaders focusing on transforming organisations. In light of the foregoing discussion, it is certainly the case that, whether we are dealing with management or leadership approaches, there are specific 'patterns of basic assumptions that a given group has invented, discovered, or developed' (Schein, 1984, p.6). Hence, Schein's (2010) claim that culture and leadership are inextricably linked.

It is not the intention here to engage in a review of the literature on organisational culture, although a commentary is warranted to advance the thrust of this review. It is essential to highlight the main points of thinking around the subject. Studies on culture have been characterised by a wide range of typologies ranging from power, achievement, role and support-oriented cultures (Harrison, 1979); club,



task, role and existential cultures (Handy, 1978); fragmented, mercenary, communal and networked cultures (Goffee & Jones, 1998); and integration, differentiated and fragmented cultures (Martin 2002) to mention but a few. While the above categories can be used to analyse culture in any organisation or society, Hofstede's (1991) typology (uncertainty/avoidance, individualism/collectivism, masculinity/femininity, power/distance, high/low context, short/long-term orientation) is significant here in so far as it makes some assertions about the cultures in societies (DRC and England) in which this study is rooted.

There is the assumption, for example, that collectivism is an African cultural construct, while individualism defines cultural life in the West (Dixon, 1997). Although Hofstede (1994) presents them as analytical tools not to be reified, the admission of their presumed enduring presence can become an essentialist view of culture that, in the end, fails to recognise the subtleties in behaviours of various agents, as they face the complexities, dynamisms and aspirations of urban spaces. This may explain why, in places that are tagged as individualistic (the West), there is talk of collegial models (see section 3.5.2.2 further down). To avoid a scenario where 'differences are compared and identified as barriers. Cultural stereotypes are assumed and a great divide constructed' (Collard, 2007, p.747). This cross-context comparative study is open to these constructs, not in a deterministic way but as a way of highlighting the cultural typology informing certain leadership narratives.

That said, one can confidently argue that an effective school culture can be created, embedded, evolved and manipulated (Schein, 2010) and this, in my view, cannot be realised unless we theorise on the experiences of those leading schools. Given recent scholarly consensus around the subject, leadership will, therefore, be understood here as the leader's (in this case head teacher's) ability to influence subordinates, in order for the organisation to successfully achieve its common goals (Northouse, 2013). Even though both managers and leaders exert some form of 'influence', I use it here in so far as the leader moves workers from subordinates into followers, who look beyond order and consistency to embrace change and movement (Kotter, 1990). From the above definition then, influence, vision (common goal) and, Bush and Glover (2014) would add, 'values' are essential dimensions of leadership that influence and manifest themselves in a variety of ways depending on the leadership style.

### **3.3 Interest in leadership**

*When did leadership become a hot topic?* Although Brock and Alexiadou (2013, p.5) argue that 'human communities *whether in England or the DRC* [my italics] have been learning and teaching since...200,000 years ago, I would think that learning and teaching can be traced back to the origins of man. However, it is argued that learning became more formalised, as knowledge needed to be 'retained, reproduced and consumed by more people in more places' on a grand scale (Giddens, 2001, p.524). Whether formal or informal, different societies would have found, developed and invented their patterns of basic assumptions, which is Schein's (1984) definition of culture. Since leadership and culture are two sides of the same coin (Schein, 2010), the contention here, in response to the above question, is that some sort of tacit organisation or management would have guided the various stages of learning, whether informal or formal.

Northouse (2013) claims that leadership is a much older concept than management, which he traces back to Aristotle and ties to the industrial revolution at the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Bush (2011), however, argues that educational leadership and management, as a distinctively articulated discipline, draws its roots from the United States, with Taylor's (1947) work presenting management in a mechanistically scientific way. This is a value-free management approach that focuses on organisational processes. Albeit in passing, Bush also recognises the contributions of Fayol (1916) and Weber (1947) before highlighting their debatable application in schools in need of more devolved, federalised, and deconcentrated systems that need to be in tune with evolving contexts.

In England, educational leadership and management became an established discipline by the mid-1990s (Bush, 1999) following a process that began in the late 1960s and led to government involvement in 1983 and the popularisation of management courses in British universities and colleges (Bush, 2011). The DRC, in contrast, is yet to develop a coherent research-based literature on the subject and successive governments have either lacked the resources and/or the will to invest in school leadership (Mokonzi, 2010). As a result, I will be using literature developed in a fairly 'similar' context like South Africa. However, as already mentioned in the context chapter, apart from environmental and business management courses, there are traces of leadership courses being delivered by religious higher education

institutions (CTSE, 2010), for example, and more research is needed to understand the history, rationale and impact of such programmes and to discuss their potential applicability in schools. Such an adventure is beyond the scope of this research, even though this study has an impact on leadership provisions at a higher education level.

I will end this section by highlighting one paradox. Bush (1999) emphasises the need felt in Britain for educational leadership theory to be grounded on British school leadership practices. At the same time, the author recognises that leadership has become an international topic and even that British (as well as North American) books, hence knowledge on school leadership, are being used in other parts of the world. I would also add that British (Western) money is being spent around the world (Africa, DRC) on various educational projects. A central issue to this research that is not addressed by Bush is 'how do school leaders or researchers bring this internationally expansive chronology of knowledge with indigenised theory and practice together?' and 'what is the status of that knowledge?'

Brock and Alexiadou (2013, p.155) end their discussion on the state of education in Sub-Saharan Africa, stating that 'for most, the goal of sustainable survival through the 21<sup>st</sup> century led by innovative education may prove elusive'. One might, therefore, wonder what the various bodies of leadership knowledge have done to reverse the old perception in developing countries that modern schooling was 'maintaining inequalities within and between societies' (Crosley & Watson, 2003, p.28) instead of being the 'great equalizer' (Rist, 2002). Crosley and Watson (2003) also lament the lack of research, especially in French speaking parts of the developing world. Assuming that there are some traces of effective leadership theory and practice, this sort of research is necessary to bridge that gap in knowledge. Before a review of existing literature on 'styles, models, or knowledge basis of leadership' is undertaken, it is essential to reflect on the importance of leadership in schools.

### **3.4 The centrality of leadership**

*Why does leadership matter?* The continuous demand for change and improvement demands it (Huber, 2004). Leadership and preparation for that specialised profession is necessary, due to the expansion of the role of schools and

the increasing complexity of school contexts (Bush, 2013). Positive impact, as a result of the work that the 'well trained school leaders' do, is an additional reason for focusing on school leadership. Dubrin (2013, p.10) disputes the above assertion with the claim that 'the impact of the leader on organisational outcomes is smaller than the impact of forces within the situation'. Bossert et al. (1982) and Hallinger and Murphy (1985) have contributed a great deal to emphasise this contingency approach, which highlights the complexity of situations within which leaders are situated. However, there is widespread consensus that effective schools are led by effective leaders and that those that are failing have had ineffective leadership at the top (Leithwood et al., 1994; Hallinger, 2003; Southworth, 2003).

Leithwood et al. (1994), for example, documents several studies that point to school heads' (principals') impact on teachers' job satisfaction, teachers' innovation within the classroom, reduced vandalism and absenteeism and students/pupils' achievement. To further highlight the view that the essential role of school leaders in students' outcomes is a humanly mediated activity, Sun and Leithwood (2015) underline the importance of focusing on teachers' emotions through enhancement of their trust in others, their commitment, collective efficacy and citizenship behaviours. What this also shows is that, various models that I am about to discuss in the next section, and indeed the limitations of such models that this research endeavours to overcome, are important strategies for mediating the achievement of better student learning outcomes and other criteria of what success represents. The models in this literature review may individually present limitations for the sorts of contexts described here; nevertheless, their positive contributions to leadership theory and practice cannot and should not be discarded.

### **3.5 Styles, models, and/or knowledge basis of school leadership**

In this section, I review the different styles, models and/or knowledge domains of leadership that are not only prominent in the current educational leadership debate but also pertinent to my research question. The brief opening discussion centres on whether there is such a thing as an ideal school leadership style for specific contexts. The rest of this part of this first chapter is a blended, themed discussion of models of leadership that appear under Western models (formal and collegial), African-centred models (authentic leadership, African authentic leadership, blending African and other leadership constructs, servant leadership), and urban school

leadership. In the second part of this chapter, the foregoing discussions are then reconceptualised using Ribbins and Gunter's (2002) leadership knowledge domains, before making a case for a theoretical approach for this research.

### **3.5.1 Ideal leadership style?**

Bossert et al. (1982) argue that 'there is no single style of leadership that fits all schools'. It is, therefore, the case that in the face of various contextual challenges (old and new), new models of leadership continue to emerge as old ones are redefined and further developed (Bush & Glover, 2014). Given the variety of approaches, the upcoming discussion will focus mainly on the most relevant ones to this research.

### **3.5.2 Western models**

I use the phrase 'Western models' loosely, in so far as it conveys the territorial origin of the literature. Their application can span beyond and may be related to other leadership practices elsewhere, as shall be pointed out within this section or elsewhere (authentic, servant, system and multicultural leadership approaches, for example), as the review moves to focusing on 'authentic' African, urban and comparative leadership models.

#### ***3.5.2.1 Formal leadership models***

Bush (2011, p.60) argues that 'managerial leadership is strongly aligned to "formal models"'. The key features, according to Bush, are the presence of a system, official structure, hierarchy, organisational goals, rationality, authority and accountability. These formal models of leadership are similar, though not identical, to the managerial approach to leadership that was shown to be present both in the DRC and English contextual leadership landscapes.

Bush identifies a series of limitations. Schools, as organisations, are not always stable entities; there are competing goals, the traffic of knowledge is thought of in a top-down manner, individual contributions are discounted in an environment where decision making is not always rational. What can also be added to this list is that these formal models do not only relay institutional structures of a given school or a country's education system, but they also convey assumptions that school leadership is unidimensional and only pays attention to culture as a 'formal, stable and perhaps consensual' way of doing things.

Using Martin's (2002) organisational culture typology (as referred to in section 3.2), I would describe the managerial approach to leadership as accentuating the 'integration perspective'. This is not to imply that unity around certain structured leadership actions is not desired. On the contrary, Boleman and Deal's (2003) seminal work on reframing organisations and Lave and Wenger's (1991) communities of practice can be viewed as ways of forging unity that even Day et al.'s (2011) successful leaders, as shall be elaborated later, cannot ignore.

Martin (2002), however, warns against a bias towards presumed stability and consensus by drawing attention to other dimensions of organisational culture, such as 'differentiated and fragmented', meaning workers present conflicting and even ambiguous organisational goals. I will, at this juncture, make four observations. Firstly, one could argue that consensus, stability or structure do not necessarily imply that a given institutional structure is appropriate or suited to a school environment. Secondly, referring to Gramsci's work, Hatch and Cunliffe (2013, p.243) see in managerialism the danger for workers to 'accept oppressions and exploitation because institutional and ideological forms of domination become part of their taken-for-granted everyday reality'. Thirdly, if workers do not accept oppression, Slaughter (2012, p.85) citing Gardner (1995, p.186), warns that leaders can be given subordinates but they cannot be given a following. A following must be earned. And fourthly, the managerial approach places unnecessary emphasis on a person called leader at the top of the leadership pyramid.

Notwithstanding its usefulness, the focus on management alone is unsuited for both Sheffield/England and Kinshasa/DRC for a variety of reasons that I discuss next. For example, the various challenges identified both in Kinshasa and Sheffield/Doncaster (poverty, achievement gaps) are a reminder that the managerial approach needs a rethink. Schools in both the DRC and English education systems have also been described as complex, which requires other approaches, perhaps collegial, than the top-down managerial one. Besides the controlling regimes felt in English and DRC schools, the DRC schools, in particular, have an additional layer of historical control or domination called 'colonisation' that the collective of Africanists (Bolden & Kirk, 2009; Higgs, 2012; Hopson et al., 2010; Waghid & Smeyers, 2012 among others) seek to overcome. There is no doubt, therefore, that emancipatory and decolonising leadership approaches have been promoted, both in England and

Africa, and this review will assess their suitability in relation to today's educational landscapes as described in the context chapter.

### **3.5.2.2 Collegial approaches**

I have pointed to the negotiated nature of school leadership in the DRC, as well as the complex nature of schools in England in the context chapter. Those two elements alone are enough ground to look beyond the individual efforts, perhaps of the manager, advocated by the formal or managerial leadership approaches and explore the contribution of team leadership (Hill, 2013), or what Bush (2011) calls collegial models. Collegial or team leadership approaches emphasise collaborative efforts (Hill, 2013) resulting in shared power and decision making (Bush, 2011). These approaches are more democratic and in tune with an increasingly democratic society, especially in England, and the community culture of Africans in general and the Congolese in particular, where it is assumed that, as Riessman (2008, p.2) succinctly puts it, 'a singular feeling *or deciding* [my italics] self is not necessarily the primary axis of significance'. I discuss the move to build a distinctively African school leadership narrative later.

Before I assess the value of distributed leadership as one of the exemplars of collegial models (Bush, 2011) to this research, it is appropriate to make reference to other leadership models that do not receive extensive analysis in my analytical approach, which sees them falling under distributed leadership, even though both Northouse and Bush would discuss them separately given the different circumstances and motives that prompted their emergence.

Northouse (2013), for example, sees the focus on the follower and the context as a common thread uniting situational leadership, contingency theory, and path-goal theory. In simple terms, the above leadership terminology can be explained respectively as the need for the leader to adapt to the development trajectories of followers (situational leadership); the matching of leadership style in accordance with the situational variable (contingency theory); and how the work setting and followers' characteristics can be used to develop a relationship that gels with the leader's style. If one views these approaches within a wider environment of democracy and community cultures, these models can do a lot to further the collaboration agenda that is embedded within the distributed leadership model.

That said, distributed leadership, which rightly with participative leadership and debatably with transformational leadership are all kept under the same umbrella of democratic models by Bush (2011), promotes collegiality and shared decision making, by engaging with expertise wherever it can be detected or emerge anywhere within a school as an organisation. It has a practical value as it eases 'the burden of overworked headteachers' (Hartley, 2010, p.271). There is an educational advantage to distributing leadership beyond the pragmatic one. A bias towards heroic leaders within a managerial framework has, according to Kezar (2012 citing Pierce & Conger, 2003), obscured our ability to take serious notice of over 100 years of research pointing to organisational efficacy being secured when leadership is distributed. Drawing on wide-ranging international empirical studies, Leithwood et al. (2008, p.27), for example, argue that while some patterns of distribution are more effective than others, 'school leadership has a greater influence on schools and students when it is widely distributed'.

There are, however, some downsides to distributed leadership. Bush (2011) summarises those concerns as ranging from hidden managerialism, to managers feeling threatened by more involved teachers (Harris 2004 & 2005). Aside from its success depending on the attitudes of staff and head teachers, collegial models are rather slow and uncertain on the question of what it is that has to be distributed and the possibility of contrived collegiality (Hargreaves, 1994).

Leithwood et al. (2008) base their claim on the positive impact of distributed leadership on a number of studies that were carried out in either American and/or English contexts. It has to be said that these studies represent a move towards comparative leadership knowledge (see 3.8) that, up to now, has yet to be supported with a coherent philosophy as the basis for such studies. What is worth pointing out at this stage, however, is that, since claims about distributed leadership are heavily reliant on empirical evidence from the western world, the authority they could have in an African (DRC) context is severely compromised unless one uses such bodies of knowledge within the normative perspective (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013) or the instrumental knowledge domain agenda (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002) that I discuss later (see 3.6).



### **3.5.3 African-centred leadership models: Authentic or African Authentic?**

*Authentic leadership or African authentic leadership?* In light of the above discussion, the inclusion of the DRC context, in particular, and the African context, in general, appears not only as a theoretical requirement but also as a moral and contextual imperative. There is the need to understand the 'internal operation of specifically African-centred *leadership* [my italics] education (Hopson et al., 2010, p.784) instead of perpetuating the colonisation of Western values at the expense of African ones, even in educational research (Higgs, 2012). In the context of this research, it means developing 'authentic' African leadership models. The use of 'authentic' here is only as a pointer to other forms of African school leadership styles. Authenticity in leadership literature, however, is more than 'context specific' forms of leadership. It is a model of leadership, in its own right; hence, the starting question above 'authentic or authentic?' The next section will focus on 'authentic leadership' as a leadership style, before engaging 'authentic' as a context specific African style of leadership.

#### **3.5.3.1 Authentic leadership**

Authentic leadership as a leadership model has only emerged since 2003, with conflicting focus, whether on the intrapersonal, meaning internal processes of a leader, or the interpersonal, which draws attention to the relational dynamics between the leader and the followers (Northouse, 2013).

Northouse provides an in-depth analysis of Luthans and Avolio's (2003) constructs, such as self-awareness, internalised moral perspective, balanced processing and relational transparency. While values and moral integrity of leadership activity are valued, authentic leadership, among other things, is a trust restoring approach following corporate scandals and terrorist attacks that hit the US first and leading into a trust disconnect between leaders and followers. As a new area of interest, authentic leadership is yet to be backed up by extensive empirical evidence in England. Besides, its historical roots are one-sided, meaning it is rooted only in Western and Northern hemisphere contexts (Begley, 2007). As such, it needs to reflect the concerns of head teachers in the DRC and other places to generate multi-context empirical data to support its noble cause amidst lack of evidence in relation to the impact it has on achieving organisational goals (Northouse, 2013). The idea of being genuine, which is related to authentic leadership, is also not unproblematic. When discussing integrity, as one of the core values of the head

teachers in this research, I address some of the inconsistencies and dilemmas that a leader might encounter who, among other things, adopts an authentic leadership approach (see chapter section 5.4.3.3).

### 3.5.3.2 Authentic African models

The reclaiming of an African identity in all spheres of life, including management and leadership in the colonial and post-colonial eras, is a moral cause that galvanised the support of Africans and non-Africans alike, since earlier calls of *negritude* by poets, such as Aimé Césaire and Senghor, to its more recent reformulation as African renaissance (Bolden & Kirk, 2009; Mulemfo, 2000; Ntibagirirwa, 2003). At the centre of the call for authentically African leadership perspectives is the need for Africans to ‘liberate themselves from colonial and post-colonial thinking and...re-engage with an African value system’ (Bolden & Kirk, 2009, p.74). The pertinence of the reclaiming of an African identity, I would argue, is justified not only because of the realisation of the limitations of Western leadership approaches (Beugre & Offodile, 2001; Bewaji, 2003). It is also because of the unpatriotic leadership of post-colonial African elites (Obiakor, 2004), exemplified by escalating levels of inhumanity, such as genocide in Rwanda, extremist attacks in East Africa, the raping of women in Eastern DRC, all the visible state-sponsored and proxy brutality across the continent that prompted Waghid and Smeyers (2012, p.12) to call for a reconceptualisation of the African philosophy of Ubuntu in a climate where ‘every assemblage of actions could erroneously be construed as Ubuntu’.

I will return to the concept of Ubuntu shortly in this section. Beforehand, it is important to build an accurate picture of ‘assemblage of actions’ to use Waghid and Smeyers’ phrase, especially when mapping out the leadership conceptualisations that give rise to certain leadership assemblage of actions. Zoogah and Nkomo’s (2013) framing (see figure 2 below) of leadership and management on the rest of the continent is a useful map that captures various schools of thought.

Different from West	High	Territorial	Instrumental
	Low	Symbolic	Sentimental
		Low	High

Similar to West

Figure 2 Adapted from Zoogah and Nkomo's (2012) 'Identity of African management research choices'.

Territorial research and management/leadership, defended by Hopson et al. (2010), as discussed above, seek to advance a uniquely African stance that is vastly different from and dissimilar to the West. While contextualisation of leadership is necessary, I contend that territorial research thinking can defend malpractice on the grounds that 'some behaviour considered ineffective in Western countries could, in fact, be effective and desired in the African context' (Lituchy et al., 2013, p.207). The symbolic frame is not concerned with a unique approach and emphasises neither African nor Western/global identities. The sentimental approach seeks to underline the similarities and, at the same time, overlook the differences. Instrumental approach, or what I would prefer to call comparative and recommended by the above authors, seeks to define both the differences and similarities in research and leadership practices in Africa and outside of it.

Bush (2007) sees such similarity reflected on the grounds that most successful leaders would incorporate some aspects of various approaches including, Ubuntu. With variations such as *Gecaca* and *Indaba*, *Ubuntu* as a way of life that emphasises solidarity, humanism, care, collectivism and interdependence is viewed as uniquely African, as opposed to the Western individualistic way of life (Littrell et al., 2012). Its spiritual obligation to ancestors, gods and the community has prompted Preece (2003) to propose a spiritual conceptualisation of Ubuntu, in the same vein as transformative learning and leadership that has been evidenced by Wanasika et al.'s (2011) culturally endorsed leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). To adapt these African leadership values with modern management techniques, Beugré and Offodile (2001) have advanced a culture-fit model that involve a combination of integration (of modern management techniques and African cultural values) and eradication (of values that prevent effective management). While the above insights are promising, they are yet to be backed up by empirical evidence of educational leadership from which consistent theories can be developed.

Interviewing about 300 head teachers in 19 Sub-Saharan countries, Bolden and Kirk (2009) used a leadership development programme funded by the British Council; the authors' aim reportedly being to gauge how new understandings of their leadership impacted on their own practice. Beyond the positive and negative feelings

that the concept of leadership provoked in the participants, more substantial data was extracted pointing to gender, cultural and religious norms as inhibitors to leadership instinct among Africans. The programme, it is claimed, helped 'to find an authentic and meaningful leadership voice' (Bolden & Kirk, 2009, p.78), which, when framed as Ubuntu, 'offers a powerful frame of reference and a way of talking about the interdependence of social actors that bridge the individual and the collective' (Bolden & Kirk, 2009, p.82). The findings suggested that (1) anyone can be a leader, (2) leadership begins with self-awareness, (3) leadership is relational and (4) leadership is for the service of the community. They ground all these within the commonly talked about relational or communal style of leadership called Ubuntu.

While recognising the need for distinct African leadership and education models based on Ubuntu, the consequences of incommensurate philosophies of education, which objectify local practices (Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009) and misconstrued barbaric actions as Ubuntu (Waghid & Smeyers, 2012), need to be addressed. According to Waghid and Smeyers (2012), the interdependence of social actors that bridge the individual and the collective can be enriched by Cassell's (1979, p.46) idea of 'living with scepticism', which for Waghid and Smeyers is about recognising the humanity in others on the basis of one's inability to gain full and certain knowledge of others. In a more recent publication, Waghid (2015, p.1238) uses Agamben's (1993) idea of the 'incommunicable' to argue the following:

When an Ubuntu community in becoming is potentially brought into communication without the incommunicable, then the differences of language, of dialect, of ways of life, of character, of custom, and even the physical particularities of each, are brought into the open (Agamben, 1993, p.63). This implies that such a community has nothing to hide and would not shame its individuals through arrogance and self-destruction.

Crucial in the above quote are constructs, such as *fear*, that enables or disables the bringing of individual particularities and the *self-scrutiny* of communities who are expected to show they have nothing to hide. These concepts, I demonstrate elsewhere (Elonga Mboyo, 2016b), can serve as a basis to account for the inhumanity and humanity within the broader methodology of Ubuntu, which I argue is commensurate with structuration theory.

With a more broadened understanding of 'authentic African' models of leadership, which are both similar to and different from other ways of life, it is essential to explore other inroads, especially in the area of school leadership within

the African context. I draw on three selected literatures, all of which are from South Africa where there is a growing intensity of published reflections on leadership. The first one (Chikoko et al., 2015) is discussed at this stage since it gives a feel of how leadership, as a blend of 'authentic African' and other constructs, is performed in an African context (South Africa), albeit limited to the selected sample and only at secondary level. The second literature (Mawdsley et al., 2014) will appear later, to give an African flavour when discussing the 'urban' school leadership literature that is an important component of this research. The third literature (Lumby & Heystek, 2011) is discussed much later when making the point about the need for a comparative leadership knowledge domain that, arguably, represents a significant gap in the literature.

### **3.5.3.3 Blending 'authentic African' and other leadership constructs (servant)**

Chikoko et al. (2015) paint a picture of two extreme types of schools with others along the continuum of the South African educational landscape. According to the authors, there are first class schools that can be compared to the best in the developed world and dysfunctional schools at the other end. The magnitude of dysfunctionality or deprivation, in terms of poverty and crime resulting in death, needs to be seen not only as happening around but also within the school parameters. Somewhere along the continuum are what I would call 'average schools', some of which are located in deprived areas and yet perform well in terms of students' exam outcomes.

The reported success has been (partly) attributed to leadership, which, according to the authors, looked inwardly at their resources and as servants developed a culture of hardworking organisations. Although the authors come to the conclusion that the leaders in their study succeeded 'through understanding and utilising its assets and through the spirit of servant leadership' (Chikoko et al., 2015, p.466), they also reported elements of shared leadership where a participant is reported to have said '...we involve teacher...we make sure that they own every activity at school'.

A number of observations can be made here. The reported shared leadership should be on the basis of the African social reality that the concept purports. Such a proposition still needs to be empirically tested in the way that shared leadership in schools is experienced both in the DRC and England. Chikoko et al.'s (2015) study is

not only based in a non-DRC context but it focuses on secondary school teachers. A lot still needs to be learnt about primary school head teachers' experiences. There is also a double irony in that, while the study is South African based, the concept of 'first class schools' is not defined according to South African standards but instead in relation to what is known as the best in 'developed countries', which could still be viewed as colonial but it, nevertheless, shows the degree of internationalisation of education standards. In addition, while it is claimed that leadership of the interviewed heads started inwardly, it ended up bearing some resemblance to leadership practices of servant leadership, for example, in the wider world. While situational particularities must be recognised, I contend that there is a different way of articulating these inwards and outwards or local and yet international characteristics, that are perhaps inherent in the practice of school leadership. One can only imagine that, as interest in (school) leadership grows on the African continent, more studies that start off inwardly will end up highlighting some characteristics of mainstream literature on school leadership. Servant leadership, explored next, is one such example here.

#### **3.5.3.4 *Servant leadership***

Servant leadership can be traced back to Greenleaf (1970; 1972; 1977). It focuses on the behaviour of the leader, which includes listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualisation, foresight, stewardship and commitment to the growth of people that Northouse (2013), using Spears' (2002) work, elaborates in more detail.

In political terms, servant leadership seems an attractive concept that should not only interest South Africa or England but also the DRC, or any other context with a history of disservice during periods of political instability or simply working under the tyranny of a top down 'heroic' model of leadership. This approach does not only put followers first, sharing control and influence; it reportedly helps to boost followers' performance and growth, organisational growth and societal impact (Northouse, 2013, p.232).

Northouse (2013) provides a range of criticisms of servant leadership. The one most relevant here rests on the contradiction that the terms 'serving' and 'leading' seem to create. The assertion that servant leadership is not only about leaders' behaviour but also about individual and organisational growth/performance also

needs to be interrogated. It is understood that within the context of servant leadership, followers move beyond their basic requirements as workers and start caring about the overall life and quality of the organisation. What remains unclear is how individuals within an organisation, such as a school, determine organisational growth in relation to personal growth. What are the 'internal aspects' of an organisation, for example, that would ensure growth? In a technology driven world market, where schools are expected to equip the students with the necessary skills to cope in the knowledge society (Hargreaves, 2003) and transform their personal and national settings, it becomes a matter of common sense first to be open-minded. Perhaps hidden in the servant leadership model is the outward look that is yet to be fully articulated as a legitimate leadership approach. The outward look brings me to discussing school leadership in open spaces, such as urban areas.

#### **3.5.4 'Urban' school leadership perspectives**

With the dawn and acceleration of 'cyberspace' and urbanisation of rural places in England (West) and the DRC (Africa), the use of the term 'urban' to differentiate certain contexts from others has been contested (Blackman, 1995; Gottdiener & Hutchison, 2006; Pugalis, 2015 – see context chapter section B - implications). That said, a discussion on how existing literature focusing specifically on 'urban' areas can inform this study is warranted. Less concerned about the historical development of urban school leadership, this section discusses and evaluates the relevance of current urban school leadership models based on selected relevant literatures. Arriaza and Henze (2012) are used to consider the voice from the US, while Ahtaridou and Hopkins (2012) and Close (2016) come in to help conceptualise urban school leadership in England. In the absence of an equivalent discussion in the DRC, Mawdsley et al. (2014) is used to explore the view from South African literature.

Arriaza and Henze (2012) start from the notion that the US urban social environment is multi-ethnic, multiracial and requires transformative leaders, who would use equity and adequacy to help to negotiate differences, resolve social conflicts and secure the future of multi-ethnic democracy. An essential attribute these authors see in transformative leaders is their sense of social, cultural and intellectual capital. Such an understanding, it is hoped, will enable them to build

healthy intergroup relations, focus on local and global spaces and promote both academic and applied preparation.

I will expand on the idea of focussing on both local and global spaces to make a serious point of concern for this research. Essentially, this is a call for leaders to 'integrate local relevance with a focus on the global connections' (Arriaza & Henze, 2012, p.129). While the notion of what is to happen within urban schools, as argued by these authors, is pertinent to this research, it is being defended from a perspective that the authors admit is traditionally within the realm of managerialism. I would argue that what is needed, rather, is a coherent philosophical underpinning behind what appears to be an integrative approach to leadership, otherwise urban school leadership could be called just about anything as long as the hoped for outcomes are sound.

What is being advocated for urban school leadership in England is different. It is, first of all, worth stating that urban educational challenges in England are not limited to Sheffield/Doncaster. So, to engage with what is a country-wide issue, a number of initiatives ranging from leading from the middle, consultant leaders, mentoring and coaching, local and national leaders education, improving schools programme, good to great programme, teaching schools programme and subject specialism support were introduced (Ahtaridou & Hopkins, 2012). While some urban schools in England were improving in terms of performance, others were still lagging behind. Hence, the purpose of system leadership for urban school leaders would be to act as change agents not only to their schools but also to those around them.

As the above authors (ibid) discuss their model in detail, there is familiar talk about engaging meaningfully with the community and caring about issues of equity. What is, however, significant with this literature is the emphasis it places on establishing sound internal aspects of system leadership and then linking the transferability and sustainability of internal aspects to external aspects of system leadership, external urban schools that otherwise need help. Within this model, effective urban school leadership being encouraged is presumed to have a ripple effect outward to other schools locally, regionally and nationally.

I would argue that the above reasoning can be applied to schools at an international level too. However, doing so would drive the model head on to an ethical and cultural minefield. What system leadership does is spread best practice. As such, it is normative (Hatch & Cunliffe, 2013); it is one way instead of



multidirectional and can come across as dictatorial if it is not well defined. In an English context where schools, especially underperforming ones, have to be self-improving, Close (2016) offers a broader perspective in his review of school leadership consultancy literature within the context of system leadership. Close's analysis of the literature brings him to argue that there are other values beyond the normative or functionalist agenda of 'what works', such as the critical (what happens) and the socially critical (in whose wider interest) that inspires system leader consultants. In addition to these values, he outlines a framework of analysis that he sees falling under three categories: context with its literature on organisational analysis, agency with its network theory literature and processes where analysis centres on change and identity formation. Beyond that is the actual consultancy development, which involves political coaching at the micro level, organisational contracting at the meso level and knowledge that counts at the macro level.

The model is rich and particularly significant for this study, in that it 'moves beyond taken for granted training approaches to more critical historical and political interpretations of consultancy practice, building on existing research in the field in terms of its scope, conceptualisation and values base' (Close, 2016, p.129). What I would say, however, is that, while the model eloquently maps out the English consultancy field, its remit does not go beyond the English national context to account for globalised dynamics within which English schools are located. Despite recognition of reciprocal learning, when the author talks about coaching partnerships, system leadership, in my view, still happens within the expert-client culture. System leadership, therefore, needs to appropriate the global context and define the corresponding leadership actions for it to remain relevant both nationally and internationally or, as I would argue, a different approach is needed to influence improvement of school leadership within the backdrop of colonisation (historical or of one approach over another) and other factors raised in the context chapter.

Unlike their colleagues Chikoko et al. (2015), Mawdsley et al. (2014) define their distinction between functional and dysfunctional schools in South Africa using a South African examination measure. They trace the dysfunctionality back to being a legacy of apartheid. Their interest, however, lies in establishing the leadership approach that defined functional schools set in a dysfunctional 'urban' area.

Their qualitative study does not argue for a distinct model of leadership in urban areas. However, it proposes useful characteristics of what an effective urban leader

can be or do to ensure his or her school can become functional despite the level of dysfunctionality surrounding it. Leading and managing the learning school, shaping the direction and development of the school, assuring quality and securing accountability, developing and empowering self and others, managing the school as an organisation and working with and for the community, were identified as characteristics for success. The above authors devote a significant section of their article to discussing the implications of their study, which revolve around the training of 'urban' school heads to achieve, what I would argue, is not a leadership instinct but a manager's instinct, that of 'training urban school principals in how to function effectively' (Mawdsley et al., 2014, p.384). This is not to downplay the importance of acquiring the necessary competencies for school leadership (in urban areas) but it does, however, place the school leader within a static status if an understanding of changing concerns and priorities is not appreciated.

While the above literatures have highlighted some of the aspirations for both primary school heads in this research, they have not been successful in articulating a coherent philosophy for integrating what is locally relevant with global connections, the application of a normative perspective based on best practices in other schools at the international level and the apparent overemphasis on a mechanistic effective function of an urban principal. With a much wider overview, one must recognise that Chikoko et al.'s (2015) literature is planted within a series of articles prefaced by Maringe and Moletsane's (2015) call for a 'cocktail' of leadership practices that include transformational, distributed, instructional, ethical and asset-based. While this approach is attractive for its eclecticism, the danger is for it to become instrumental and non-dialogical, as I will argue shortly when I reframe the review next. Besides, suggesting the application of known school leadership models elsewhere in some unique multiply deprived settings in South Africa, and indeed in Kinshasa, shows that context is not too impervious to be open to insights from the outside. By the same token, instead of one place becoming the dumping ground for cocktails of models, however good they are, a certain degree of knowledge multi-directionality needs to be shown.

## **Part II: TOWARDS A THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR THE STUDY**

### **3.6 Introduction**

In order to fully appreciate what is being advocated here, a reframing of the above review of literature using Ribbins and Gunter's (2002) typology of school leadership literature is necessary. Other scholars (Mabey & Finch-Lees, 2008; Hartley, 2010, for example) have certainly engaged in the exercise of mapping the field of leadership. The choice for the above literature can be justified in the way that it helps to understand the forgoing discussion, it gives me the opportunity to advance certain (practical) reasons for discounting certain approaches and also shows how this study moves beyond the current literature and, hopefully, suggests something new and most of all an appropriate theory and practice of school leadership for Sheffield/Doncaster and Kinshasa, initially. The contention here is that, all the limitations and gaps that have been identified thus far can be resolved within a comparative leadership knowledge domain framed from a comparative research approach. The next three sections respectively reconceptualise the above literature review using Ribbins and Gunter's (2002) framework, argue for comparative knowledge domain as a theoretical basis for school leadership research and practice, and discuss some examples of studies that have arguably employed/defended the comparative knowledge domain agenda. The discussion ends with a conclusion that identifies key knowledge gaps in the literature to which this research aims to respond.

### **3.7 Leadership knowledge domains**

Ribbins and Gunter see the literature on school leadership defined within five major knowledge domains: conceptual, critical, humanistic, evaluative, and instrumental knowledge domains. Upon further theorising (Ribbins, 2006a; 2006b; Hartley, 2010), the number of knowledge domains or provinces has seen descriptive, aesthetic, and axiological added to the total list of eight provinces, which have been further grouped to argue that research and practice of leadership is about understanding meanings, understanding experiences, working for change and delivering change. The forthcoming discussion will be based on the original five knowledge domains, as discussing more or less knowledge provinces does not alter the gist of the overall theoretical case that is developed in subsequent sections (3.8

onwards). Despite the need to make reference to earlier discussions, the upcoming reconceptualising will refrain from delving into more detail to avoid repetitiveness.

*The conceptual knowledge domain* is concerned with the clarity of leadership concepts in terms of their ontology, epistemology and even values. Hodgkinon's (1978) research is cited as defining this sort of research. Even though they may refer to philosophical approaches to leadership practices, they do not necessarily start from an empirical exercise. The distinction between management and leadership discussed at the start of this review and Ubuntu as a viable African leadership conceptual framework are fitting examples.

*The critical knowledge domain* is represented by the works of Stephen Ball and Jill Blackmore, although, based on its concern for leadership knowledge that emancipates and liberates from oppressive structures, many Africanists, as discussed in section 3.5.3.2 onwards, would qualify as proponents of the critical knowledge domain. The oppressive structures can be thought of as managerialism, as discussed here, or other forms of imposed models that have no relevance to a given situation. The context chapter also outlined some national and international debilitating structures, which include colonisation. In response, contextually authentic research and leadership approaches could be deemed necessary. However, as discussed earlier, some emancipatory African models, as well as western-based models such as servant leadership, which can be understood as an attempt to overturn the domination of traditional leadership models, also have limits.

*The humanistic knowledge domain* is about research that prioritises and brings out what is known about people's experiences of leadership. This approach takes the emphasis away from the mechanistic nature of managers' work to the interpersonal and intrapersonal experiences of leadership, in order to articulate the highs and lows of professional practice. Greenfield's (1993) work can arguably be used to defend the need to articulate such experiences. Much of the literature discussed here refers to school leaders' experiences and they, to a certain extent, champion the humanistic knowledge domain. While this humanistic approach to research and practice favours a personal and interpersonal construction of knowledge, it cannot do so while ignoring the order and structure that the mechanistic ways of working of formal leadership models bring. In addition, although the humanistic stance privileges human experience, it does not seem to explain how researchers and practitioners can navigate the interface between this human

experience in one place and another. Bush (2007), as already discussed, goes some way to looking at humanistic leadership experiences in Africa and those in the Western world and concludes that there is a certain resemblance.

*The evaluative knowledge domain* measures the impact of leadership. Reynolds (1994) and Hopkins et al. (1997) are the main proponents of this construct. Here, leadership programmes can be devised and applied and outcomes measured to gauge its effects in terms of effectiveness and/or improvement. Bolden and Kirk's (2009) evaluation of the British council's leadership programme in Africa is one such example and, as already discussed, this model has its weaknesses. The focus of this research could have been about the evaluation of servant, authentic, distributed or other leadership models. While I do not have positional deciding power in schools in the DRC and England, the option to develop, apply and evaluate a leadership programme is non-viable. In any case, the underlying assumption that is corroborated by the findings in the last chapter is that urban primary school leaders do not operate exclusively from a single construct of leadership. Ribbins and Gunter (2002) would also argue that this knowledge domain is based on controlled manipulation of variables, baseline testing and outcome indicators, in order to measure the impact of school leadership and improve practice.

*The instrumental knowledge domain* focuses on transferring tried and tested school effectiveness or school improvement strategies elsewhere and seeking to implement them in another context. This is the normative perspective that somehow brackets individual situations in favour of proven effective leadership behaviours or instruments. While all leadership models discussed here can be used as instrumental knowledge under the pretext, for example, of researcher or practitioner's subjectivity, grounds of innovation, and developmental learning, they could backfire if not handled skilfully. This is why critics of the instrumental knowledge domain approach cite the assumption in this model that working environments are unproblematic and similar. Ball (1993) and many others (Bush & Quiang, 2000; Collard & Wang, 2005; Hallinger, 2005; Merchant, 2004; Walker & Dimmock, 2000) refute that view and recognise the complexity and distinctive nature of workplaces, especially in educational leadership. There are ethical, political, gender and even cultural complexities that must be acknowledged and instrumental knowledge seems ill-suited to accommodate such complexities.

### **3.8 Comparative knowledge domain: multiple perspectives for multicultural urban settings**

A comparative knowledge domain is what is needed, not just as a methodology of comparing school leadership experiences at the international level, but as a depository of school leadership knowledge to overcome 'fragmented discourses' (Eacott & Evers, 2015, p.307) of ontologies, epistemologies leading to various (legitimate) lens or models of leadership. While the partiality of models of leadership have led some to argue for contingent leadership (Bush, 2011), the focus here is on discussing the *comparative knowledge domain* as a viable alternative to school leadership in 'urban' settings. I do that by way of exploring some pre-existing research with the same philosophical approach in order to clearly define the kind of theoretical framework called 'comparative knowledge domain' is being introduced here and ultimately pave the way for this empirical research project.

When conceptualising comparative and international research in education, Crossley and Watson (2003, p.117) advocate for 'a multidimensional process (between, for example, theoretical and applied arenas, policy and practice, micro and macro levels of analysis ...studies of the North and South), and genuine dialogue where all involved learn from the experience, practice and literatures of each other'. But is that possible in a world with not only clashing value systems but also based on contrasting ontological as well as epistemological dilemmas? (Moore, 2004). While the seminal work of Burrell and Morgan (1979) sought to highlight a shift from the sociology of order (functionalism and interpretivism) to that of change (radical humanist and radical structuralism), it did not resolve the objective versus subjective, structure versus agency dichotomy that could be used here to justify a comparative study across opposing binaries. To look at it in a different way, Burrell and Morgan's conceptualisation envisages that the micro and macro binaries, for example, would evolve from the sociology of order to that of change but within their respective organisational ontologies, contexts, etc. This ontological incommensurability has to be overcome in order to conceptualise a multi-perspective approach within a comparative knowledge domain.

Crossley and Watson's comment is a reminder that comparative research in education, in general, has a conceptual grounding similar to the one being pointed out in this section of the review. However, the comparative school leadership

literature, with its ontological uniqueness, among other things, is yet to be articulated and having been left out of Ribbins and Gunter's 2002 review makes it even more compelling. It could be argued from the above authors' point of view that the five (or eight) knowledge domains they propose should not be looked at in isolation but should be seen as complementary. But such interdependence can be achieved without undertaking a mental journey that can result in practical issues around theory, policy, and practice/policy borrowing (Crossley & Watson, 2003). The comparative knowledge domain, I would argue, provides an eclectic arena for exchange and mutual learning.

Although theory development has kept a pace with increasing interest in school leadership in the last two or three decades (Bush & Glover, 2014), the theoretical basis of its comparative branch is still lagging behind. Without discounting the multiple published and ongoing comparative researches, some pioneering literature based attempts to theorise on multicultural comparative school leadership (Collard, 2007; Dimmock & Walker, 2000) are yet to be enriched by theories built from empirical studies.

At the centre of comparative knowledge domain then is, arguably, the recognition of the cross-cultural dimension of leadership that 'honours localised thinking yet moves beyond it to see multiple possibilities, multiple influences and multiple perspectives' (Sackey & Mitchel, 2002, p.909). This post-modern way of thinking comes to enrich the comparative knowledge domain without its exclusively subjective ideology that, according to Bush (2011), does not recognise the interconnectedness of human experiences and the viability of organisations as such. Instead, drawing on Adler (1997), Lumby and Heystek (2011, p.7) aptly justify the use of comparative study stating that the:

'intention is to recognize both the differences and interconnectedness of the world and to challenge acculturated limitations, that is, an inability to see things differently and afresh due to the defining ways of seeing brought about by a lifetime of immersion in one culture'.

The national and urban contexts for this research and the contexts within which the studies used for this literature review are based are replete with binaries: wealth versus poverty, functional versus dysfunctional, local versus the global, decolonising versus non-decolonising, one-man heroic leadership styles versus communal approaches etc. Those studies that attempted to bridge the gap and overcome the

binaries, in the case of transformative leadership and system leadership for urban areas, as discussed earlier, fail either to articulate a coherent conceptual leadership philosophy or recognise the multidirectional traffic of leadership knowledge. They tend to champion singular agendas and in the process perpetuate stark contrasts in rather complex and diverse (urban) world/settings in need of collaboration.

### **3.9 Examples of studies/literatures with a comparative knowledge domain agenda: a critique**

There is a growing body of literature around comparative school leadership approaches, some of which will be discussed shortly. That such studies are being carried out, is testament to its acceptability in a world of tension fuelled by various contrasting values, cultures and beliefs. Although outside the scope of this research, a review of (either national or international) comparative school leadership literature is long overdue; perhaps along the same lines as Ribbins and Gunter's (2002) approach looking at the purpose, focus, context, method, audience, communication and impact of such studies. Here, I am guided by an initial interest to impact on school leadership practice of my chosen contexts and will limit the review to the most current literature, as well as those who have a direct link to those contexts.

A literature search of similar comparative studies of (primary) head teachers in the DRC (Kinshasa) and England returned zero entry which makes this study even more relevant. Within a wider African context, the closest among many other possible literatures, is Lumby and Heystek's (2011) study entitled *Leadership Identity in Ethnically Diverse Schools in South Africa and England*. The authors use interviews to understand leadership identities. What they mean by that is how leaders' attitudes have shifted or not in relation to sudden changes in student and staff ethnic demographics following for instance the inflows of Eastern European in the case of the primary school in England and the arrival of black and Asian population in the above authors' unnamed urban school in a post-apartheid South Africa. The authors argue that 'a profound compulsion to remain dominant or to compromise with the dominant is decipherable in strategies of re- or de-categorisation' (Ibid 17) and recommend that the training of school leaders engages with the issue of diversity more practically than theoretically.

While the above claim is relevant to leadership practices of head teachers explored here; not only is the above study set in a context outside the DRC, but the agenda of the researchers only reflects deeply unique (and lingering) racial divisions



and inequalities in post-Apartheid south Africa. While those are vital issues to consider, the agenda here is much broader in that this does not only seek to understand the nature of challenges that school leaders face in different contexts (Sheffield/Doncaster and Kinshasa), it also wants to grasp how different leaders attempt to resolve them and ultimately frame as well as interrogate the similarities and differences in leaders' understanding of good leadership. As shall be discussed in chapter 5.4, the data from this study has also prompted further exploration of ontological scope and leadership values.

One piece of literature with a similar comparative agenda is that of Day et al. (2011) who, drawing from Leithwood et al. (2010), report the consensus in most literatures on the generic leadership practices of successful leaders in most contexts: setting direction; capacity building; refining and aligning organisation; and improving teaching and learning.

The first set of practices involves the setting of direction, which includes articulating a vision, fostering its acceptance and expecting high performance in its achievement. While having a vision is important, not all visions are productive. Fullan (1992b) discusses the damaging impact of certain visions and uses evidence from case studies of other researchers to point to the fact that visions can sometimes emerge. Instead of having managers who orthodoxically follow externally imposed visions, Fullan's assertion reinforces the need to understand whether the DRC and/or English primary head teachers' approaches to school leadership, which, like life itself, arguably take place in 'a never ending dialectic between seeming constraints and imaginable possibilities' (Bruner, 2012, p.6), is that which would defy, subvert, ignore, ridicule, wait and see, or embrace official policy (Bottery, 1998; Bush, 2011, p.8); and ensure that visionary rhetoric corresponds with the prosaic reality (Hoyle & Wallace, 2005).

The second set of practices requires leaders to build capacity. Here the leaders' ability to identify school needs and deploy the necessary supporting resources is essential. Day et al. (2011) include intellectual stimulation and modelling as compelling sets of behaviours for this core practice. This could mean followers challenging the status quo and (together with) the leader setting a new agenda that advances the local school's interests. This is easier said than done; especially in a setting such as the DRC, as already discussed in the context chapter, where

managerial style of leadership is prevalent. Do English and DRC head teachers perceive their roles in this way and, if so, what are the implications for the way in which they might go about their work? It is, therefore, important that the views of those whose leadership is expected to turn things around in English and DRC schools are part of the knowledge base.

Beyond building capacity, refining and aligning the organisation as a third set of core practices focuses on fostering culture, putting in place a structure and looking further afield to keep the running of the school in line with and responsive to current and future changes and concerns of parents. This, however, is only possible if, for example, it is part of the leadership culture for school leaders to foster new cultures of teaching and learning, which constitute the fourth core leadership practice.

However pertinent these empirical studies are, they do not make reference to leadership practices in the DRC. Another general critique of the above body of knowledge about school leadership, borne out of some form of comparative approach, is also that it can become a panacea. That would not matter if one is sceptical to the idea of globalisation. If you are a hyperglobalist, who sees the only reality as that which crosses nation-state boundaries as an objectified body of leadership practice, then policy borrowing is such a practice that has no regard for local situations. Like Giddens, as a transformationalist, I see the above activities being elevated to some form of trans-situational knowledge, as providing an opportunity to 'engage more effectively with powerful non-territorial *bodies of knowledge* [my italics]' (Crossley & Watson, 2003, p.55). In this approach, the aim is not only to decree what school leaders do similarly or differently to these core actions (Day et al., 2011) but also highlight what is involved in the process leading to the display of good leadership actions. Besides, particular types of knowledge cannot be defended by elevating an impervious one-sided approach, which is not only half the truth in a global world, but effectively becomes colonising. That is not to say that I am going to be dismissive of such widely recognised studies. When discussing the findings from this study (see chapter 5), a considerable effort will be made to see how the practices of head teachers in this study link (or not) to the above practices.

Like Day et al. (2011), Day and Gurr's (2014) *Leading Schools Successfully: Stories from the Field* could be considered as one other literature feeding into the comparative leadership knowledge domain that decolonises by bringing different school leadership examples from various parts of the world within one arena. One major concern with this literature is that it presents leadership stories alongside each other in beautifully peaceful narratives. Two stories in particular suffice to illustrate this point. Ora (Yaakov & Tubin, 2014) and Chamuada (Wasonga, 2014) are two successful head teachers working in Israel and Kenya respectively. The authors narrate their trajectories and draw lessons in the way that they, sometimes with the help of their communities and colleagues, overcame local challenges to lead their schools to success. One point, for example, that blends nicely with the stories but is not interrogated in the overall thrust of comparative leadership knowledge is the ages of these leaders.

In the case of Ora, she took up headship in her mid-40s after 18 long years in the profession, while Chamuada started making a real change at the age of 28. The learning from each other's experience and literature (Crossley & Watson, 2003) imply that the above stories needed to be interrogated further in order to, for example, reflect on other (hidden) factors that would make one scenario possible here and not there, today but not yesterday. Schweisfurth (2001, p.221) describes it as a challenge where one attempts to 'appreciate the unique and intrinsic value of each specific case, while at the same time using them comparatively to give them wider significance'. Gur and Day (2014, p.2) characterise the whole book within which the stories of Ora and Chamuada are based as 'a celebration of the work of principals throughout the world', which, for a literature that supports the work of The International Successful School Principalship Project (ISSPP), only goes as far as celebrating the unique values of specific cases but not far enough to reflect on their comparative wider significance (Schweisfurth, 2001) in increasingly multicultural urban contexts full of inequalities. Drawing from Kincheloe and Steinberg (1997), Zembylas and Lasonos (2010) would call this 'pluralistic multiculturalism', where diversity is celebrated but social trends of inequality are hardly interrogated.

Leithwood et al. (1994) align with this study's contextual assessment to construct a similar outlook on social trends within which schools of the future are set. The non-exhaustive list of the trends is the move from agricultural and industrial to

information economies, which creates the need for a skilled workforce; the need for lifelong education for an aging population; cultural, religious and ethnic diversity; the need to respect the rights of individuals regardless of their status; and the role of families/communities in the overall education of their children. The authors see leadership as problem solving in an environment that is increasingly more complex, hence the need to '*Develop Expert Leadership for Future Schools*', as the title of their publication shows.

As the authors go on to explore the nature of expert leadership and how to develop it, they do so focusing mainly on what a leader of a given school can do in his/her environment. That is not to say that they do not pay attention to the diversity of the social context. However, they do so insofar as it affects the school leaders in their singular environment. As in some of the literature already reviewed, while this model is effective here, there is the need to compare it with what other heads are doing over there instead of simply transferring the practice here over there. That would amount to instrumental knowledge (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002), which, in a diverse setting, becomes conservative multiculturalism (Zembylas & Lasonos, 2010). Similar to the sentimental approach to leadership and management in Africa (see chapter section 3.5.3.2) is the liberal multiculturalism, which takes away all the differences and assumes an assimilationist approach blind to colour and inequality. This study can then be placed within Zembylas and Lasonos' (2010) critical multiculturalism approach, in which school leadership is, as demonstrated in the context chapter, happening within the context of globalising diversity, inequalities and constraints that need to be challenged through a particular approach to school leadership. The demonstration, in chapter 5, of the complex process of achieving change through a comparative approach shows that comparative knowledge domain that is critical is not idealistic and abstract (Dimmock and Walker, 2005).

In their recently edited book *Leadership for Increasingly Diverse Schools*, Scanlan and Theoharis (2015) recognise multiple dimensions of diversity within schools and the marginalisation of certain groups therein. To empower head teachers in such contexts, the approach of the whole publication is to look individually at the history, legislation, literature, challenges and case studies of individual cases (such as race, gender etc.) and provide some practical tips on how to improve practice. While this is useful, the US-based literature does not provide us

with an overall theoretical and practice-based framework within which to conceptualise and lead diverse school institutions within globalised and yet unique contexts. The possible internationalisation of this literature on, for example, the inclusion of people with diverse gender identities in schools, ought not to be imposed but needs to evolve within a cross-context conceptualisation of how school leaders grapple with these issues. As already indicated in chapter 1.1, this is one of the unique contributions of this study.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

Bearing in mind the research questions (see section 1.1), the context chapter 2 has helped to highlight literature-backed challenges faced by head teachers in the DRC and England. This chapter, in particular, has explored leadership concepts, models and knowledge domains that can help to make sense of the leadership pathways and actions to the challenges that the participants of this study (see section 5.2) face in their respective settings. For example, the link between culture and leadership and how the latter is driven by context while management underlines a repertoire regardless of the context put forward useful nuances that can inform how the trajectory to headship is framed. The extensive discussion on context specific (African, Western, Urban) partial leadership models and the proposed comparative knowledge domain as a viable theoretical model to school leadership ground further analysis on how gathered data fits into/outside of, extend, modify, adapt and reinvent conceptualisation and practice of school leadership.

With regard to the overall structure, this chapter has sought to define leadership in relation to or as opposed to other related concepts, tracing its origin as well as reiterating its centrality in the success of schools. While highlighting the pertinence of various prominent models of school leadership and reconceptualising them in terms of knowledge provinces that a head teacher relies on to work effectively, the various approaches discussed have presented some degree of weakness; the types of weaknesses that would make it difficult to respond adequately to the complex nature of challenges faced by urban primary head teachers in the DRC and England, or elsewhere for that matter.

There is an increasing body of comparative leadership research being carried out and yet little is known about school leadership practices of English primary head

teachers as compared to their DRC counterparts. Besides, with the internationalisation of school leadership, comparative or eclectic approaches are not only bound to happen, as illustrated by a sample of studies discussed (see section 3.9), but, as critiqued above, they do so with some degree of limitation and without a known consistent theoretical framework to adequately respond to unique urban challenges and realities. The methodological parameters are further defined in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4 Methodology:** concept, approach and tools for research

### **4.1 Introduction**

This chapter begins with an outline of the research questions, followed by the researcher's place/role or positionality. The research question and aims (or objectives) endow this project with a workable focus, although the narrative-based findings in the next chapter deliver more than the study initially set out to achieve. The role of the researcher or researcher's positionality discusses how the subjective trajectory of the researcher is reflected in the overall direction of the research project. What can sometimes come across as a bias to be overcome, the philosophical and social trajectories of the researcher are defended here as essential components of this research project, not to say all research projects.

The rest of the chapter can be best explained by borrowing the logic used by Briggs et al. (2012) when outlining the contents of their publication on *Research Methods in Educational Leadership and Management*. They structure their work in four parts: the concept of research, approaches to research, research tools, and lastly a section on analysis and presentation of data.

The section on comparative research methodology, whose ontological and epistemological stances are discussed prior to it, can be viewed as research as a 'concept'. The discussions on ontology and epistemology briefly review the traditional positions on those issues before opting for a position that views reality and school leadership knowledge as the result of the combination between the objective and subjective, the local and the non-local, and justifies comparative research as a concept.

The next section on 'narratives' is the approach to research or enquiry. Here, narratives are discussed in terms of their origins, use in research, nature, applicability in this study and limitations to be overcome.

There are many tools of inquiry within the narrative approach. In a separate section, I discuss the practical and methodological usefulness for choosing 'leadership conversations' as a research tool. The rest of the chapter shares thoughts about how I went about identifying participants, arranging the leadership

conversations. This includes resolving and framing ethical issues, collecting, presenting and analysing data.

## **4.2 Research question, aims/interests and objectives**

In as much as they enable the researcher to fill the knowledge gap(s) identified while reviewing the literature, the research question and aims are inspired by a simple goal to which, I believe, all models and knowledge domains of school leadership, as reviewed earlier, would adhere. It is the view here that school leaders are ‘charged with the learning of all – teachers as well as students and the larger community – the main task of leaders is to nurture and promote the development of talent and human resources (that is, capacities) in and across the school, in pursuit of maximising learning goals’ (Dimmock, 2012, p.191) for economic and human development purposes (Hatipler, 2014; Raffo, 2014). This can be contrasted with the purposes of education in the historical rise of formal education in the two countries (see chapter section 2.4.1). Given the limitations of existing models as summarised in chapter 3.10, it legitimises the desire to ground future possible approaches on further empirical studies, such as this one, which covers new contexts. The research is, therefore, framed as follows:

What could comparing urban DRC and English primary head teachers’ experiences offer in terms of deepening our understanding and practice of school leadership?

The specific interests within the broader question above can be summarised by the following sub questions:

- How are journeys/pathways to school leadership described?
- What are the leadership challenges that DRC/England head teachers face as they go about their work?
- How do they go about responding to those challenges?
- What do DRC/England urban primary school heads believe defines a good school leader?

The research objectives, therefore, are:

- To learn about the different journeys/pathways to school leadership,
- To identify the challenges of school leadership faced by certain urban head teachers in the DRC and England,



- To gain an understanding of the research participants' approaches to overcoming their challenges, as well as their overall perceptions of what constitutes good school leadership, and
- To compare the different challenges and approaches to leadership in DRC and England and begin reflecting on what it might take to develop comparative school leadership knowledge and practice.

### **4.3 Researcher's positionality and bias**

This section justifies my positionality with regard to this research and at the same time relays what that means in terms of the researcher's bias. I will, however, broaden the discussion in order to stimulate a wider debate. I arrived at comparative research from both philosophical and social/sociological trajectories, which have somehow moulded my positionality.

To compare, as understood in comparative research, means 'to examine two or more entities by putting them side by side and looking for similarities and differences between or among them...' (Postlethwaite, 1988, xvii cited in Crosley & Watson 2003, pp.18-19). The success of comparative research is therefore built on the juxtaposition of more than one object of study put side by side. In essence, comparative research stems from our very existence as human beings. As a student of philosophy, I have wrestled with the question of whether human beings are a single entity or an amalgamation of two or more entities. There are those who think of themselves as physicalists, meaning a person is made up of the body only; there are those who are dualists, meaning humans are a composite of body and mind; and the trichotomists who see themselves as comprising of body, mind and soul/spirit (Murphy, 2013). While conflicting views on the subject will endure, I, like many others, buy into the idea that humans can only be understood when two or more entities are put together and are, therefore, inherently comparative.

Socially, I, and perhaps many others in an increasingly transformationalist global age (see chapter section 3.9 for further clarity on hyperglobalism and transformationalism views on globalisation), have had a cross-context trajectory. I left the DRC in my late teens and spent three years in Uganda and more than a decade now in England. I finished my three year stay in Uganda without some people realising that I was a Congolese. Those few mistook me for a Cameroonian.

In England, I am often referred to as either from the North or South of England, France or Africa. There are many factors that could have led to those assumptions: the colour of skin, my French name Jean Pierre, or my English, which blends the Southern, Northern, and African/French accents.

My ability to bring different aspects together is the result of my travels. That would have been the only way, coming from a no television, no telephone, and no newspaper village in the North-West of the DRC. Nowadays, people can lay claim to being a cross-context person without moving out of their living rooms or countries, as the latest technological advances bring food, accent, etc., distinctions a touch away from their fingertips. The sociological reality of two or more cultures, accents and, in this case, educational leadership experiences side by side is inherent in the global world we live in, whether one travels away from home, as in my case, or not. There is, therefore, no way around the enterprise of bringing things together or 'comparison which is fundamental to the sociological project' (Smaje, 1997, p.309).

The scholar who encapsulates my experience of blending different aspects of life is Antony Giddens in his structuration theory. Social reality, according to Giddens (1979), is the result of an intersection between subjects and society, structure and agency. Giddens' scholarly influence on my thinking and, as shall be discussed next, the ontological foundations of this research, does not diminish the validity of elements of interdependencies evidenced in the literature-based context chapter and data-based discussion chapter.

Although I have rooted the comparative approach to the philosophical nature of my human existence and sociological life trajectory, it is perhaps still unclear where interest in school leadership between the DRC and England comes from. I have been a teacher with an urge to get up the school structural hierarchy for more than a decade. This is an obvious explanation for my interest in researching about schools and school leadership. The DRC and English contextual elements, as well as school leadership, are certainly based on the fact that I was born and raised in the former and now both live and work as a teacher in the latter.

That I am an ideal person to negotiate the insider/outsider roles both in the DRC and England, given my affiliation with both settings, is inconclusive. As Merriam et al. (2010) demonstrated, both roles (insider and outsider) can be advantageous in

extracting valuable data and therefore any skilled and adaptable researcher can do it, as long as one's view of reality (ontology), knowledge (epistemology), methodology, ethics, among others, are coherently defined and operationalised.

#### **4.4 Ontology: a brief discussion**

Hatch and Cunliffe (2013, p.11) argue that 'ontology is important to organization theory because different perspectives holding different ontological assumptions bring different phenomena of interest (aspects of life) into focus'. Their further elaboration on the ontological approaches to organisations is summed up as follows: 'belief in an unshakable reality existing outside human influence' is objective ontology, while subjective ontology focuses on reality as it 'is revealed in private thoughts, feelings emerging from interactions in a particular context' (ibid 11).

When trying to picture the reality of school life, a binary between THE SCHOOL, having its life outside of humans, and A SCHOOL, which is inseparable with the very people that constitute it, usually emerges. The former is an objective ontology and the latter values subjective ontology. Subjective ontology places schools as organisations, in the changing being and actions of teachers, head teachers, pupils etc. of a particular setting, while objective ontology, in social sciences, would view schools as stable structures with set activities and routines that perhaps stem from generalised outside experiences of what schools should be about. An objective ontological outlook can be called positivism/empiricism, while the subjective one can be referred to as critical theory (Scott, 2012), both of which lean towards methods that generate quantitative (facts) and qualitative (values and meanings) data respectively. Burrell and Morgan (1979), as already referred to in the previous chapter, would use functionalism to refer to approaches to organisational study that stress the objective ontology, as opposed to interpretism for those that lean towards subjective ontology. This rather simplistic approach does not exclude other approaches such as critical realism (Bhaskar, 1989). However, none of them escape the objective and subjective dualism I wish to contrast with my ontological perspective for this study, which I believe is consistent with my positionality.

Having laid out the key concepts and approaches discussed in the literature review, it should become clear to the reader that those who hold head teachers as either managers or leaders will perceive of schools from two clear ontological standpoints, with managers taking care of the objective and stable affairs and the

leaders focusing on culture, language, local environment/context, feelings etc., of any given school. Stepping out of one's local context to consider what schools in other places, are or schools of the future, would seem too objective and subjective a business, depending on one's view of reality. As already stated in the context chapter and further reiterated in the literature review, what a DRC and English head teacher cannot do is focus on the local, here and now, and ignore the global situation, what might be going on out there or vice versa. A comparative leadership knowledge domain should be open to various perspectives.

The ontological stance adopted here would be an intersection of the objective and subjective, of structure and agency, of what is going on out there and what is happening here. This ontological approach is in keeping with Giddens's (1979) structuration theory in the Western world, which is arguably consistent with the operationalisation of the value of 'interdependence' of force-beings (structure and agency) within the African philosophy of Ubuntu (Elonga Mboyo, 2016b).

To explain this ontological position further, it is worth reflecting on how Foucault's (1995) study of modern prisons in the Western world led him to provide an extensive description of the panopticon architectural entities existing outside of individuals. To that extent, the reality of constant surveillance was external. However, prisoners within that environment interiorise that external reality and come to experience it in an internal way with the feeling of being permanently watched or not. In light of this, the ontological reality of prisons is not independently subjective or objective but rather an internalised exterior and/or an exteriorised interior. In the case of the school leadership experiences that I am researching, it would be a one-sided ontological enterprise if I focused the study entirely on the local of primary head teachers here (the local, the internal) without taking into account what is going on out there (the global, the external).

This illustrative example, using Michael Foucault's panopticon, can still be challenged on the grounds that I am comparing local and subjective experiences of four head teachers in two local places (although situated in two different countries) and that there is nothing global and objective about them. While that may seem a legitimate challenge at face value, it fails to recognise the perspective already discussed in the literature review that elevates certain local practices to objective

status and becomes the tried and tested instrumental knowledge domain that, some would argue, should be embraced by all. Although local, the settings as described in the context chapter, are diverse, multicultural and open to outside influence.

#### **4.5 Epistemology**

The centrality of epistemology in research is asserted by the approach taken to know, recognise, use and distinguish reality from non-realities (Morrison, 2012). This endeavour is complicated further by the different ontological approaches to what constitutes reality. These approaches to knowing are also culturally configured (Stephens, 2012) and yet 'dominant research epistemologies have developed methods of initiating and assessing research in Africa where researchers fail to acknowledge the cultural preferences and practices of African people' (Higgs, 2012, p.37). The consideration of African and Western cultural preferences extends beyond this discussion on epistemology.

There are some in the African continent who argue that Bantu epistemology is revelatory (Luyaluka, 2016). Although this study is primarily of a social nature, of the experiences of school leadership, I found no evidence to suggest that the above divine epistemological position was the basis of school leadership actions. Senghor is criticised for suggesting that Africans' approach to the world was through emotions and feeling, denying them of the capacity to reason (Udefi, 2014). Emotions and feelings as an epistemological approach to reality have always been regarded as lower in order, infantile and ascribed to Africans, compared to reason and the search for objectively scientific truths that is the vocation of the Western world (Lupton, 1998).

However, with the realisation of emotional intelligence (Goleman 1998; Goleman et al., 2013), that 'all knowledge is developed through the body' (Lupton 1998, p.36), rise in emotional leadership literature (Crawford, 2007; Mills & Niesche, 2014; Sachs & Blackmore, 2010), as well as humanism in school leadership (see chapter section 5.3.3), it has become essential that this research, or any other for that matter, remains culturally sensitive to phenomenologically embodied selves. Hence, when research draws from and represents the findings as sense-making of subjective (embodied) experiences, such an epistemological paradigm is a phenomenological form of interpretivism (Morrison, 2012). The narrative approach to

this research can be said to draw from phenomenological epistemology. The positivistic paradigm in social research collects data and/or represents them as objective realities. Although this is a qualitative piece of research that is based on leadership experiences, the pattern of some of those experiences fits into the realm of an objective ontology (see chapter sections 5.4.1 and 5.4.1.1). Marlene Morrison concludes the categorisation with critical theory and postmodernism epistemologies. For the latter, knowledge is localised within specific contexts, while the former puts an emphasis on value-based knowledge that seeks to emancipate. I do not adopt an exclusively postmodern epistemology in the sense that contexts (as described in chapter 2) are both local and non-local. My professed intention for conducting this research is to increase knowledge and improve practice. An extended discussion on the value basis of the researched head teachers (see chapter section 5.4.3) can be considered as evidence of a critical theory approach to knowledge.

Clearly, my epistemological approach is all embracing. Favouring one over the other could translate into undue bias, which could lead to concealment of certain perspectives and voices that could be out of sync with a chosen one-sided ontological view. That means proceeding with this research without making it either an exclusively objective or subjective ontological and (positivistic, phenomenological, critical theory and postmodern) epistemological enterprise. Does this mean employing various sets of tools to uncover various bodies of knowledge that could turn out to be facts and values? 'This does not necessarily lead to the conclusion that since data and therefore facts are inevitably informed by values of one type or another, there is no point in empirically examining the world' (Scott, 2012, p.108). Hence, the need for research to remain open, whatever the approach to enquiry, to data that produces varying accounts of school leadership knowledge as either based on objective, observable and measurable practice or co-constructed through a democratic process (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2014). I would argue that the need for an 'integrative coming together of worldviews...' (Stephens, 2012, p.50) regarding the nature of knowledge could be better articulated from viewing comparative research as a methodological concept.

#### **4.6 Comparative research as a methodological concept**

As a research concept, to compare is 'to examine two or more entities by putting them side by side and looking for similarities and differences between or

among them...’ (Postlethwaite, 1988, xvii as cited by Crosley & Watson 2003, pp. 18-19). The comparison that is carried out here is not dictated by the view of school leadership as a hyperglobalised entity, where certain knowledge and practices are said to have an objective existence across all contexts. Instead, comparative research as a methodological concept can be conceptualised from a transformationalist approach to globalisation, which seeks to bring multiple knowledges together to inform practice.

Some may be motivated by *‘what works’* and embrace a view of comparative research that produces objective instrumental knowledge, as framed by Ribbins and Gunter (2002). They tend to favour, though not exclusively, quantitative approaches designed to respond to explicit policy demand (Métais, 2001), to allegedly solve particular problems ranging from students’ achievement gaps, optimal class size, teacher salary, to staff motivation (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016) – forgetting or ignoring that globalisation is mediated by culture (Vulliamy, 2004) that needs to be captured even in its constantly changing forms (Collard, 2007). McGrath (2001, p.267) describes it as the ‘cult of efficiency (that) works against the painstaking analysis of systems, cultures and histories and in favour of quick, simple and implemental solutions. Too often, the comparative is little more than a legitimisation tool for domestically *or internationally* [my italics] devised policies’.

Since this study has not been commissioned by a particular institution to fix a particular institutionally identified problem, its relationship with policy design is indirect, which should not be taken as diminishing its value for policy design based on contextual framing (see chapter 2) and research findings (see chapter 5), for example. Métais (2001, p.200) citing Hallage et al. (1998, p.14), would argue that studies such as this one, develop knowledge, ‘raise unimagined and forbidden questions’ and could ‘underpin the practitioner - *school head, researcher, and consultant* [my italics] of the future’. Hence, the need to shift from the tyranny, and disregard for people’s ability to work out a way of applying knowledge derived from elsewhere to their local situations of *‘what works’*, to providing the sort of comparative school leadership knowledge that enables people to not only understand (Hammersley, 2002) in a value-free way but also work out *‘what is appropriate* at a given time and space’. By implication, and on top of trying ‘to understand both the uniquely individual aspects of the case (school leadership

experiences in this case), as well as their commonalities' (Lodico et al., 2010, p.158) with all the binaries, knowledge domains (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002), contextual dimensions and operating levels (Close, 2016) in mind, this study raises more questions than provides magical answers. It 'may show that you had a problem you never even thought about; it may critique your policy rather than tell you how to succeed with it...' (Smeymers & Smith, 2014, p.137).

If what seems indirect to policy research is not so after all, then the same can be said about an array of research approaches. In direct policy research projects, the aim from the start to finish is perhaps to use statistical data to establish causal relationships and that measurements, such as surveys, would produce generalisable and replicable outcomes (Morrison, 2012). Direct policy research, however, cannot account for personal experiences of school leadership reality that is essential to 'better theorise the policy *or leadership* [my italics] process' (Steiner-Khamsi, 2016, p.382). This study, therefore, is pertinent in that, although it starts off with a qualitative approach seeking to understand school leaders' meaning making of their work, it does so while remaining open to outcomes that point to the existence of other ways (objective) of experiencing school leadership. This is consistent with the experience of the world for many as a messy amalgamation rather than 'uncontaminated bundles' (Morrison, 2012, p.25) of epistemologies.

One implication of what Gorard and Taylor (2004) call 'a third methodological movement', in my view, should include openness to the prospect that the same methodological approach (narrative in this case) could lead to a comparison of data that points to different epistemological standpoints.

Below is a table indicating comparative research concepts that serves as the basis for the narrative approach to be discussed shortly. The first column brings to mind various singular school leadership knowledge projects as discussed in the literature review. The second and third columns identify corresponding methodologies within those singular projects. The fourth column is the position adopted in this research, which defends an approach comparing bodies of knowledge using one or more methodological approaches.



Ribbins and Gunter 2002 (see lit. review)	Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014	Grogan and Simmons, 2012	My argued domain (from context through lit review to methodology)
Conceptual knowledge	Conceptual research		Employing Ribbins and Gunter, 2002; Brundrett and Rhodes, 2014; and Grogan and Simmons, 2014 to produce another layer of knowledge domain: the comparative domain
Humanistic knowledge	Reflective action		
Evaluative knowledge	Evaluative research		
Instrumental knowledge	Instrumentalism		
Critical knowledge		Critical stance	
			Comparative research concept: open to amalgamation of ontologies, epistemologies, methods, analyses and research outcomes etc.: multiple perspectives

Figure 3 Laying the foundation for 'comparative research' as a concept

Having argued for comparative research as incorporating various perspectives, or binaries, whether contextual, cultural, ontological, epistemological or methodological, it can, therefore, not be attributed to any single knowledge domain or type of research (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2014; Grogan & Simmons, 2012; Ribbins & Gunter, 2002), or postpositivist, social construction, advocacy/participatory, and pragmatic philosophical worldviews (Creswell, 2009) drawn from a single case study. It could mean engaging in a multi-method approach, which involves 'data collection using two *or more* [my italics] methods from the same paradigm' (Hickman, 2015, p.42). This could also mean comparing survey data here against narrative data from elsewhere, or undertaking comparative research that combines survey (quantitative approach) and leadership conversations (qualitative approach), as is proposed here as a way of furthering this research agenda (see chapter section 6.4). Theoretically, however, it could raise questions about the validity of comparing research findings that are based on measurement tools that favour one perception of reality over another, although there is a body of research that uses 'mix-and-match' approaches to overcome a distinctive paradigm approach to research (Morrison, 2012).

Day et al. (2001) have used a multi-perspective approach to investigate school leadership that they, rightly, portray as a relational activity. The multi-perspective of their methodology consisted of collecting data from different stakeholders (constituencies), such as head teachers, teachers, students and parents, to build a 'wider picture' of school leader as an alternative to autobiographical studies focusing only on head teachers' views. A study can also be

described as using a multi-perspective approach given the mixture of analytical approaches it employs. Vandermause et al. (2014, p.674) demonstrated that by starting off with a postpositivist approach to abstract similarities and differences in texts they analysed, before moving to 'an interpretative phenomenological approach (IPA) to identify overlapping patterns in the texts in a search for ontological meaning'.

In this research, I use the same research approach (narrative approach) and research tool (leadership conversations). Its multi-perspective nature is closely linked to its comparative approach that seeks to combine the views of the same constituency of professionals from different contexts. There is also an analytical multi-perspective that combines thematic and IPA approaches to make sense of the data (further detail in section 4.6.6). This research also claims a multi-perspective on the basis of the study's outcome, which shows that the practice of school leadership can be conceived from a multi-paradigm perspective, reversing the paradigmic incommensurability professed by Burrell and Morgan (1979). The foregoing general attempt to delineate comparative research as a methodological concept and my actual approach within it may not (yet) be seen as a paradigm, if by paradigm one means 'shared beliefs within a community of researchers who share a consensus about which questions are most meaningful and which procedures are most appropriate for answering those questions' (Morgan, 2007, p.53). While some may use other terms to describe it, I see the distinctiveness of comparative research in its openness to pull together different cross-context knowledges through the use of either different constituency of participants, or methods within and across paradigms, analyses etc.

Before discussing the methodological research approach, it is perhaps worth pointing out some (practical) difficulties with comparative research that, in trying to overcome them, have had an impact on the process of gathering the narratives. Limited time and financial resources have undeniably impacted on the logistics of this self-funded (Coleman, 2012), cross-context research project. The choice of one's tools for research is, therefore, crucial in offsetting such challenges. The practical advantage of 'leadership conversations' in this regard is discussed in section 4.6.2 of this chapter.

#### **4.6.1 Narratives as a methodological research approach**

This section focuses on the nature and place of narratives in the respective continents to which England and the DRC belong. It shares the understanding of narratives adopted here before discussing how I attempted to overcome some pertinent criticisms of narrative enquiry. Using some sample data extracts from this study, the section ends by highlighting the comparative function of narratives.

Although postmodernism seems to have signalled a shift from meta or ‘grand narratives’ of humanity’s cultural and technological progress, otherwise known as life histories (Loytard, 1984), to ‘small-scale’ personal narratives (life stories and autobiographies), ‘it is true that narratives and stories are part of the common currency of the day’ (Goodson, 2013, p.10). This does not take away from the assumption that humanity started narrating and storytelling from time immemorial (Murray, 2008), with genres that ‘deeply affect the shape and course of human thought’ *and action* [my italics] (Bruner, 2012, p.10).

As a field of research inquiry into grand or small-scale narratives, a narrative approach to research is rather a recent enterprise (Clandinin et al., 2007). In the West, the explosion of interest in narrative, in the last two decades or so, can be traced back to the works of Freud, Levi-Straus etc. and the changing conceptions about language, text (Hyden, 2008). In Africa, its traditions have been long associated with storytelling (VanZanten, 2012). With a rich history in both continents, within which England and the DRC are situated, the narrative approach adopted for this study is arguably a suitable one.

That said, narrative research, in its simplistic form, can be viewed as a recital of facts (Allen, 2006). Beyond a supposedly disinterested transmission of factual accounts is the rational, emotional, subjective and intersubjective sense-making in which the person engages. On that basis, narrative research can be further regarded as concerned with accounting for and theorising on people’s perspectives on their personal and professional lives (Newby, 2010). Hence, the attitude to narratives here is that which sees in them the generation of stories that are ‘a portal through which a person enters the world and by which his (her) experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful’ (Caduri, 2013 citing Clandinin & Rosiek, 2007).

Crucial to the sense-making that narrative enquiry is reported to facilitate is the needed interaction between the researcher and informant (Floyd, 2012) and the giving of voice to the marginalised (Henry, 2007). The former was evident in this study, as interactions with participants have resulted in enduring relationships that have the potential to outlast the stages of analysing and reporting on their narratives. This is probably one of the consequences of trust, listening, among other ingredients, needed for successful operationalisation of narrative inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). As for the latter, 'giving of voice to the marginalised', the results were not as obvious as I had hoped, as shall be discussed in the 'identification of participants' and 'ethics' sections.

Kemmis (2010) has challenged educational researchers to carry out their investigations within praxis traditions, which, for Kemmis, will bring us closer to not only knowing but also changing '*what one is doing in the doing of it*'. While action research may be an ideal way for achieving this, it cannot be the only way. In so far as narrative research gives a practitioner a voice, this research meets the praxis mandate. And further analysis or reflexions, at a comparative level, are not arbitrary reconstructions but necessary engagement between different ways of being or doing leadership.

Concepts such as 'small-scale' narratives, 'personal perspectives and meaningfulness', and 'what one is doing in the doing of it' leave narrative inquiry open to the criticism that it is rather focused on 'the individual rather than on the social context' (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.153). It is not surprising that, in an effort to overcome such a limitation, some researchers would opt for a case study approach that would enable diverse respondents' data triangulation among others (Scott, 2007). While this might enhance the comparative research concept's mission to overcome the quantitative and qualitative divide and bring objectivity to subjective data, the bounded nature of case study approach (Bassey, 2012) makes it unsuitable for this rather life history/narrative approach. As several examples of narrative extracts show (See Chapter 5), participants in this study refer to experiences that happened prior to their working in their respective current schools which would be impossible to triangulate in the way of gathering accounts from other respondents within a given setting. Whether this self-reporting narrative approach produces accurate findings will be discussed in (4.6.7 and 6.1) where I make the

point about the undesirability of reliability criterion in some cases (Bush, 2012) and complementarity as a form of triangulation in narrative research (Floyd, 2012). To return to the need to capture the social context from individual stories, this narrative approach is inspired by Goodson's call (2013, p.5) 'to embrace stories of action within theories of context'. That, according to Goodson, would enable us to capture not only the holistic view but also, perhaps at a later stage, interrogate some constraining stories of action that simply 'fortify patterns of domination'. The idea of 'scope' as it appears in chapter section 5.4.1 onward, is an example where this study views stories of action within their social context leading to the production of some form of 'objective' mediated knowledge (Ponte, 2010).

In this narrative approach, Goodson envisages an attitude that takes almost 'a vow of silence' (Goodson, 2013, p.36) to allegedly extract the story as constructed by the storyteller. Goodson's view is that people would have their stories well-rehearsed, an assumption that cannot be generalised as the author warns in another chapter of his book. To overcome instances of lack of narrative capital, the interview schedule (see appendix 1.3) prompts to trigger narratives became necessary not only to generate extensive data but also to help me, as a researcher, to skilfully navigate the fine line between taking 'the vow of silence' and being a co-constructor of narratives, as shall be discussed in the 'leadership conversations' section.

Another way of responding to Kemmis' call for praxis traditions is also to say that the search for the exact practice and meaning of that practice is rather an impossible task. It is important to note that the narrative approach discourse here has moved from capturing a holistic view, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, to acknowledging the impossibility of extracting exact practice and meanings. This downside to the research, that I have chosen to be upfront about, is also apparent in the choice I have made to focus on narratives in their spoken words only. In the context of a conversation between the researcher and informant, those spoken words tend to be uttered in a rational and conscious state. Hence, they are said to have a multiplicity of functions, such as 'remember, argue, justify, persuade, engage, entertain, and even mislead an audience' (Riessman, 2008, p.8), all of which require a certain level of perfecting one's skills as a researcher that even conducting a pilot study prior to the actual research cannot fulfil. The danger then of reducing

narratives to the linguistic act is that, you miss out on other communicative media, such as facial expressions, gestures, postures, pauses and so on (Heslep, 2001).

Despite the failure to capture everything, I am consoled by a shared admission that such an exact record will remain elusive even to practitioners and, as Bold (2012) argues, we have to look at the stories as tentative representations. Such representations, according to Lewis (2011), are powerful enough to shape identity, self and practice without necessarily being the sole author of life experiences that depend on many other factors (Murray, 2008).

This is almost saying that we can study the habitus of school leadership practice without pretending to capture experiences 'in the very movement of their accomplishment' (Bourdieu 1977, p.3). It does not mean doubting the authenticity of informants' stories but perhaps ensuring that the conditions are right to engage with participants in their authorship of their identities, practice and give some epistemological credence to the study's findings (Caduri, 2013).

Beside the above functions of narratives, what has also received less emphasis is the reality that narrators use their narratives for comparative purposes (see appendix 1.6). Narratives cannot be thought of outside comparison, which, as already defended when discussing the researcher's positionality, is fundamental to the sociological project (Smaje, 1997).

Rather than viewing the statements referred to in appendix 1.6 as an attempt by participants to generalise their 'individually experienced world', it must be recognised that the (professional) world on which their narratives are based is a shared and relational one. Commenting on the nature of research in Africa, in particular, Higgs (2012, p.44) advises researchers to take account of 'the double role of individuals in African societies' to highlight their critical perspectives on educational practices.

#### **4.6.2 'Leadership conversations' as a research tool**

The ways of collecting narratives are perhaps as diverse as the means used to preserve them. Many scholars (Bold, 2012; Marshall & Rossman, 2011) argue that narrative data can be collected using drawings, photographs, journal records, letters, e-mail messages, spoken words, recordings of body language among others as other possible ways people tell their stories. In Africa too, there is evidence that

spoken words are being represented in picture books, graphic novels and YouTube etc. as a way of preserving culture (Yenika-Agbaw, 2011) and challenging it (Sheik, 2015). However, since the researcher and participant interactions are part of this narrative approach, questioning was an essential aspect of the conversation. The issue that needs clarifying then is why frame the research tool for this study as 'leadership conversations' instead of interviews?

One thing to remember is that 'few believe there can be a one-size-fits-all approach to interviewing' (Ribbins, 2006, p.214). Although interviews, like conversations, imply inter-subjectivity usually between the interviewees and interviewers (Cohen et al., 2007, p.349), interviews can turn into unequal 'question and answer' sessions where the interviewee is the giver and the interviewer is the taker. Riessman (2008, p.24) argues that 'when the research interview is viewed as a conversation – a discourse between speakers – the rules of everyday conversation will apply: turn-taking, relevance, and entrance and exit talk'. Behind Riessman's above comment, which was the aspiration of this study, is the understanding that a conversation is an 'ideal dialogue' where mutual understanding between free and equal partners can be achieved (Gadamer, 1975; Habermas, 1984). This view needs to be put into perspective, considering the claim that 'power exists both in casual conversation and institutional dialogue', covertly or overtly embedded in the very act of asking questions (Wang, 2006, p.535), which is a feature of 'leadership conversations' too. Even if power was not knowingly exercised by the researcher over the researched, the fact that 'the way in which we create and tell stories are culturally based' (Short, 2012, p.11), means that there could be the possibility that 'rules of everyday conversation' would bring the researcher to abide by certain culturally assumed norms of a particular setting (Clark, 2013; Hofstede, 1991) and potentially compromise the validity of the narratives.

While there were no obvious signs that Hofstede's or other cultural typologies governed the conversational narratives from this study and despite the impossibility of producing 'ideal dialogue', a clear effort had to be made to ensure that the conversations were intended (at the start), felt (throughout) and reviewed (at the end) as opportunities for privately mutual, non-antagonistic conversation, and 'truths' about the topic of the conversations: experiences of school leadership. This is unpacked in the next few paragraphs.

At the start of each conversation, a clear statement from the researcher was made to invite the participants to the aspirational 'ideal dialogue'. I said:

'I am here to learn from you. You are the expert in your own practice and only you can explain what you do, how, when and why you do this and/or that'. (See appendix 1.3)

The above starting line was particularly crucial in the case of the DRC participants. It draws from pragmatics research, built on the premise that social interactions affect communicative interactions. According to Oatey (1993), researchers should, therefore, assess and minimise power relations that could have a negative effect on the communicative interaction. Wary of the potential impact a UK-based doctoral researcher could have on the DRC head teachers, a genuine rather than staged recognition of local expertise had to be professed.

The researcher's genuine intent can only bear fruit if it is spontaneously reaffirmed by the participants. This was felt throughout the conversations by increased participant ownership of the conversations, evidenced by phrases like 'today, I want to talk about'. The turn-taking happened while preserving one's line of thought: 'let me finish this and you can ask what you want', 'I will leave this for another day because I'm sure we will get to speak about this'. At the end of each conversation, the participants were given an opportunity to say anything (of their choice) they wished to say that had not been covered.

The aspirational principle of 'ideal dialogue' did not only govern the chronological flow (start, throughout and end) of the conversations but also needed to be reflected in the content of the narratives, or at least in how this was perceived. Here, some of the features of 'everyday conversation' were also evident: mutual privacy, non-antagonism and 'truths'. The privacy element, even for the two DRC conversations that took place in a public place, was guaranteed when the participants said '*we can always suspend our conversations if people arrive*'. A tacit mutual agreement was, therefore, made for third parties not to eavesdrop on 'our' conversation.

Privacy should not be confused with secrecy. The participants were not made to feel as though they/we were conspiring against anyone, which would make it a secretive affair. On the contrary, they used their liberty to inform their colleagues about my visits and, in some cases, the colleagues (teachers) were invited to talk



about their work. This non-antagonistic approach, that can be summed up by a colloquial phrase '*we are just having a conversation*', enabled the flow of 'truths' about school leadership practice that came through a touch of frankness from the participants and the researcher's prompts. This was ensured by researchers asking and/or the participants feeling free to articulate what they actually do alongside what they should do. The theme of 'circumvention' that appears under the theme 'scope' in the next chapter, is one such example of participants' frankness, which, in this case, was followed by the researcher's 'interrogation' about the integrity of the act of circumventing (see chapter section 5.4.3.3). There was here an echo of everyday talk, people sometimes say '*let's have a conversation about this*' as if to suggest researcher and participants were going to have issues laid bare and clarified.

*Can there be a set format to conversations then?* If I can afford the safety of my work to fractionally contradict Riessman, it would be to say that, instead of prescribing how (leadership) conversations have to take place, from my experience I would rather recommend that researchers oscillate between control and flexibility, general statements and specific, temporal and non-temporal order, planned life history grids or emergent themes, whichever would be suitable at a particular time. This proves the point about the provisionality of a 'leadership conversations' schedule and the need to remain open to hybridity where those engaged in narrative conversations would move 'spontaneously and instructively and in a succession of ages and stages, between the descriptive and elaborative modes of narration' (Goodson, 2013, p.112). It is that flexibility and latency of conversations that are not only practically suitable for time-consuming and costly comparative research, but it also accompanies other stages of the research. In this case, it was the seeking of further clarification and elaboration, not only during the conversation sessions (see appendix 1.3) but also at the analysis and reporting stages. Hence, subsequent telephone conversations and email exchanges did not form a separate data set but were, instead, merged with original data sets in an effort to enrich and clarify certain aspects of the narratives.

#### **4.6.3 Identification of participants:** Convenience sampling

Floyd (2012) has highlighted the importance of the internet as a way of identifying potential participants in narrative research. However, since Internet is a service subject to the preponderance of the state of such infrastructure in different countries,

other options have to be considered. The research participants Bafote and Lokuli (for the DRC), Fiona and Donald (for England), whose profiles can be found at the start of the next chapter (see figure 5 in section 5.2), were identified through a combination of internet searches, personal, family and friends' contacts. Attempts to enlarge the sample size through snow ball sampling (Coleman, 2012) secured one participant in England and its limited success in the DRC constituted a significant ethical issue that is discussed further in section 4.6.5.

Hence, the overall strategy for identifying participants was mainly a convenience sampling for the accessibility, proximity of the two urban settings and the probability that, despite the challenges that will become evident hereafter, my knowledge of SCR and Kinshasa will work to my advantage in identifying participants. For its convenience and cost effectiveness, this has generally become a common sampling method despite the possible bias, population unrepresentativeness and, therefore, limiting the potential for generalisability (Muijs, 2012). I would contend that the convenience (the easily accessible) did not diminish the purposive element (participants had the preferred experience - see chapter 5.2) and the validity of the data (see section 4.6.7).

That said, my starting point for identifying potential participants in the DRC was talking to friends, relatives and contacts, who worked and still work in education, about my research project and the profile of school heads I was looking to interview. He or she had to be either a primary or secondary school head in Kinshasa with at least 5 years of experience in the headship and with some standing as successful in their role as heads.

Once they had that 'intelligence', they began to suggest some names. Before considering any name, I still had to ask them to explain why they thought this or that person was the right candidate for this research. Hearing their justifications was a useful echo of their internalisation of the profile of the people I was looking for. Five names were suggested and it was hoped that, through those, we would be able to reach even more heads who might be willing to take part. Out of the sampled prospective participants, I identified the two needed for this study while keeping options open with the other willing participants, just in case.

My high hopes had to be revised as the two I first contacted conditioned their participation, which they perceived as a form of expertise sharing, on clear financial recompense: the 'value-worth'. Others simply blamed their busy schedule for their inability to take part in the research. Given participants' reluctance, I became more and more convinced that this was never going to be the grassroots empowering revolution I had hoped for, where professionals, whose experiences and expertise are presumably hardly spoken of, are given a chance to voice their views and grab the opportunity to transform their profession. One can look at 'participants' identification' as either a technical process outside of research or an integral part that is fraught with ethical issues to be attended to. The 'value-worth trap' evoked here is further discussed to align the study with its ethical guiding principles. As for the process of identification of the two DRC heads, family relations proved useful in contacting the participants, who, after informal phone calls, unreservedly agreed to take part in the study.

There is a further implication here, with regard to 'voice' in narrative research; a discussion that appears here for procedural reasons but, in essence, adds to what could be said about narrative research and leadership conversations. While we have to qualify 'narrative voices' given to participants by stating their demographic parameters (age, ethnicity, profession, years of experience), in order to locate them within other studies, some attributes such as 'marginalised voices' (Hendry, 2007), to assume some form of participants' self-awareness of that reality and eagerness for emancipation and to make their voices heard, as I did, may be misleading. Instead of prejudging the social state in which potential participants may find themselves, the study's narrative approach contended with narratives' long tradition in humanities to 'elicit voice' (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.153). Linked to this discussion is the idea of 'voice of silence', to refer to the conspicuous nature of certain aspects of professional life that are not said (i.e. represented in speech). I elaborate on this when discussing and critiquing the extent of the value of 'inclusivity' (see chapter section 5.4.3.2).

In England, the process of participant identification was long. While many schools' phone numbers and e-mail contacts could be accessed through the Internet, many of my e-mails and phone calls were not returned. Some who had initially agreed went back on their promises. There may have been other factors that

contributed to the situation but the most cited reason was the high demands of work. Despite the workload, Donald, who I knew through my children’s education, agreed not only to take part but also to use his contacts to find me another participant (Fiona), whose rich narratives have contributed to claims being made here about the practice of headship in England.

All in all, both sets of heads met the profile of working in an urban setting and being experienced. The fact that they turned out to be catholic is incidental. However, their religious histories and organisational affiliation are a significant component that is discernible in their narratives although this is contextualised and theorised in sections 5.2 and 6.2

#### **4.6.4 Leadership conversations’ arrangements**

The conditions of extracting data through narrative enquiry can add to the epistemic validity of the findings (Caduri, 2013). Hence, all the participants for this research had the freedom to determine the location and timing of the conversation sessions that the researched had hoped to run three per participant lasting a maximum of 50 minutes to an hour. In reality, the length and frequency of the interactions only lasted the natural length of each leadership conversation as the following table shows:

Country	Participants	Location	Number	Length	Follow-up
DRC	Bafote	School office	2	95 and 40 minutes	3 Phone calls
	Lokuli	Private location	2	40 and 50 minutes	2 Phone calls
England	Fiona	School office	2	80 and 115 minutes	2 emails
	Donald	School (separate room)	2	50 and 75 minutes	2 emails

Figure 4 Length and frequency of conversations

In the DRC, for instance, one participant chose to talk about his experiences in his office during his working time. As a result, the interviews could be interrupted by work colleagues, superiors, and parents who needed the head for whatever reason. Sometimes, we had to continue with the conversations despite the noise of students playing during break times. Notwithstanding the potential for losing focus, the interruptions became a constitutive element of such conversations that required more attention. The fact that these interruptions were happening in a place of work struck observational sparks for our ongoing conversations.

The other participant promised to find a quiet place but we ended up taking a walk to the high street to find what we both thought was a suitable place. An empty bar in the early afternoon seemed like an appropriate time to get interviews done before bars are invaded by their regular users. Given the location, heat and that my interviewee had been working all morning, having the leadership conversation over a coffee and away from all the distractions and harshness of the environment seemed to put him at ease and be able to speak unreservedly.

For their part, the English heads preferred the quiet and uninterrupted office spaces after completing a days' work to share their experiences.

Both participants agreed and did not feel intimidated by the use of digital devices to record the conversations. I initially used the recordings to play back and link the previous conversation with the next. Themes and actual words that the participants may have used were echoed back to see if there was anything that both parties in the series of conversations could pick up on.

As already introduced in section 4.6.2, the introductory statement of the leadership conversation schedule (see appendix 1.3) was inspired by pragmatics research tradition that seeks to minimise possible power relations that might impede 'ideal dialogue'. It is important not to equate a research schedule with the research questions (see chapters 1.1 and 4.2) although the former should enable the achievement of the latter. That said, the research schedule had two main parts: the open and the episodic. The open question of 'how did it all start for you' or its variant was intended to draw out the life and professional story of the participant. Alongside its potential to uncover participants' pathways to leadership, I would like to invite the reader to look at the life history/narrative trigger-questions in the research schedule metaphorically as a net that is cast as wide as possible in a deep sea of narratives. The net catches everything (leaves, stones, fish etc.) that is an essential part of the river's furniture (the participants' personal and professional lives). Like a fisherman who picks the fish out of the rest of the catch, the researcher will select the (lengthy or brief narratives) that are needed to answer the research questions. When necessary during the flow of the storytelling, the researcher negotiated entry points to ask specific episodic questions (see appendix 1.3) had been prepared to meet the research aims and in the order primarily dictated by the aspect of leadership being

narrated by the participants. For example 1) 'was it always easy for you? How did you deal with it?' were used to generate discussions around leadership challenges; 2) 'What set you apart as a leader? or was it important to be good at your job? how? were deployed to gain a sense of what consisted good leadership.

#### **4.6.5 Ethics**

Ethical dilemmas are an intrinsic part of social research. Although some emerge in the course of conducting research, 'researchers need to be mindful of rules, laws and codes of conduct which determine how to behave whilst they are conducting their research' (Stutchbury & Fox, 2009, p.488). In its planning stages, this research project was approved by Sheffield Hallam University's (SHU) devolved faculty ethics committee. In the next blended discussion, I present key planned and emergent ethical issues relating to this research.

A possible addition to Riessman's (2008) list of functions of narrative, already discussed in the 'narrative research: an approach' section, is to say that people can also use stories to (inadvertently or intentionally) confess and confide. This is where 'the researcher must be...sensitive to disclosing more about the person than he is comfortable with (Marshall & Rossman, 2011, p.145). I ensure this, not only with my written promise to maintain anonymity and confidentiality (see appendices 1.1 and 1.2) but also with participants' cross-checking of transcripts.

I would argue, however, that when narratives are taken out of their local urban as well as national settings to be compared with others elsewhere, other ethical issues emerge. What might be ethically sound in one country may be the reverse in another. Schools, for example, are not immune to issues of sexual orientation or ways of disciplining children, which may vary from one place to another. Ensuring anonymity is the researcher's responsibility. However, avoiding harsh and premature judgement of others is an ethical responsibility of every reader. That said, it is a prerogative of everyone, felt more so by a comparative researcher, to ethically (meaning respectfully) join informants' narratives with the narrative of inquiry – meaning with some degree of probing (Connell & Clandinin, 1990 cited in Marshall & Rossman, 2011).

The biggest challenge, over and above the challenge of coming across as an insider and/or an outsider to extract equally valuable data (Merriam, 2010), was

overcoming what I would call the 'value-worth trap' in research. I will use a commercial analogy to illustrate the above point. At auctions, you can get an expert's valuation of an item (value) but what you get out of it may be different (worth), hence the expression 'this is not worth its value'. Now imagine telling an informant, especially in a 'poor' country like the DRC, that the value of a piece of research such as this is about: giving voice to the marginalised (Hendry, 2007); promoting local pride and practice; enlightening policy makers; and improving students' outcomes (human capacity). That is the value tag that I attached to this research at the time of conducting it and producing this report. Whether we get something of its worth in the way that different actors put into practice the comparative knowledge that this research produces and ensuring that it bears fruit worth its value is another matter. But meanwhile, do not forget that the informant gets no financial return out of it, as expected by those potential participants in Kinshasa who refused to take part, while I (the researcher) would be likely to get a doctoral degree out of it. This is what I call the 'value-worth trap', where the value is everything but worth nothing for the (economically deprived) participant. I lost a few potential participants who thought that the value of their data was everything but 'its worth' to them personally was nothing.

Educating people in the culture of research and researcher-researched shared authorship (De Angelis et al., 2007) are some of the options for overcoming such issues. There are varying degrees of participation (Riessman, 2008) and it has to be acknowledged that, at some point, especially in a comparative research, some stages such as transcription, translation and comparison are (inherently) out of reach for some members connected to the research. However, what the 'value-worth trap' also highlights is that, even for an arguably noble cause, such as the advancement of (local school leadership) practice, issues of social justice and others (see chapter section 5.5.1 for further discussion of the benefits of comparative research exercises), participants' financial trappings/expectations, in some settings, precede ethical considerations, even if they are governed by national institutions to protect the integrity of research. Without a clear and accessible ethical code from the DRC, this research was informed by British Educational Research Association guidelines (BERA) ensuring consent for the unpaid exercise is given, and privacy, anonymity,

right to withdraw and avoiding intentional detriment are guaranteed (Punch & Oancea, 2014).

With the above in mind, I simply moved on to the next potential participant who could see the bigger picture, as stated in the consent letter (see appendix 2a&b). What the consent letter also does is not only state but also get participants to agree to the basic ethical guidelines governing research.

#### **4.6.6 Data process: From collection to analysis**

*Collecting data:* The informants knew (see appendices 1.1 and 1.2) that the conversations were going to constitute the main form of data, above everything else, for example, as documents (school report) that were needed to extract factual details from the schools in which they worked. They all agreed to the use of a digital device to record their narratives. I occasionally took notes when I needed to trigger a particular narrative or episode within a narrative. The conversations did not start and end at absolutely set times. We may have started when we had agreed we would but had to stop and start and even go beyond the allocated time depending on various social and environmental demands. The formal and informal mix seemed to put informants at ease. However, the challenge, as a researcher, was to maintain a balance and a purposeful exchange that did not trivialise what might turn out to be valuable data or conversely overemphasise a particular conversation that, in the end, may have little significance. The three sessions and the opportunity to do further follow ups, even over the phone, were helpful to consider possible narratives to explain or clarify earlier points.

*Storing, translating, transcribing and presentation of data:* The recorded information was securely saved and stored onto a UBS stick, to which I was the only person who had access. Once I had the data safely stored, the next steps were to transcribe and translate, especially those conversations with the DRC heads in French. Translating the conversations from French to English is much more than a technical process. It could be argued that translating takes the 'raw' from data to replace it with 'processed' (Wengraf, 2001). That said, perhaps all research projects report from 'processed' data, as they seek to add correct grammar, punctuation etc. to be understood by particular audiences (Singal & Jeffery, 2008). Marshall and



Rossmann (2011, p.165) recommend 'reasonable approximation'; this process is described below.

Being bilingual helped in that the job of translating did not have to be outsourced to a third party. It was a case of personally listening to the voice narratives and typing them out in the way that they were delivered. Doing this, as a researcher instead of outsourcing it, enabled me to make some analytical notes that would not have been possible had this part been outsourced. I agree with Floyd (2012, p.229) that, even if someone else had taken on the transcribing and translating, they are still 'an essential part of the research process' that would benefit the research in going over the recordings, transcriptions and translations. I started off putting a segment of text into both Bing and Google translate and realised that the latter search engine gave the closest translation that needed minimal nuanced rephrasing by me to align the conversations with their original French versions. While this process was applied to the first data set with the first head teacher, the transcribing and translating of the conversations with the second head were done on the basis of relevance to the study and additional (specifically different kind of) information that was not expressed by the first head. Hence, the transcripts of the second head are shorter compared to those of the first and translations that I use in the final report are embedded in their original French transcripts. The DRC participants did not get to see the English version of their transcribed narratives, mainly because they did not understand the medium.

Not being able to cross-check an English version of the narratives, in the case of the DRC head teachers, raises both ethical and 'data processing' issues. Formulated as a question, one might ask: will this research pass the credibility test given the varying level of informants' participation? My brief response would be that the clarity of research process descriptions will help the reader judge for themselves, bearing in mind the fact that 'corroboration turns out to be complicated, even illusory' (Rossmann, 2008, p.197) in the case of transcription, let alone translations that my participants could not understand and were relying on the probability that, as a French speaker, I would produce a consistent translation. The reader, therefore, needs to know that your full confidence or trust in the processes of data collection through to findings can never be a certainty but rather a decision of probability or improbability (Sapienza et al., 2013) that you will arrive at, despite my promise and

demonstration of meeting humanly possible fundamental requirements for rigour and trustworthiness.

Although, the DRC head teachers did not see the translated transcripts, they, like their English counterparts, were able to cross-check the transcripts. Here, the issue of respect for meaning and how the participant wanted their worldviews to be represented played a part in the way that I responded to, at least, one concern raised. This concern can be compared to the 'cleaning up' issue that is associated with transcribing and translating (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). These authors recount incidents in their own research where they have been asked to remove misspellings, incorrect grammar etc. that were in the original narrative text. In this research, I had included jokes in the transcripts that one head wanted removed, stating in her email (see appendix 1.7) that:

Elements like the [name of place] quote was an 'off the cuff' remark - does not need to be mentioned (Fiona)

In essence, participants in narrative research, or other research approaches for that matter, are more concerned about how their narratives are represented in the final report rather than reading their own unthematized and unabstracted data without knowing the purpose for which it will be used. In a way, the audience determines the genre of the narratives that are sanctioned for reporting or vice versa. Linked to that could be unexplored ethical issue of the impact an 'off the cuff' remark could have on the speaker or those towards whom it is directed.

For the purpose of clarity, I have opted to present data extracts, as units of analysis, according to the abstracted subthemes within their overall themes. They are blended with further commentary based on the perspectives that the participants wanted to portray. These are, in turn, contrasted and critiqued in keeping with the comparative nature of the research.

*Analysis:* Analysis is crucial in that it transforms 'data into wisdom', which 'is not, in practice, something that can only be considered towards the end of the project' (Watling et al., 2012, pp.381-382). The analysis here started concomitantly with the 'leadership conversations' right through to the transcription and translation stages. For example, I listened to the audio version of each conversation before the next scheduled conversation session. I took some notes about possible themes that

have been covered, needed clarifying and those on which I might need the views of the participants. The transcription and translation stages not only enabled me to provisionally identify some themes and subthemes but also to link extracts that, while they may have been far apart in the transcribed verbatim, either clarified, repeated or contradicted other extracts appearing elsewhere.

However, as a separate activity, the analysis process does not focus on the structure of narratives. While structural analysis, which looks at the start, mid-point and ending of narratives to understand what might be going in them, is useful, the unstructured nature of the 'leadership conversations' does not only lend itself to such an analysis process but would have required further training for me as a researcher (Rejno et al., 2014; Riessman, 2008). Instead, it looks at the content of what was said, not to abstract on the regularity of certain words used but on the thematic meaning behind the extract stories narrated (Smith & Taffler, 2000) initially. How these extracts are viewed and used depends on one's approach. 'As a result of the general growth in the interest in narratives, there has also been a rise in interest in different conceptions of what counts as a story and how to analyse stories' (Hyden, 2008, p.50). Riesman's (2008) adapted table below provides a range of approaches to which I have attached my understanding of narratives, how they are represented here, the focus on units of analysis and the contexts being considered.

Author	Definition of narrative	Representation of narratives	Unit of analysis; focus	Attention to contexts
Williams (1984)	Extended account of a speaker	Lengthy interview excerpts	Narrator's understanding of genesis of...	Local: minimal; societal: considerable
Ewick & Silbey (2003)	Bounded segment of interview text	Brief interview excerpt	Acts of resistance in narratives	Local: minimal; societal: considerable
Tamboukou (2003)	Bounded segment of a document...	Segments of document	Subjective reflected meanings of narrators	Local: minimal; societal: considerable
Cain (1991)	Life story of speaker or writer about...	Documents, observations and tapes	Recurrence across narratives, and narrator	Local: minimal; societal: considerable
My approach <b>not to be confused with conversation analysis – CA</b> (Drew, 2008)	Conversations (mono or dialogical) planted within wider local & global contexts	Brief or lengthy extracts of co-constructed conversations	Themes from each narrative primarily; convergence and divergence across other case (s) in one setting and compared with another setting secondarily (IPA – Smith and Osborn, 2008)	The local and the societal/global are intertwined; delivering what I would call a <b>comparatively thematic analysis of narrative conversations and abstracting their wider significance.</b>

Figure 5 Approaches to narrative thematic analysis - adapted from Riesman (2008)

After transcribing and translating, I read the transcripts several times to familiarise myself with the overall stories of the participants. I then read with the intention to identify 'definitive' themes emerging from certain extracts. While identifying the themes, I made sure that I did not take certain sentences out of the overall context in which they were expressed. So, an extract would be a sentence out of a group of sentences narrated to convey a certain message (see appendix 1.5 as an example of this coding).

It also became clear, for the purpose of expanding on a point or human forgetfulness, that participants were going back and forth in the way they were telling their stories and, sometimes, inadvertently providing incomplete or inaccurate facts that seem to contradict an earlier or later version of the narratives. In those circumstances, part of the analysis was to reorganise the narratives so that the themes that emerged from the narratives fit into the context in which they were intended. The emergent themes were subsequently looked at in order to abstract much broader concepts to which the themes belonged. Like Floyd (2012, p.229), I found the analysis as a continuous process of 'merging and renaming some codes'. Given the need to keep 'the codes active and as close to the original statements as possible' (Floyd, 2012, p.229 citing Charmaz, 2006), I elected to complete my analysis on the original transcripts without any transitory template that I felt was going to take me away from new insights that I could get only if the data stayed in its original format (see appendix 1.5 as an example of this coding).

The above process was applied to each participant's narrative. Given the differences in narrative density of the participants, I decided to put the stories of the head teachers in the DRC together to build an overall and complementary perspective from a given setting, while highlighting certain differences between them (Kinshasa/DRC and Sheffield-Doncaster/England).

This stage of the process was shaped or informed by an intention to meet the research objectives. This may be supported by the fact that this was not a grounded theory approach (Creswell, 2005), which is, arguably, impossible to separate from one's motives for carrying out a particular research such as this one. Besides, I concur that:

'The overarching aim of the research project is to seek answers to the questions posed and the aims stated. However ...it is possible *as is in this case* [my italics] that new and unexpected concepts will emerge that will be relevant to...research...and taken into account in the overall analysis and interpretation of data' (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2014, p.150).

To grasp the unexpected concepts, I borrow from IPA to 'identify overlapping patterns in the texts in a search for ontological meaning' (Vandermause et al., 2014). The discussions in Chapter 5 part III are examples of that second layer of abstraction. It is not so much of a superstructure but rather emergent underlying ontological structures that give the narratives an overall trans-contextual existence. Hence, this multi-analysis perspective is more than technical because of the multi-ontological and epistemological paradigms it produces. While the thematic analysis (see Chapter 5, part II) gives context specific knowledge/epistemology about leadership pathways, challenges and actions, the IPA-based analysis (see Chapter 5, part III) produces what might be called mediated-knowledge/epistemology (Ponte, 2010). Mediated knowledge or learning comes when we use reflection or abstraction to come up with concepts that transcend immediate contexts, although they are derived from and explain those very contexts. Hence, the first level of analysis sticks to subjective reality out of which the latter produces a kind of objective trans-situational (more transferable than generalisable) reality.

With the language of 'emergent' themes that are not only interconnected but also offer some form of typology in school leadership actions and the ontological structure of the narratives coming within the backdrop of a literature review that offers a rather open 'comparative knowledge' theoretical framework, this thematic analysis/IPA multiple analytical process seems like a grounded theory approach (Dimmock & Lam, 2012). The open-ended research question 'What could comparing urban DRC and English primary head teachers' experiences offer in terms of deepening our understanding and practice of school leadership?' and the fact that data analysis has led to proposing a comparative leadership framework (see chapter section 5.5) can be used to strengthen the case for an overlap between this narrative research and the inductive approach of grounded theory (Charmaz, 2008). Smith et al. (2009, p.202) acknowledge some degree of overlap between grounded theory and IPA, particularly with regard to macro-level claims. They argue that, while grounded theory has the potential to generate macro-level claims on the basis of its

usually large sample of research participants, IPA, as is the case at the analysis stage here, relies on (individual) ‘complementary analyses which may enrich the development of more macro accounts’, although Dimmock and Lam (2012, p.190) see grounded theory emerging even in ‘the smallest group of teachers, students, school leaders and the interactions between them’.

Again, some might have a slight objection to my approach, given that “narrative scholars keep a story ‘intact’ by theorising from the case rather than from component themes (categories) across cases” (Riessman, 2008, p.53) as I do by borrowing from Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) with regard to convergence and divergence between cases as explained above (Smith et al., 2009). As I argued earlier, narrative research is a sociological project and, by its very nature, it is comparative and that has to be shown by comparing narratives.

#### **4.6.7 Research validity**

Although the methodological description and discussion in the whole section (4.6) have leaned towards demonstrating the viability of narrative (in place of case study, mixed methods, etc., on this occasion) research approach within a comparative methodological concept capable of producing knowledge that would enrich comparative knowledge domain in educational leadership, it is essential to illustrate its potential in delivering valid knowledge. Validity can be guaranteed both externally by ensuring research findings are generalisable and internally through the findings that are consistent with the phenomenon investigated (Bush, 2012). For the former (external validity), this research does not seek to establish generalisable knowledge although the mediated knowledge (Ponte, 2010) that emerges from it in the way of a theoretical framework may be of use in other contexts. With regard to the latter, internal validity is often linked to the notions of reliability and triangulation. Reliability is the notion that the findings will be consistent if the same research tools are replicated even with other participants. It is, therefore, difficult, if not impossible, to vouch for the reliability of a study that relies on data from unique respondents (Bush, 2012). As it will become clearer from reading Chapters 5 and 6 that the above measure of reliability is undesirable not only because of the uniqueness of participants’ experiences but also because the variety of responses are needed to complete an emerging theoretical framework.

With regard to triangulation, this approach does not offer traditional forms (data, investigator, theoretical and methodological) of triangulation (Scott, 2007). In narrative cases such as this one, Floyd (2012, p.230) recommends that 'any researcher planning to use the approach supplements, rather than triangulates, their data with other sources to provide context and texture'. Although Floyd might be referring to other sources 'within' the same site, I would like to extend that to cross-site complementarity that has the potential to create a narrative within narratives. I will return to this point in section 5.3.3. An indication of valid data has been the existence of the same narratives repeated over and over. Other strategies employed have been my deliberate effort to create consenting environment for 'ideal dialogues' to emerge, and follow-up phone calls (see section 4.6.3) to confirm a point, highlight an inconsistency. Another validating factor is that the analysis strategy used highlights points of convergence and divergence between participants' accounts that are immersed in their limited cultured assumptions (Lumby & Heystek 2011).

#### **4.7 Conclusion**

This chapter began with an account of the researcher's biographical and professional amalgamation of perspectives, arguably rooted within the wider multidimensional philosophical and sociological nature of human beings in an increasingly globalised society. Whether these factors are recognised by all or not, it is imperative to show sensitivity, as has been the case here, to the cross-context nature of this research as well as the diverse dimension of each setting and explore the diversity in ontology and epistemology.

Taking the different ontological and epistemological assumptions into account, the chapter proposes 'comparative research' as a methodological concept that can lead to various designs of research approaches and tools based on the preference of the researcher. In chapter section 6.3, for example, I make further research suggestions that are rooted in this chapter's concept of 'comparative research'. For this research project, however, the chapter discusses the practical and methodological advantages as well as the limitations of the chosen narrative research approach and leadership conversations as a research tool. Its methodological multi-perspective/comparative nature arises not only in the mixing of the thematic and IPA analysis strategies but also in the diverse ontological and epistemological knowledges the analysis produces.



## **CHAPTER 5 Research Findings and Discussion:** pathways, challenges, actions, scope, metaphor and values.

### **5.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents and discusses, in a comparative way, the findings of field study 'leadership conversations' that I engaged in with two DRC head teachers in 2014/2015 and two English head teachers in 2015/2016. The chapter is divided into four parts. Part one presents a visual mapping (summary - figure 5 below) of the participants' profiles and research findings. Despite the difficulty in gaining accurate data in Africa in general (Montjourides, 2013) and the DRC, in particular (AfriMAP, 2009), the participants' profiles (see figure 5 below) give details about participants' age, gender, ethnicity, faith and experience, alongside social, economic, budgetary, attendance etc. data about the school in question.

In keeping with the first stage of data analysis, part two is an extended thematic and comparative data-based discussion, which begins with the theme of 'pathways to leadership'. This section is sub-themed to build a personal picture of different journeys to leadership. The next theme in this section shares the main concerns that the participants faced when working as head teachers. While noting the disparity in the nature of leadership challenges evoked, this section goes further to contrast the findings with those from other studies, in order to develop a better understanding of the nature of the challenges and their implication on leadership practice. The third theme in this section deals with views about school leadership to capture what these heads did regularly but also pointedly to overcome the challenges they faced. What emerges as a common feature is their eclectic, termed here as comparative, approach to school leadership.

Part three of the chapter employs the second phase of data analysis by delving into the underpinning ontological spaces to which narratives on pathways to leadership, leadership challenges, and views about school leadership pointed. Data-based evidence points to the concept of 'scope', which is variably experienced in the DRC and England. In the face of comparatively objective (for the DRC) and subjective (for England) scopes, multi-layered responses are discussed with the aid of a metaphor that was used by one of the head teachers. These multi-layered responses, I argue, are consistent with the core values of risk taking, inclusivity, integrity and success-mindedness that shaped their leadership actions.

By way of summarising the whole chapter, part four engages in a cross-context discussion of the findings, which culminates in the proposal of a framework or model that can be used to conceptualise comparative school leadership. After highlighting the need for a cross-context framework, despite pertinent challenges, the section goes on to reflect on the convergence and divergence of the findings as they feed into the proposed comparative leadership model.

## Part I 'IN A NUTSHELL'

### 5.2 Participants' profiles and findings: a visual mapping

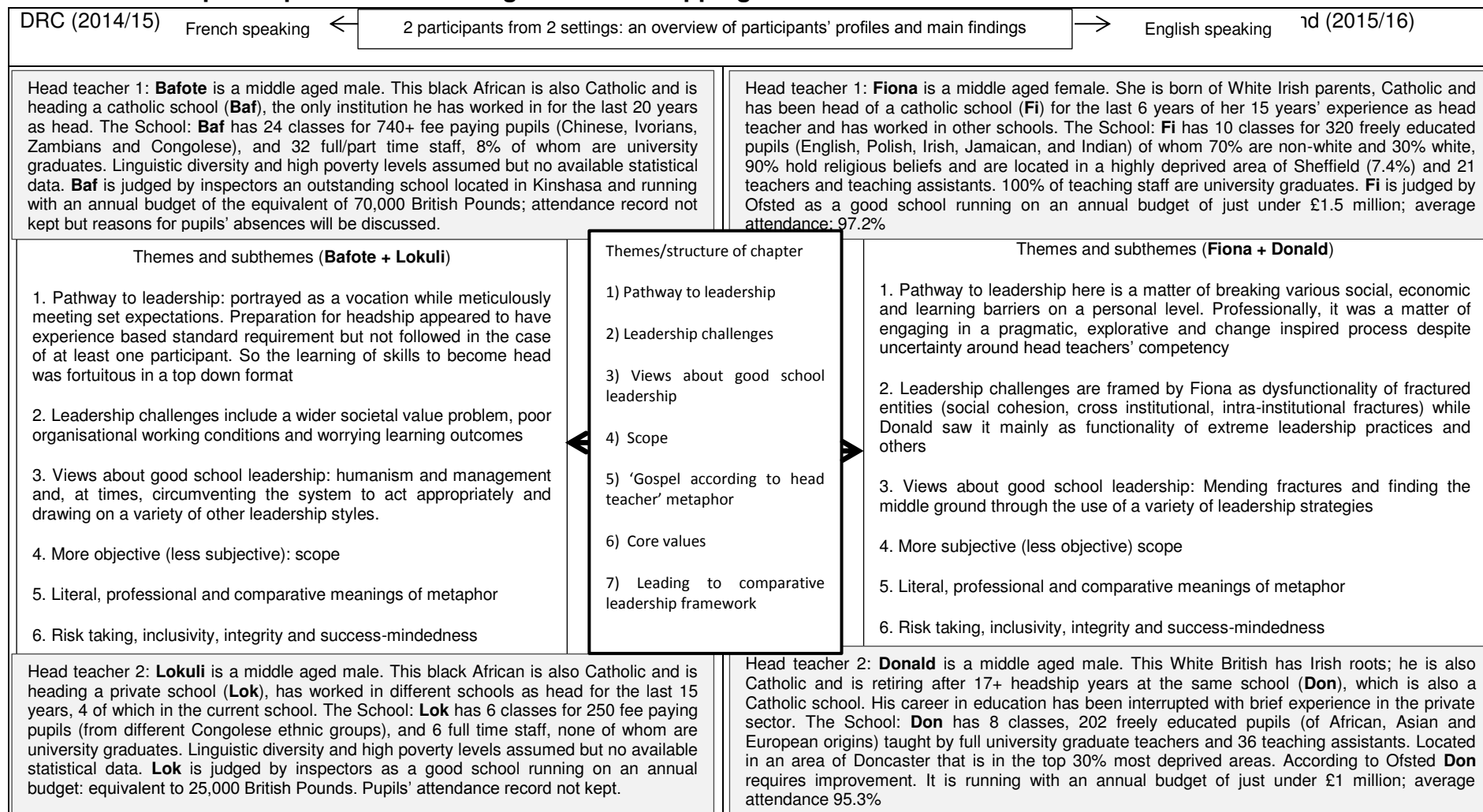


Figure 6 Participants and findings in a nutshell

*Brief summary about participants and their schools:* It is important to note that over and above my main participant selection criteria of 'urban' and 'experienced' (see chapter section 4.6.3), those that agreed to take part (Bafote, Lokuli, Fiona and Donald) have additional significant features worth bearing in mind. Three out of the four happen to be male and all four heads are Catholics; three of whom lead Catholic schools. As discussed in chapter section 2.4, since the 1977 convention, Catholic education in the DRC has held a special place in the country's education system (Titeca & De Herdt, 2011). Similarly, the slow state formation and the strong leadership of the Catholic hierarchy in England led to a Church-state settlement in the governing of schools (Grace, 2001).

However, the above two sources, among others (Arthur, 2013; Titeca et al., 2013), point to an evolving relationship (of cooperation, competition and even erosion) between Catholic Church institutions, in the two countries, and successive governments, as the latter have tried, over the years, to implement educational policy reforms. Hence, attempts to preserve a distinct Catholic identity has to be seen within the states' (DRC and England) overall criteria for well performing schools; that they try to ensure this through statutory national initiatives, such as the national curriculum and inspection programmes, as discussed in chapter section 2.5.3. What this means is that even these Catholic head teachers must prove their relevance to national/international (non-religious) stakeholders/partners. One way of doing that, I think, is by secularising otherwise religiously-termed experiences of school leadership, as evidenced by, for example, Donald's leadership metaphor 'the gospel according to the head teacher' discussed in section 5.4.2. Whether or not the narratives to be analysed hereafter are determined by gender is a topic I examine within the overall debate about the uniqueness of contexts and/or cultures.

The settings of the two sets of schools, and the experiences presented in figure 6 above, highlight sharp contrasts. There is a disparity with regard to pupils' attendance figures and affordability of education. Without discounting the value of their professional experiences, only about 8% of the teaching staff in Baf and 0% in Lok have some form of university qualification, while the rest only trained up to secondary school level in pedagogical schools.

In schools Fi and Don, however, 100% of the teaching staff are university graduates. While Fi, with half the number of pupils compared to Baf, runs with an estimated annual budget of just under one and half million British pounds, Baf's total annual budget is an estimated US \$ equivalent of 70,000 British pounds. This figure represents more or less half the school fees for the academic year 2014-2015, the only main source of income for most schools in the DRC (De Herdt et al., 2012). The contrast may prompt some readers to argue that the gap between the two settings is too wide to be subjected to any form of comparison. Given the uniqueness of the settings, some might argue for the narrative and storied voices of the participants (Bold, 2012; Henry, 2007) to be regarded as bounded case study units (Stake, 2006). That is the territorial approach, where contexts of study are perceived to present high differences and low similarities and are, therefore, incomparable for some (Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013).

Added to the above viewpoint is the consensus that education as well as school leadership is dominated by white, male and middle class approaches (Lumby & Coleman, 2007). This has prompted the need to decolonise school leadership not only in England but also in Africa. Eacott and Asunga (2014), therefore, call for school leadership preparation and development in Africa to be rooted in African traditions that draw in socio-political dimensions of the continent.

However, traditions or cultures, whether in Africa or the West, cannot be reified as they 'are dynamic entities: they are fluid and evolving' (Dimmock, 2012, p.203). Hence, a viewpoint that combines all of the following may need to be adopted: the historical tradition where theory and practice (of leadership in this case) should be based on how life used to be lived in the past, interpreted tradition where the historical makes sense only in so far as it is interpreted today, and contemporary tradition where theory and practice draw from how life (school leadership practice in this case) manifests itself in contemporary times (Weiburst, 1989). While remaining sensitive to research-based national cultural idiosyncrasies of low power distance, masculine, individualistic, collectivism, obedience to authority (Beugré & Offodile, 2001; Hofstede, 1983; 1991; Wanasika et al., 2011), the context chapter, the above participant/school profiles and some of their narratives hereafter, are immersed in diversity and have a certain degree of crossover that needs to be acknowledged. For example, all four heads are experienced (at least 15 years as head). The schools, in

which they work, are ethnically, linguistically and culturally diverse. They (schools) are located in highly deprived places and serve some of the relatively poorest people in their respective communities. For the above reason, all four schools fit the common description of urban schools (Rury, 2012).

Therefore, the position that has guided this research project is instrumental, in the way used by Zoogah and Nkomo (2013) beyond the single knowledge domains of Ribbins and Gunter (2002) to a more comparative approach (Crossley & Watson, 2003; Lumby & Heystek, 2011; Schwesfurth, 2001) or critical multiculturalism (Zembylas & Lasono, 2010), which does not only recognise the similarities and differences; it also sees a comparative school leadership approach/domain emerging from the critiqued narratives that is variably actioned, in terms of skills, depending on certain ontological determinants. This will become clearer as the discussion develops in Parts II and III and with further theorising in part IV. Within each stage of the, efforts will be made to link to the vision of a comparative knowledge domain theoretical framework introduced in Chapter 3 part II (section 3.8).

## **Part II ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: phase one**

### **5.3 Findings: a detailed comparatively thematic analysis**

This section presents, in more detail, the summarised findings as presented in the above visual mapping (see figure 6). As indicated in figure 5 (see section 4.6.6), where Riessman (2008) offers various options for presenting narratives, both as lengthy excerpts (Williams, 1984) or brief excerpts (Ewick & Silbey, 2003), this section combines both lengthy and brief excerpts after sifting through immense narrative data, in order to draw out the useful segments that address the research questions. The excerpts that are embedded in this report not only represent abstracted themes but also point to areas of convergence, divergence and complementarity, while challenging accultured assumptions (Lumby and Heystek (2011), with openness to both local and global perspectives (Sackey & Mitchel, 2002) and highlighting the wider significance (Schweisfurth, 2001) in keeping with the comparative knowledge domain framework (see section 3.8).

#### **5.3.1 Pathway to headship**

*Bafote and Lokuli's narratives (DRC):* With regard to their journeys to leadership, participants framed their narratives in terms of personal drive (seen

mainly as a natural calling or vocation, but also as experience-based), combined with organisational input in the way of preparation for headship (which is defined by official guidelines, the meeting of which is sometimes through customised and fortuitous learning).

*Personal drive:* The personal drive to become a teacher and then head teacher was, in the first instance, attributed to the realisation of a *natural love* or a *vocation* for the profession:

I had a weakness for teaching [or I had a soft spot for teaching (j'ai un faible pour l'enseignement)]; I loved my teachers who initially spoke very well. It is they who have led me to love this job. Then gradually I did my studies in applied education, I was hired right after my studies (Bafote)

A similar view, although with weaker emphasis, was echoed by Lokuli, who credited becoming a head teacher to an earlier choice to enter the teaching profession, presented as an obligatory pathway for headship, as the following extract shows:

For me it is an easy profession, I [easily] find my way through, headship is an easy profession for me, and it was in my blood because I know all my classes'

There was also an element of *nurture*, as Bafote acknowledged the shaping influence from without (his teachers), rather than it being solely about the teaching and headship skills flowing naturally from within:

The good that I found in my teachers has shaped me and made me a teacher' Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2041-2).

*Professional trajectory: preparation for headship and learning:*

Participants here had a clear mental picture of the official stages to headship, as the following extract illustrates:

You begin as a teacher before you are promoted to exercise the functions of a sur-école (surnuméraire, meaning an additional number), deputy head and then head. You must also have passed through all the stages of primary school to allow you to manage them. I started as a teacher for 6 years, after which I was promoted as deputy head and 5 years later I became head. There is a mechanism, although I didn't go through it all. (Lokuli)

Bafote also referred to his own shortened leadership process; although expressed with an explanatory sentiment of personal competence that would have led to an

abridged process, his success in learning on-the-job may also have been due to the ability to do as he was told, as the following extract shows:

I did everything to the letter, according to what my bosses dictated that I should do [the technical skills of managing a school], so that one day I will do the same to others [meaning use the skills learnt once made head] Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2009-10)

*Summative discussion:* This early stage of the narratives was characterised by positivity about teaching and school leadership professions, which were framed as natural, although they also recognised the influence others had on them. It had an echo of trait leadership theory, where the qualities of being a (head) teacher were perceived as innate (Northouse, 2016). This could explain the fact that both Bafote and Lokuli were fast-tracked to headship. However, such fast-tracking measures could also be interpreted as a response to the world-wide issue of a shortage of school leaders (Chapman, 2005) or, as implied above, attesting to their ability to do as they were being told, which portrays learning not only as top down but also fortuitous, due to the scarcity of good leaders, as Bafote seems to suggest. What may also be the issue here is not only the need for well-trained head teachers but also the tendency for existing ones, in the case of Bafote at least, to conceive of leadership as a matter of reproducing what one has learnt and, therefore, leading to a scenario of the same practices reproducing themselves. Although the heads here went on to diversify their approaches in response to variety of situations, the sense of the profession being innate and learning being top down stand in stark contrast to their English counterparts, as I present and discuss next.

*Fiona and Donald's narratives (England):* Both Fiona and Donald frame their initial personal journeys as breaking social, economic and learning barriers. As a professional career, teaching and school leadership were pursued following a series of pragmatic and explorative steps as the desire to change grew stronger. In terms of the official preparation for headship, the research noted an emphasis on professional expectations amid uncertainty at the national level.

Fiona and Donald framed the journey to headship as one that began from moderate social, economic and educational backgrounds to what they both regarded as the ambitious and socially prestigious undertaking of being a school head.



Socially and economically speaking, Fiona recognises her moderate origins with the following:

I didn't come from a rich background. My mum and dad were Irish and there were nine of us in a terraced house with three bedrooms but they made sure we had shoes on our feet and they would go hungry themselves to get shoes on our feet. (Fiona)

Donald echoed a similar theme with the following:

In terms of family they were five of us. I have a sister with a degree, and then there's me with a degree. My brother went into teaching early on before degrees were necessary... there were a lot of changes but my mum and dad were very supportive. They were both from working class families but they had quite middle class ideals. My dad did not want me to go into steel work like him and told his boss who wanted to offer me a job there that my son will have to do better than me. (Donald)

They also had to overcome personal learning challenges to be where they are today.

Fiona sums it up with the following words:

...even for me, exams didn't come easy to me; I had to work hard to get the lowest grade. I worked harder and harder and came out with only scraping through. And that's what schools are also about, there are some children who assimilate facts, exploring, research and there are those that do not quite have, it's not that I didn't have support at home but really dad worked all the hours that god sent to get the money for the house and mum didn't have an education. So she couldn't help. So you just had to make it on your own really. And although you may have lots of brothers and sisters around, sometime it's just about survival in a big house. We looked after each other, there was no way we wouldn't protect each other out on that street but when it came to learning, you just get on with it. (Fiona)

Although the above quote was made to reflect on the variety of learning needs, it also reveals a personal story with regard to learning.

#### *The professional journey: reasons and preparation for headship*

*Reasons for becoming a teacher and a head teacher:* The professional trajectories that stand between the moderate social, economic, learning backgrounds and the 'prestigious' role of headship are characterised by a pragmatic, explorative and change-inspired process. Fiona, for example, had to take a series of pragmatic decisions, either for learning or economic reasons, to embrace teaching.

I went to college to do teaching because I knew I could get a grant...I couldn't have afforded it otherwise... (Fiona)

At different points in his career, moving in and out of the profession, Donald echoed a degree of pragmatism with the following:

I started teaching naturally [meaning a natural process, he had to do it - not naturally as in second nature] if I'm being quite honest. I started teaching because I didn't do very well in my A levels. (Donald)

After becoming disillusioned with the contractual changes, in the way that teachers were being asked to work around 1985, Donald left teaching altogether but returned two years later after the private sector had collapsed and with it his job at an insurance company. He had to make another pragmatic decision at this point:

I had two children and it was coming up to Christmas...so I started working as a supply teacher... Overall, it came from having a family, needing money. (Donald)

Fiona captures the exploratory steps taken with the following words:

When I became a teacher, I didn't think I'm going to become a head teacher. I wanted to see what this world of teaching was going to be like really. (Fiona)

However, out of his explorative and pragmatic process grew a love affair with the profession and a desire to change practice through the office of headship.

Donald, in particular, highlighted his developing passion for the teaching profession and different roles he was taking up in different schools at various points of entry, with recurrent words such as 'love' and 'enjoy':

I loved teaching straight away...; I loved it in the new school...; I really enjoyed it, covering lessons in different schools...; I enjoyed working in my own parish... (Donald)

After conveying her initial motivation for exploring the teaching profession, Fiona supported the evidence of the crucial role that head teachers play in school improvement, as discussed in the literature review chapter, with the following words:

...then you begin to think maybe I could do better, I could give more and I can only give more if I'm in a higher position. (Fiona)

The 'giving' more was perceived as having a school-wide impact designed to change teaching practices:

I saw some teachers who were quite restricting in the way they taught and not so good in the way they taught or treated children. And looking at the panoramic vision that you can have as a head teacher, those are the things that you can actually change. (Fiona)

Another early push factor was to do something about certain divisive cultures:

...also I have been in situations where there have been little enclaves of staff talking in their little spaces and I'm thinking I can't stand that. (Fiona)

Putting across a similar theme of change, Donald said:

...when I worked in a small primary, staff meetings were fantastic. We had very lively debates and I was used to having some steer on the direction of the school... I thought of affecting the whole climate rather than just being a part of it. (Donald)

More on how these two heads went about affecting change will follow (see section 5.3.3 on 'Good school leadership practices'). What can be stated at this stage, however, is the conviction that underpinned it:

...maybe if there was an insertion of a certain aspect to improve their teaching, they would be a different person. (Fiona)

*Preparation for headship:* There was an acknowledgement of overall systemic uncertainty in England, with regard to making certain professional qualifications compulsory before assuming the role of school headship.

They made it compulsory to have national professional qualification for headship, which is run from the national college. You can get a deputy leadership qualification through there as well. They did it at one point and then they scrapped it but I think they [the government] are bringing it back again. (Fiona)

This has been interpreted by some as a backward move that devalues theory at the expense of experience (Bush, 2010, 2013). However, the two extracts below show that beyond the politically motivated decisions lurks an expectation that headship theory and practice must inform each other:

If you wanted leadership you would look for key stage leadership. All teachers in primary are responsible for certain areas anyway. But also you would look for ways you could improve the school to the point where this didn't exist before but I have implemented it. I made it work for the good. So I always found something that I could do to enable me to manage people, a team. You build up your management skills that way. CPD always goes along with it. (Fiona).

The on-the-job training is further illustrated by a personal account of learning during her deputy headship years:

So he [the head] really left the running of the school to me [deputy] while he went in the cellar to smoke a pipe, or did whatever he did. So I actually did five years of getting to know what the school was about, running finances, running the classes as well and most of all, the biggy really, that even though you are a teacher, if you get the parents on side you can do anything' Fiona. (Appendix 2, lines 85-89)

However, Fiona also underlined the importance of theory in leadership:

But if I were a governor interviewing a head, I'd like to know what qualification they had, what research have they done, what studying have they done because you need to constantly improve yourself because if you are wanting your staff to do it, you have to.

These extracts indicate that although systemic uncertainty, with regard to professional qualifications being a requirement, seems to have an adverse positive effect, in that it has positioned local bodies to make the decisions that suit the needs of their schools, the requirement to combine theory and practice still persists.

*Summative discussion:* There seems to be a pattern worth noting that while the 'born (head) teacher' feeling in the DRC was followed by the desire to maintain the status quo (learning the skill of leading so that one can do the same, according to Bafote), their English counterparts seem to begin from a position of personal, economic and educational struggle. These struggles are followed by a series of pragmatic and explorative decisions, as well as the urge to change practice.

The importance of theory in the practice of school leadership is recognised in the literature (Bush, 2010), despite the status of such specialised knowledge being 'compromised by the decision to make NPQH optional for future leaders' (Bush, 2013, p.463). While new pathways to headship have been introduced (Higham et al., 2015) to deal with the shortage in the English context (Howson & Sprigade, 2010; 2012; MacBeath, 2011), it is not clear how current approaches satisfy the need to explore these heads' professional identities, hopes and expectations, which could have a significant impact on how leadership is practised. Although the data, as shown above, attests to a combination of on-the-job learning and a continued requirement for theory and practice, as part of the conditions for selecting heads at the local level, it is unclear how such training adequately reflects on the issues raised

above and those that relate to scope and leadership values, as shall be discussed later.

Bafote and Lokuli are confronted with an unacknowledged issue of poorly trained teachers, with a figure below 10% having had a university education, while the rest are secondary school graduates (see figure 6 in section 5.2). In the absence of a mandatory qualification or alternative accredited routes to headship, their own preparation was based on their accumulated experience as teachers, which amounted to fortuitous learning, despite teaching and leadership being portrayed as an innate attribute. Although they underwent some on-the-job training (seminars – see figure 7 in section 5.3.3), this only adds to the narrative about poorly trained head teachers in Ghana, Kenya and Africa in general (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Kitavi & Van der Westhuizen, 2002; Zame et al., 2008). Although the establishment of formal school leadership development programmes is contested (Levine, 2005), Thomson's (2010) call for planned processes of leadership development, rather than leaving it to chance, is valid for both the DRC and English contexts. The dire situation in which the DRC finds itself makes it particularly urgent for its national campaign for rebuilding capacity after state absence (see chapter section 2.5.1). Otherwise, effective capacity building through effective leadership learning could become wishful thinking (Copland et al., 2002).

Two remarks are warranted to contextualise the above discussion. The first remark is that effective school leadership is not wishful thinking here, since all four heads consider themselves good head teachers, although Don's up-to-date Ofsted report, at the time of these narratives, deemed it as requiring improvement (see figure 6 in section 5.2). The second remark is that, whether they perceived themselves as good head teachers or not, the uncertainty over mandatory theoretical learning in one place (England), combined with a total lack of mandatory specialised training in another (DRC), does not mean that their leadership practices are devoid of theory. The scale of the challenges in the DRC (see Chapter 2 and next section) can compound representations of primitivism, that the image of the *heart of darkness* carries, and mislead the public into thinking that nothing good, in educational leadership theory and practice, can come from it (Dunn, 2003). The point of research such as this, therefore, is to understand these head teachers' professional

experiences, put forward the findings that can be theorised and inform practice in England, the DRC and possibly beyond.

### **5.3.2 Leadership challenges**

*Bafote and Lokuli's challenges (DRC):* Bafote and Lokuli framed the nature of their leadership challenges as societal (with regard to decaying morals both in society and in schools) and poor working conditions (due to poverty in pupils' homes, lack of resources in schools, meagre remuneration for teachers, perceived by one head as ungratefulness on the part of some school stakeholders). Such challenges create additional problems with regard to pupils' performance at the very least.

*Societal challenges:* The lack of 'sound moral norms' in society constituted a significant challenge for Bafote:

Many Congolese lie; because the Congolese have elected the rule of least effort, they do not work and they would all expect to be given everything on a gold plate.

This societal culture is understood to affect the culture within schools. Of his own school (Baf), Bafote had the following to say:

In social life, there is everything. Not everyone will applaud, there is unfair competition. What is he doing, who does he think he is and why has he arranged his office like that? My school is the Congo in miniature. Everything you see there [in terms of moral, economic, and educational challenges] is happening here.

Extending his description of moral challenges, although of a different kind (corruption), to schools, Bafote exercised his 'double role of individuals in African societies' (Higgs, 2012, p.44) and now, speaking for the wider community of schools, he had the following to say:

You will go in some state schools: when a teacher arrives, he puts a basket in front and the students give what they can. He takes a notebook and he asks a student to copy something on the board and at the end of the year the child passes to the next class with an empty head having learnt nothing.

What is important to note here is the level at which schools can become a reflection of the wider social world. This calls for head teachers' increased sense of the nature of social/organisational values and their direction. Alongside social challenges

observed at the societal and school levels, Bafote and Lokuli made mention of poor organisational working conditions.

*Poor organisational working conditions (resources, ungrateful stakeholders and transportation challenges):* For schools, whose running depends largely on the payment of school fees, parents' lack of money is linked to the availability of resources. To highlight this point, Lokuli said:

Pupils struggle to pay school fees, which affects our ability to deliver a well-resourced curriculum. Lokuli (Appendix 2, lines 2643-4)

Where resources could be made available, the head, who does not control the school budget, is left at the mercy of the hierarchy [school based religious, national] that, in the case of Bafote does not make resources available:

For example, you ask for resources. Because a teacher is a perpetual learner I need this..., give me means/resources [French: moyens]. You do not get those means/resources. And sometimes you are suspected of embezzlement of what.... And yet it was for a noble cause, for the good of others and they refused you it. And when you have a fault due to lack of resources you are blamed for it.

The problem, according to Bafote, is much deeper. He explained it as resulting from ungrateful stakeholders (employers and parents), who seem to undervalue the profession. Bafote said the following about employer ungratefulness:

Work here is demanded with much more insistence, serious work with quality and quantity wanted. These sorts of people [teachers and heads] deserve to be valued. Let them [authorities, policy makers, employers and parents?] somewhat soften certain services. Teaching is a vocation and, despite the years of service, I always come to work on foot. The head is 'haut gradé' (highest ranking). When you talk of CEO, president, the head, and manager, the head is the CEO, I could/should be driving. And yet every time I take a motorbike. You raise a child for a day and you sweat but to do that for 33 years! How many children have I formed? At retirement, you are given next to nothing. The ingratitude of the employer.

Turning the spotlight on (some) parents, he recalled the following case:

We are in a world of humans. In that world, there is also what we call ingratitude. There are some parents who you help but they forget and they can even take you to court. I recently appeared at Supreme Court near the national bank. I was accused of selling uniform. The school has never sold them. It was a private workshop that was selling them and parents of the students that I know very well did this. They were even going to put me in jail because I had allegedly not obeyed the governor's instructions that uniform would be free. But it is free in public schools; here it is a private school.

A further organisational challenge that, according to Bafote, could be resolved by incentivisation was to do with transportation affecting teachers' punctuality:

Transportation is a big problem. For teachers to arrive at school on time, you [meaning the employer] could rent a bus and tell the driver to move quickly to bring teachers to the workplace before such time. Someone who is sick, you understand his illness.

*Educational competencies:* the educational competencies were highlighted in terms of pupils' achievement, illustrated by their poor literacy skills:

The big problem we face at the moment is with reading. Many students cannot read. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2331-33)

and incompetence of trainee teachers:

We had a trainee teacher who was teaching the wrong things, imparting the wrong kind of knowledge that even the pupils disagreed [student teacher was teaching the conjugation of the verb 'to be'] Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2644-48)

*Summative discussion:* Pupil dropout rates and boy/girl ratios were not raised as of particular concern here. However, despite the DRC's Prime Minister announcing that overall school attendance had improved from 83.7% in 2007 to 100% in 2012 (UNESCO, 2014), which paints a better picture than the 90% attendance at primary and 64% at secondary level (see context chapter 'urban contexts' section), the volatility of the political and social landscape in the DRC means that up-to-date independent data on school attendance have to be prioritised.

There was no evidence to support the above attendance averages, as Bafote and Lokuli did not keep such records. Nevertheless, they listed various reasons for pupil absenteeism in their schools. These ranged from transportation difficulties, the weather (rain) affecting pupils' ability to travel to school, lateness resulting in being refused entry if arriving after 8 o'clock, illness and, mostly, exclusion due to non-payment of school fees. Here, one is reminded of the reality that increased intake and completion do not necessarily, translate into effective human capacity-building (pupil attainment) that is usually associated with daily quality engagement with the school curricula (Roby et al., 2016). A direct policy measure is pertinent. However, a more enhanced understanding of how these challenges are framed is necessary in order to put in place an adequate policy response. I return to this point at the end of this analysis section.



There is a perception that the challenges are, to a certain extent, interlinked. For example, there is a suggestion that the good moral practices promoted in Baf are in response to their inexistence in wider society; that the lack of resources affects educational achievement; that the overall devaluing of hardworking teachers and head teachers is partly due to stakeholders' (mainly employers) ungratefulness and lack of consideration for their services. At this stage of their narratives, the participants did not only feel let down, they expressed a real sense of anti-climax given the nature of the challenges relating to societal moral 'decadence' that contradicted the values taught by Belgians during colonisation and those promoted by the school's founder, as the extract below suggests.

*We must sustain the work of our founder [deceased local Cardinal] who hated mediocrity and I also draw from the way the Belgians [colonisers] taught us – to be conscientious and be the best. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2031-2; 2010-1)*

The second part of the above extract represents, at face value, an antithesis to the non-emancipatory colonial education in the Belgian Congo, as already discussed in the context chapter (Brock & Alexiadou, 2013; Dunkerley, 2009; Masandi, 2004). Far from it, the apparent fascination with what I termed as the 'golden age' of the DRC's education, given systemic and historical post-independence failures, confirms instead the colonial insistence on values, such as order and good behaviour, to 'ensure the subject toed the line instead of being enabled to write and read between the lines' (Depaepe & Hulstaerk, 2015). Although the Congolese participants in this study did not convey an awareness of this aspect of their colonial legacy in their narratives, one must refrain from deducing, therefore, that their leadership actions were a replication of the colonial system. Indications from the next section (5.3.3) are that they embraced an emancipatory comparative approach to school leadership, in spite of their (more) constraining environment. That said, the above extract highlights the existence of historical value (re)sources that Bafote drew upon to moralise his leadership practices in the face of his perceived challenges.

The organisational challenges relating to lack of resources and affordability of education and poorly trained staff (although unacknowledged) corroborate the claims made by Mokonzi (2010) for the DRC, and by Bush and Udure (2006) for the wider

African continent. These organisational challenges seem to affect the morale of teachers and their ability to engage with learning of teachers (as indicated above), but also have a real potential to affect the learning of students [see Bafote's attempt to link lack of resources and educational faults in the above table]. Removing fee structures and making resources available will not only somewhat honour already missed educational millennium goals (United Nations, 2000), it could, in real terms, make education more accessible to the poor (Zuze & Leibbrandt, 2011) and contribute to substantial gains in student outcomes, especially in deprived areas (Curto et al., 2011; Zuze & Reddy, 2013 citing Fedderke & Luiz, 2002). Even then, since the variable 'resource' is measured differently, Al-Samarrai's (2006) cross-country study in Africa concluded that, while resources are necessary, their composition with the institutions managing those resources is needed. Therefore, a focus on education systems and management of schools is essential to generate an empirical research-based outlook on much-needed changes to policy, research, theory and practice.

The uniqueness of the way Bafote and Lokuli went about resolving their leadership challenges will be outlined in the next section (5.3.3). However, in so doing, one head (Bafote) is left physically exhausted, which, in itself, constitutes a leadership challenge.

I finish work, I come home, I rest a bit, I take a glass of water and my family remark 'Papa is tired... Let him rest. Mental fatigue of intellectual work... Sometimes I do not have a vacation... When I finish the year, I prepare the next year. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2094-2104)

The above extract both attests to the existence and impact of an overworked head teacher in the DRC and, like in England, highlights the need to distribute leadership at least as a pragmatic measure (Hartley, 2010), while further attempts for more sophistication in distributing leadership are considered.

It has to be stressed that most of the above challenges, especially organisational ones, were framed as the product of uncaring and ungrateful stakeholders, such as employers who do not provide the finances (wages and resources) and parents who take them to court based on false allegations (see appendix 1.16). To argue in favour of more resources, better wages and elimination of fee structures is not all there is to these leadership challenges. Unlike their English

counterparts, who frame their challenges from a systemic point of view, as shall be discussed next, these heads appear to seek solutions that would enable them to carry on with 'business as usual'; meaning, as defined by those higher up in the hierarchy. I return to this issue towards the end of this section.

*Fiona and Donald's challenges (England):* Two key ideas that stand out from their narratives at this stage are that Fiona noted a disconnect between various entities or dysfunctionality of various (social, cross and intra-school) entities, while Donald emphasised school leadership extremes (policy and people centred) encountered in the course of their careers.

*Fiona - Dysfunctionality of fractured entities:* What is fractured and dysfunctional are the cohesion between social groups, cross-collaboration between educational institutions and intra-institutional congruity, all of which have had a correlational effect on communication and accountability between stakeholders, staff shortages due to localised expertise and pupils' difficulty in making good emotional and academic progress at the transition point between primary and secondary.

*Fractured social cohesion:* this is an ongoing social issue that seems to have drawn Fiona's attention, even prior to becoming a teacher or head teacher. Recalling an earlier generation's experience, she had this to say:

So when my dad came to England, first of all to the RAF [Royal Air Force], he went to the car factory as an engineer. The Irish and black people were treated abysmally in the 1950s in England. You would see signs in buildings if they were renting places out: no blacks and no Irish men. (Fiona)

Describing the poverty that plagued rival communities, who had to be housed in separate estates during her teacher training years, Fiona provided the following reflection:

If you were walking, there were no roads that went into the town. There were overhead bridges, so you connected estates by overhead bridges. There weren't pavements and I think the philosophy behind was that 'it stopped marauding cars from going into these places and causing hassle and problems. But it also segregated them because X didn't like Y people, so they just decided to plot them to a different estate. They hated each other. (Fiona)

During her headship years, the persistent social fracture resurfaces and is voiced in very similar terms:

It was really weird because we started getting Polish children into the school and I don't know the background and history but travellers don't like Polish people. And this Brendan's mum said once in a meeting: I'm just fed up with these Polish coming over here and getting all the jobs. I said, actually the Polish parents we've got are electricians and they are really skilled people and to be perfectly honest if nobody is fitting the job why shouldn't they work? I said 'why don't you train to be an electrician?' (Fiona)

Donald also noted the brokenness of the family social structures of his pupils which resulted in various forms of abuse requiring his leadership input:

Originally, I felt very uncomfortable; you would sit in a room with the mother, the father, may-be the police and a social worker, a drugs worker ...and me. We would have the meeting and they would ask sir...do you think this is a case of neglect? The first time I had to do it, I was very embarrassed because I had spoken to the mum several times. And when they asked why? I had to say I do feel this is negligent because we had met here before, these are the four points, simple points that are easily understood, and we are sat here again six months later without any one of them having a noticeable improvement. For a reasonable extent of time, that would have been an exceptional case, but this year we've had 8 children taken into care which is a big number particularly for a school this size but it's only 4 families and 2 of the families had 3 children each. One of the children we've got, the family had got quite a complex set up, and it's more unusual that the dad gets custody of the children but because dad had custody of the children in this case, the hours he kept ... so the children's team had a difficult job... it was very low level but the child, I think, needed to be looked after by the local authority and when dad found another partner, things changed dramatically, the child was just coming off the local authority's looked after list but now he couldn't come off the list. (Donald)

Although he remained encouraged by the help that the children caught up in these situations were receiving, these issues also consumed his time as head; time that could have been spent focusing on other things, such as instruction:

I think the message it sends out is quite a positive one because you've people out there who are saying, in this case saying to the dad; look the child needs this and you couldn't do it by doing this. So, there is quite a lot of support out there that should help most people. The thing that holds it back is the level of genuineness of the parents in wanting to engage with the professionals so if they are not telling the truth so it's difficult for you to help.

But it's very time consuming. Each of those meetings takes about 3-4 hours and then you have meetings every 6 weeks with those families and then plenty of other families who are not at that level that we meet regularly every 6 weeks. (Donald)

Not engaging with these issues at the source is not an option for Donald, as the main repercussion would be an unhappy child who is not ready for learning:

You have your normal day to day, mum and dad have had a row and the child comes into school crying and upset and if I'm being honest I would probably not have been able to notice that when I first started as head. The teachers might say so and so is upset because mum and dad have had a row or just that so and so is upset. Whereas now, if a teacher or someone said those things, fairly quickly we would ring mum and dad and say your child is upset in school, he/she says you've had a row, is there anything we can do to help? (Donald)

*Cross-institution collaboration fracture:* Fiona noted a degree of skill and emotion based on a disconnect between primary and secondary entities. The concern about the dysfunctional fracture of skills is summed up with the following:

You do so much with them and the moment they move to secondary, it just evaporates. We had a year 13 (secondary) and year 2 from our primary) link programme as part of the buddying process. The year 13 from x secondary went on a trip with our year 2s and at the end of the process they were meant to record thoughts. We handed them with an A3 sheet and our children go on with their writing straight away whereas the year 13 looked on and first asked; 'what? You expect us to write on that and fill it up with information?' (Fiona)

Referring to cross-institution emotional identity fracture, Fiona makes the following observation:

...We have amazing concerts here, amazing plays, just vibrant assemblies and by half term in secondary, the kids that were doing this would no more do that and fly; ... I think something like emotional intelligence was a subject at the very beginning in secondary, I think lots of children may not lose that kind of identity. (Fiona)

It is also a question of social fracture that is reflected not only as pupils start secondary schools but also at primary level, which needs a particular leadership approach that is not just about box ticking but identifies the fracture from an overall social context:

...if you have a child with difficulty, whether it's bereavement, parents broken up in marriage, or they have come from another country and they have seen things that they think a child shouldn't see (violence and

deprivation), that child needs help in just exploring where they are at. Backgrounds, circumstances, parenting all that have to be taken into account when you are helping a child. Unless you see the different parts of the jigsaw, you can't piece it all together. (Fiona)

Working once as a federation head, Fiona was called in to move two schools forward and overcome what she saw as a disconnect between primary educational institutions.

The sad thing was you had X, and two miles away you had Y and never they, not one school had visited another, they didn't know each other's community which I found terrible. ... The impoverished school was seen as a bad neighbour. Yet there were a lot of strategic things that were going wrong with the other school as well. (Fiona)

*Intra-institutional fracture:* As the above quotation shows, the cross-institutional disconnect also hid intra-institutional fractures. As well as the strategic poor practices mentioned in the quotation above, it is important to recall what was termed earlier as divisive cultures among staff that prompted Fiona to want to consider school leadership as an example that seems to prevent internal congruity in schools.

...also I have been in situations where there have been little enclaves of staff talking in their little spaces and I'm thinking I can't stand that (Fiona)

There were also signs of intra-institutional disconnect in the current urban school. It first pitted parents against teachers, including the head:

I stepped into a failing school, except a lot of the community didn't know it was failing. (Fiona)

Not knowing how exactly the school was performing did not do much to transform the sour relations between parents and teachers.

Albeit small, there was a percentage of parents who were extremely disrespectful to teachers. Their body language, their behaviour on the playground and the way they disrespected the head teacher. (Fiona)

The information fracture also defined the relationship between school governors and the leadership.

The governors were aware that the school was in difficulty but they didn't quite know what and how; ... at meetings they were not getting the correct information from the head. (Fiona)

It is possible to argue that there was lack of genuine accountability between the parties (stakeholders), which accounted for a major challenge. However, Fiona

seems to suggest that accountability towards others needs to stem from accountability towards oneself as head. In a well-resourced school, compared to Baf and Lok in the DRC setting, Fiona raises this issue of leadership accountability, with a particular emphasis on school resources, with the following words:

Terrible things were happening like they bought loads and loads of stock but nobody was monitoring what they were buying it for and where it actually went to. So when I was clearing out the staging in the hall because I had to get rid of this big horrific stage, it pulled out underneath and there were three computers still in their boxes bought 5 years ago, so they were old. Every cupboard had stock in it that nobody was using but they spent a fortune buying. (Fiona)

Whether these practices could have a causal effect on pupils' academic performance is debatable. However, from Fiona's point of view, the dysfunctionality of fractured entities, especially in Fi, was reflected in poor pupil outcomes.

There are all sorts things that allowed that but the main thing is there is a document at the end of each year that comes out after all the results have gone through called 'raise online'. The first draft copy of it would come around September time and the actual copy around February. I had a look at this and it was just disastrous. There was the odd ok result but the three-year tracking was poor. Key stage two, they were not meeting the national expectations. (Fiona)

*Donald: the functionality of extreme practices and other issues*

Casting his mind back to all his accumulated years of experience in education and especially in school leadership, Donald delivered a verdict of 'the functionality of extreme practices':

I had these two extremes. (Donald)

When outlining what the two extremes were, he described them as policy-oriented versus person-oriented approaches to school leadership. The former was impersonal, policy driven, rigid, but it ensured consistency, as illustrated in the following extract:

It was meticulously planned and policies were the policies and they were tinkered with but they were never massively overhauled because once she decided that's how we've got to do it, that's how we were going to do it. Every time there was an issue, it was referred to the policy: handwriting for example, everybody had to write your crossbar had to be

at the right height, if you had two letters with a crossbar together, you use one crossbar. If you had fractions and you were in the infants, you had larger squares...so you knew exactly ...thus affected everything. If you had a policy, you had a policy. (Donald)

The above approach was inspired by comments made following a school inspection:

She [the head of the school] felt cheated that she hadn't been in the job long and HMI came to visit. After the criticism about children's handwriting, she decided that everything that happened in the school happened her way. She said I'm not going to be criticised again for inconsistency or poor quality handwriting. Her way was a reflection of what HMI was asking, she picked up on every criticism that HMI made and she said I'm never going to be criticised for that again. (Donald)

The latter (people-oriented) approach shows human passion, based on the creativity and inventiveness of those making up the school.

It was absolutely the opposite. It was, you know, where is the policy? Do we have a policy on this? It was a very small school; staff meetings were very good, creative and loud sometimes. I loved the passion of the teachers in this second primary school. You didn't have the passion in the first school. It didn't feel like your voice was being particularly heard. (Donald)

The people-oriented approach had a negative side, where relationships took precedence over skills that were there or needed to be developed.

Teachers would look at an (the) advert and say: that job is for so and so; no one else is going to apply. There was a feeling that the head had picked the teachers who were going to get the money. (Donald)

To capture the functionality of these extreme practices, the following was noted:

There were advantages at both types of school. I absolutely loved the freedom but with that came a little bit of anxiety. If I'm doing it this was and the teacher next door or before that doing it that way and I realised there great benefits in consistency but you have to get the right things consistent. (Donald)

In the face of these extremes, and perhaps to offset the downsides of both approaches, Donald made a decision about his leadership approach that will be discussed in the next section:

...and I thought somewhere in the middle is the school for me. (Donald)



*Some day-to-day challenges:* Highlighting the need to develop a personal rapport with staff, Donald recalled an experience relating to a teacher's personal life that affected her work and professional relationships at school:

I find the personality problems the hardest part of the job by far. The children are great. Over the years we've had say a teacher may have an issue with alcohol, family, mental illness problems and you are trying to nurture and care and do the best you can. Mental illness for example causes some issues in school and in the classroom you've got to deal with them sensitively and other times; nothing you can do would help. The mental illness case ended up with that particular member of staff having to leave. X went from being an outstanding teacher one year and two years later she was finding it too difficult to take books home to mark, it was also because of the home life that she had. I tried to be supportive there; at her request, I even accompanied her to her psychiatric appointments and I wrote a letter explaining the impact it was having on her work and as it got worse, she then couldn't see that I was supporting and felt that I was public enemy number one which made life very difficult.

It was like walking on egg shells on certain days. And sometimes it flared up in an unmanageable way and it came to a head ...and I ended up actually writing a letter that this is actually gross misconduct and I would like a written response from you. (Donald)

There were also different cultural perceptions of education among diverse populations of parents, resulting in lateness and a later school starting age:

Some of the culture about arriving to school on time was not necessarily the same. For example in Poland, they don't go to school until they are 7 so it can't be that important here until they get to 7, surely. So we say, yes it is and we begin at 8:55. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1843-46)

For her part, Fiona described some of the challenges that come with the popularity of the school in terms of appeals:

As soon as we deliver those 40 places, there is very few that actually pull out. So, what's happened over the last few years is that, we have offered 40 places and I have a nightmare summer term because I have to go to all the appeals (See appendices 1.10 for full citation)

and lateness due to perceived 'ill-intentioned' bus route changes by the local council:

...so many of our parents apologise for being 10 or 15 minutes late that is basically the buses, it's not the fact that they haven't got up on time. And we are just accepting that now, that I can't change the bus routes, we just accept that they will 10 or so minutes late because we know it's true. But it's the school they want to go to and they are not going to change it. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 533-547) (See appendix 1.11 for full citation)

*Summative discussion:* As announced in their intention to become school leaders (see section 5.3.1), both of the heads' drive to change is followed by a panoramic evaluation within and across educational entities, which has led to the identification of various fractures (mainly in the case of Fiona) and extreme leadership practices that, admittedly, were functional, as the following extract from Donald illustrates:

There were advantages at both types of school. I absolutely loved the freedom but with that came a little bit of anxiety. If I'm doing it this was and the teacher next door or before that doing it that way and I realised there are great benefits in consistency but you have to get the right things consistent. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1363-81)

While the personal price that one of the DRC heads (Bafote) paid, in the face of such challenges, was physical exhaustion (burn out); here, Donald cited the time-consuming process of hearing after hearing for the serious 'social fracture' cases. Despite these demands that might put some off considering headship (Higham et al., 2015), what seems to emerge from these experiences is the head teachers' resolve to find solutions, which, arguably, have defined them as leaders. Donald, for example, recalled his resolve to carve out his own leadership approach, after becoming aware of the policy-oriented versus people-oriented extreme practices as follows:

...and I thought somewhere in the middle is the school for me. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1382-3)

What 'somewhere in the middle' entails, and how both Fiona and Donald dealt with the above challenges, is presented and analysed in the next section.

While Donald highlighted what was wrong with functionally contrasting leadership styles, Fiona noted the dysfunctionality of fractures within social ethnic groups/communities, requiring head teachers' engagement to ensure that children's learning does not suffer. However, this level of engagement meant that less time was available to spend on other equally important matters, such as instructional leadership (Grissom & Loeb, 2009; Spillane & Hunt, 2010). There was also a disconnect between schools (primary vs secondary and primary vs. primary), which affected pupils' emotional stability and their academic continuity/progress, as well as

restricted or localised staff's expertise that could otherwise be shared. A victim of her own success, Fiona notes the challenges of non-admission appeals and school lateness for some children who have to travel long distances to get to Fi.

I will now make three assertions relating to: 1) how the overall challenges by these experienced head teachers compare with those new to headship (Earley & Bubb, 2013); 2) how they sit within Jha's (2007) internal vs. external school barriers; and 3) the differences in how the challenges were framed, before making a final point about the clash of values as a leadership challenge.

*New vs. experienced head teachers' experiences:* Earley & Bubb's (2013, p.789) small-scale research into the experiences of new head teachers has identified challenges, such as:

feelings of professional isolation and loneliness; managing staff who thought the school better than it was; being driven by inspection judgements; improving teaching and learning; improving pupil progress and raising standards, at a pace; effecting improvements rapidly; developing staff, especially in preparation for change; developing resilience in coping with emotional and traumatic situations; dealing with multiple tasks, managing time and priorities; managing the school budget, especially those in deficit; dealing with ineffective staff; implementing initiatives; restructuring, especially of the leadership team; dealing with the legacy of the previous head teacher; developing a culture of accountability; engaging governors and parents for greater impact; dealing with problems with school buildings and site management.

The above findings are consistent with earlier studies by Holligan et al. (2006) and Hobson et al. (2003). While some of these could, arguably, be on the minds of the head teachers in this study, they did not feature as a major concern. The striking point about some of the challenges listed above is also that, while they could impact on 'the extent to which head teachers are free to act in principled and innovative ways' (Cowie & Crawford, 2009, p.18), the challenges could subside with more years of experience on the job. This leads me to make a tentative assertion that head teachers' perceptions of leadership challenges are linked to their years of experience on the job. While the less experienced, like those in Early and Bubb's study, frame challenges whose solutions could come with a bit more experience on the job, the more experienced, at least in terms of Fiona and Donald in my study, were more concerned about major systemic changes relating to the nature and direction of their

profession and education. New head teachers' development programmes, therefore, need to engage new recruits, not only with the technicalities of headship, however necessary, but also with the directionality of education as a whole. In the same vein, to 'avoid a final dip in the performance as they – *head teachers* – [my italics] near the end of their career' (Stroud, 2005, p.101), questions of systemic change need to be considered in their professional development programmes.

*Internal vs. external challenges:* Jha (2007) distinguishes between internal and external school barriers. External barriers are educational challenges that children face outside of schools and prevent them from (ever) accessing educational institutions. Here, campaigns to enrol children can be termed access-policy. Internal challenges are those that are experienced by those inside school institutions. These challenges can be the cause of pupils dropping out, absenting or not fully succeeding in those institutions. Efforts to improve this can be termed as success-policy. The descriptions of leadership challenges by the DRC and English heads in this study can be seen as overlapping between internal and external challenges, as they refer to the running of schools and the realities of the wider educational and societal environments. As already hinted, however, there are some differences in the way those challenges were framed. This is explored further in the next section.

*Patterns between challenges framed and the environment lived:* It is demonstrably plausible to suggest a (non-deterministic) pattern between the framed challenges and whether the face-value solutions would have to either strengthen an established system (conform) or push boundaries in an unimaginable way (transform). There is an assumption that organisational success depends on the identified challenges being resolved. However, the argument I want to make relates to whether one's environment correlates to the framing of leadership problems, whose solutions lend themselves either to conforming to a systemic order or transforming the system.

The figure (7) below summarises a sample of leadership challenges from both settings, as outlined in the previous two figures. It proposes a success-policy, as indicated by the participants or abstracted by the researcher, and evaluates whether such a solution lends itself to conformity or transformation.

Setting	Leadership challenge	Possible success-policy	Pattern
DRC	Lack of resources	Increase schools' budget to cater for the need for resources	<i>Conform:</i> 1) it enables doing the job as prescribed. 2) in response for commitment to carry out defined tasks
	Poorly paid teachers	Increase teachers' salary	
England	Extreme leadership practices	Comparative leadership that is the result of the head's evaluation of various needs	<i>Transform:</i> 1) it changes the systemic direction of the school and 2) it innovates in a way that surprises even the hierarchy (Fiona: section 5.3.3 theme 'self-regulation and collaboration').
	Assessment policy uncertainty	Comparative leadership (cross-school collaboration similar to the one in which Fiona was engaged).	

Figure 7 Leadership challenges framing pattern (DRC vs. England)

The above table should not be used to downplay some of the practical challenges faced by the DRC heads and others in similar circumstances as framed only to fulfil the conformity agenda. Some resources, like having computers with (a good) Internet connection, have the potential to transform, by allowing a head teacher and others to access information that they would not otherwise be able to. However, the poor monitoring of surplus resources (computers for example) decried by Fiona, as having taken place during the previous leadership prior to her arrival at Fi, only goes to show that, however vital they are, resources and other practical success-policy ideas need to be anchored in the right leadership success-policy. That policy, I will argue more explicitly further on, is a comparative leadership approach, which not only has the potential to transform but is itself, it seems, tied to one's scope unless more objective scopes are circumvented, as is the case with at least one of the DRC heads in this study (section 5.4 onwards discusses this more extensively).

*(Clash of) values as a challenge:* Both DRC and English heads spoke proudly about the fact that their schools were a melting pot for cultural and linguistic diversity (see figure 6 in section 5.2). Such a feature of urban schools (Rury, 2012) brings with it the multiplicity of values that can both enrich and compete with the goals of other stakeholders (Michalak, 2012). This is true here for Bafote, who, in relation to the loss of moral values in society, described Baf as 'Congo in miniature'. In figure 9, Donald refers to a similar issue of conflicting values from stakeholders (parents) with a Polish background, with regard to school starting age and the start of the school day. The clash of values, regardless of significant observable cultural diversity, came to the fore in the form of a value judgement as the following incident shows:

A fight was reported to have happened between two children. Standard practice after stopping the fight is to establish what led to it and who is responsible. At this stage, cracks began to appear in the way that parents perceived the way I was going about it. Forgiveness is what we are about, I was happy to have brought the warring children to say sorry to each other. Some parents, however, deemed it inappropriate that their child was being asked to apologise when, according to them, the child was only defending him (her) self. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1718-30)

The next section 5.3.3, hereafter, provides some explicit references to the value approach that these head teachers took in relation to these explicit incidents. However, sometimes values are unobservable (Begley, 2000). While they may not necessarily be voiced (narrated), they are, nonetheless, the ground on which actions and rationality stand (Bush, 2011; Greenfield, 1991). Hence, the pertinence of carrying out a broader assessment by looking at the underlying core values underpinning the leadership actions of Bafote, Lokuli, Fiona and Donald. In section 5.4.3, I identify, elaborate on and critique the four core values (risk taking, inclusivity, integrity and success-mindedness) that they displayed.

### **5.3.3 Good school leadership practice**

***Bafote and Lokuli (DRC):*** I summarise the practices that Bafote and Lokuli felt contributed to the success of their leadership as essentially revolving around two major concepts: humanism and management.

*Humanism:* Both Bafote and Lokuli underlined the importance of humanism (Ubuntu). Bafote gave more emphasis to the understanding of others' (teachers) needs, followed by attending to those needs and then noting the raised commitment. The jump from understanding to attending to needs seemed quite unrealistic and Bafote did not provide any further clues. Although evident in previous narratives, I would like to highlight this particular section as illustrative of cross-site complementarity that validates these narratives. Lokuli's narratives add further components, such as negotiating priorities, assessing resources and raised expectations, as realistic steps that can be inserted between understanding and attending to needs, as described by Bafote. Put together, it would build a coherently patterned narrative within narratives that looks something like the following:

In terms of understanding others' needs, Bafote said:

I do my work with authority and humanism. By humanism I mean understand the discomfort of others. Times when a teacher says look Mr head teacher, I am in need..., then I say ah take this... you will reimburse at the end of the month ... and all these are the ingredients that make friends (meaning his staff) have acceptance. (Bafote)

Understanding teachers' needs led, in the case of Lokuli, to a dialogue that involved the negotiation of priorities of need, in other words their urgency, as the following extract shows:

I was at work and a teacher stopped teaching, left the classroom and came to the office to tell me his child had been taken to hospital sick. He asked that I give him money so that he can go. So I said: I want you to go but what do you think will solve the problem: you going or calling someone to come over and get some money to tell to treat the child? Your presence is not required; it is the mother who accompanies the child to the hospital. Let us call your wife to come and get something, you teach and after which you can join the child? And he said: if that's the case then there is no problem. If the problem is urgent and the teacher insists on leaving, he is given the resources that he needs, he goes and the *surnuméraire* [additional teacher] takes over for that day. But if you send money and agrees to stay, then that's fine

The level of social cases even exceeds collaboration that I advocate. I take an example that happened to me. I'm in front of two teachers who tell me, Mr. Director, we [teacher and family] have not eaten for two days. Can you give me an advance on my salary? There is another that tells me look, my child is sick. Tell me, which one am I going to serve? I will serve the one whose child is ill. For him it is not a mitigating factor. For example, if the child died, I'll still take money out to help to bury the child but you, you can starve today, and tomorrow you will not die. (Lokuli)

During these explaining and negotiating sessions, Lokuli attempts to assess the levels of school resources to see whether he is materially able to help, as shown below:

I took a moment of reflection to also check how much money we have, called them to my office and explained it to them. I made it clear to him, the one who had not eaten for two days, I told him, listen: we don't have sufficient means to deal with your problems; you can wait but let us give priority to the one whose child is ill. I do not refuse to help but I ask him to wait. I cannot say straight away, you take this much and the other one you take that much. (Lokuli)

The above steps blend well with the actual attending to the needs of the teachers that Bafote emphasised:

You see a teacher coming, he is exhausted! He has a problem at home: the child is sick but he has no resources. I draw 100,000 FC [+ \$100] from *ma caisse* [school's petty cash pot] and tell him you'll return me the money in 2 or 3 months. With the child recovered, whatever I ask him to do; he will do so quickly and well. For this person, I have to do everything he asks me. (Bafote)

With this support comes a certain degree of professional expectation that the head, Lokuli in this case, places on the teachers at the receiving end of it:

Like all self-respecting leaders, I cannot accept just about anything. I demand the following from staff: punctuality, attendance, and a job well done. The opposite of that is unacceptable. As I said yesterday, I like to collaborate; we talk about things and find a solution instead of being at war. I will add discipline. If all this is done, you will see that the work will go well. (Lokuli)

As a result of this process and incentives, Bafote notes the reciprocal response from teachers in terms of committing to the task at hand:

All these [referring to acts of humanism] are the ingredients that make friends (meaning his staff) accept ... the work 'de façon consentie' [in a consensual manner]. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2154-55).

*Management:* In an endless list of 'you must have this....' and 'you must have that...', Bafote and Lokuli identified three different key management functions: administration, pedagogy and finance.

With regard to administration, the brief extract that summed it up was the following:

*You must have all the records in place* [communication, pupil records, inspections, committees, legal frameworks...]. Bafote (Paraphrasing appendix 2, lines 2388-2454)

When focusing on pedagogy, the ideas of a national teaching curriculum, teachers' performance and head teacher's involvement with planning and its control featured in the narratives:

Document SERNAFOR is important since it gives us the national programme and explains everything you have to teach [what subjects and how to teach], ...I report on staff teaching performance at the end of the year. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2358-60)



Without overall budgetary control, unless a private school is headed by its creator, the management of finance was a question of record keeping and oversight of petty cash:

One must also have a folder of school needs for buying some resources, and other small jobs. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2438-50)

*Summative discussion:* having fortuitously learnt the management skills from their mentors while training, the management aspect of school leadership is not only embedded in official directives but also a constant narrative here which perpetuates long traditions of managerial school leadership in the DRC. What seems uniquely unexplored by literature on education in the DRC is the insertion of pedagogy as one of the essential components of a managerial leadership approach. It is unclear whether by pedagogy the participants meant either instructional leadership (which focuses on the teaching), or learning-centred leadership (which underlines the learning side of teaching) (Rhodes & Brundrett, 2010), or both. However, while instructional and learning-centred leadership styles can be discussed as separate approaches in their own right, the apparent *rapprochement* between management and pedagogy here is evidence that managerial leadership that does not turn into managerialism is needed to support other leadership activities (Bush & Glover, 2014), such as pedagogy in this case.

There are grounds to suggest that the DRC's pedagogical leadership within the three strands of management is similar to its construction in Nordic literature where pedagogy is seen as a multidimensional construct encompassing management and administration, teachers acting according to curriculum goals and instructional or learning-centred are viewed as subordinate to it (Salo et al., 2015). That said, further research is required to study its nature and ascertain to what extent the management of pedagogy is influenced by inspection criteria, as the following extract seems to suggest:

There is a folder for extracurricular activities, one for school inspection and inspectors, once here, they take charge of that, and another on class visits. We are inspected, and I inspect my teachers too. And I have to keep all the records. Bafote (appendix 2, lines 2356-7)

The inspection process, which, in seeking to act on their inspection framework, corroborates an earlier suggestion (see chapter 2.5.3) that the inspection regime in

the DRC is more of a box ticking exercise, giving the impression that inspectors are government guards on a mission to catch out offenders, as the following extract suggests:

Someone who finds these well-arranged folders; when they say you lied, you say no, look at the evidence. This is the work that speaks for itself; it is palpable facts, experiences. Everything is in its place. When they ask me if he can show the program, I have that. Do you have the internal regulations, yes Mr. Inspector, here it is. Sometimes they ask if I had been a priest by any chance and when I ask why they say because we can't catch you out. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2269-74)

Although the rigidity of Ofsted in England still impacts on the leadership practices of some head teachers (see section 5.3.2 subtheme 'policy-centred'), there is equally more scope (see section 5.4.1 onwards for clarity on this concept) for English heads to initiate forward-thinking changes that are commended by Ofsted inspectors (see for example Fiona's comment in this section appearing under 'self-regulating and collaboration').

A new addition to their (good) leadership narratives, as compared to those when they were still training as heads, is the concept of '*humanism*'. Its remit surpasses the boundaries of professional lives in schools and goes as far as considering the whole person's needs through understanding, negotiating and attending to them; this then is followed by raised expectation and commitment as the above themed data table suggests. Perhaps owing to his Christian (Catholic) faith, Bafote made indirect references to the gospel value from Matthew 11:28<sup>3</sup> to justify his humanism, 'those who come to me shall find relief' (Bafote). Overall, Bafote portrays his humanism as *préstation douce* (a gentle way of working) and, although not explicitly articulated by Bafote, the humanism talked about here also relates to Ubuntu (Littrell et al., 2013; Venter, 2004).

Although all four research participants are Catholics leading three quarters of recognised Catholic schools (see chapter section 5.2), what should be borne in mind is that the transformative (Preece, 2003), servant (Lituchy, 2013) and collegial (Bush, 2007) leadership elements, distilled from the spiritual and humanistic attributes of Ubuntu, are not unique features of denominational schools. I would also argue that

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<sup>3</sup> Depending on the version of the Bible being read, Matthew 11: 28 will say something close to: 'Come to me, all you who labour (are weary) and are overburdened, and I will give you rest'.

Ubuntu is lived out in a unique way that requires checks and balances (accountability), as implied in the nature of negotiations that Lokuli, for example, undertook. If the principle of accountability, which I would argue is an inherent aspect of interdependence within Ubuntu, was undertaken, not only between the head teacher and his/her staff but also between DRC head teachers and their education system as a whole, it is likely to lead to systemic dialogue that would possibly generate negotiation for more scope and avoid circumvention, despite its moral legitimacy, as I argue later in the 'scope' and 'leadership values' sections.

When Ubuntu is seen as interdependence of low fearing agents and self-scrutinising structures (Elonga Mboyo, 2016b), the leader does more than look inward and then be a servant, as reported in Chikoko et al.'s (2015) South Africa based study. Ubuntu as interdependence should inspire head teachers to look upwardly and outwardly. It was remarked in the literature review that Chikoko et al.'s work should be seen within Maringe and Moletsane's (2015) attempt to argue for an eclectic approach to school leadership in urban schools in South Africa. Their conclusions have a certain degree of resonance with this study's findings. I would, however, reiterate that eclecticism should be seen in a dialogical way for it to cease being instrumental, colonial, and become more egalitarian. So that, when Bafote's leadership looked outwardly, as shown in the following extract:

...we update knowledge according to what is being done in other places/lands. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2103-4)

it is done within the context of taking as well as giving - a feature that is felt more prominently in the practice of Fiona. This, I believe, is what makes comparative leadership differ slightly from system leadership that, in my view, is more about consulting system school leaders having an impact beyond their schools (Hargreaves, 2009), without stressing what other schools may have as impact on 'system leaders', not only nationally but also internationally.

The humanism of Bafote, for example, included constructs such as empathy and stewardship, designed to foster a spirit of commitment among teachers. Despite its utilitarian motive, it is similar to servant leadership models (see chapter 3.5.3.4). However, the failure to engage with the above critical approach to Ubuntu and recognise its adverse effects could turn the well-intentioned humanism of Ubuntu (or

literal Biblical inspiration) into a palliative mechanism that subdues/contrives other stakeholders (teachers, pupils and parents) to conform to regimes with more objective scope, without much leverage to engage in critical and necessary leadership exchanges and changes.

Having challenged certain acculturated limitations of the concept of Ubuntu, for example, let us apply the foregoing discussion using Ribbins and Gunter's (2002) framing of school leadership knowledge domains, as discussed in the literature review. It needs to be remembered that this narrative research seeks to explore the 'humanistic impetus' (Miller, 2000, p.8) of school heads. However, its comparative approach has elicited certain concepts, such as humanism/Ubuntu (conceptual knowledge), not only as it is lived and experienced by Bafote, Lokuli, Fiona and Donald (socialisation of Ubuntu as humanistic knowledge). It is pertinent to consider other evidence-based approaches and work out how it [Ubuntu] can be used to emancipate and change practice (Ubuntu as a tool for social emancipation - Critical knowledge). This provides an array of knowledge domains that can be put into action and evaluated (Evaluative knowledge).

Overall, within the unique leadership concept of 'management', Bafote and Lokuli were able to display a range of leadership styles, such as managerial, pedagogical (whether instructional or learning-centred or both) and financial. Through humanism, they showed traces of consensual/collegial, servant, caring, 'authentic' African leadership styles. They were arguably able to do that through a series of awareness-raising initiatives of not only who they are in their individual schools but also how the job of school leadership and teaching in general is done elsewhere, as Bafote put it, to describe the sources from which he drew his school leadership knowledge:

(I) ...update teaching [knowledge] with insights that come from other places/lands. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2103-4)

The expression 'other lands' was used to refer to anywhere (schools, private sectors...) inside and outside the country. How that knowledge travelled was through radio, seminars, research and internet, as the following extracts indicate:

Knowledge conduits	Narrative extracts
Radio	<i>'Sometimes we learn through the radio. He who learns something, he comes to tell others'</i> Bafote. (Appendix 2, lines 2194-96)
Seminars	<i>'As a head you must have your work plan and the agenda. We cannot work in a vacuum, I can show you mine. That can help in daily, weekly and termly tasks, etc., that they tell us in different seminars what is appropriate depending on the size of his school'</i> Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2422-25)
Research	<i>'The big problem we face at the moment is with reading by our students. Many students cannot read. We even used the gestural method. When I do like that, everyone says 'i'. And all that we know through research'</i> Bafote (Appendix 2, Lines 2331-33)
Internet	<i>'I would say to my teachers, look this is my vision, we have the operational objectives, competence, and the practical application it will add in everyday life. And what is needed now is how to achieve this goal... Now, he (the teacher) goes to internet cafés, he goes everywhere in search for..., he does personal reading, there is a duty to contribute'</i> Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2181-87)

Figure 8 Leadership knowledge conduits - DRC

I will make a few pertinent remarks about the above knowledge conduit table. Arguably, the above knowledge conduits enable the DRC head teachers to engage with other ways of working and, to that extent, whatever is learnt through them constitutes a body of comparative knowledge on which to base their leadership practices. However, with no specific radio programmes and their assured regularity in mind, the hoped for expertise to be gained is left to chance, as the extract shows (see above figure 8, extract on radio). With the exception of seminars that are organised by official and external educational partners, the rest in terms of acquisition of concepts or theory and practical advice is left to personal initiatives. The use of the Internet by teachers to acquire knowledge that would enable them to collectively implement the head's vision shows signs of distribution of leadership by assignment (Bush & Glover, 2014); the Congolese head teacher needs to reconsider if such a level of distribution is enough in terms of succession planning and reduction of head teacher's burnt out, a concern that was raised in the previous section 5.3.2.

What is also worth noting is that the whole of their experiences of exposure to a variety of leadership approaches does somehow account for the tendency, at least in Bafote, to alter, adapt or circumvent prescribed managerial tasks, with regard to pedagogy and finance. For example, Bafote used (or overstepped) his management prerogative to forge a humanist profile by diverting money designed for the day-to-day running of the school to help out one of the many teachers in need of humanitarian assistance. Similarly, he went against official expectations by altering

and adapting the timetable, in terms of length of a lesson, and included other subjects (ICT, sex education - not officially stipulated).

That is the school timetable detailing the length of the lessons, breaks etc., it is there only for official use especially when the inspectors come. But we use our own timetable that suits us. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2635-36)

With traces of non-controversial and variably articulated visions in England and Wales (Bolam et al., 1993), Bafote's actions underline the importance of vision, despite the centralised nature in which certain education systems are rooted (Bush, 2011). Above all, they highlight the risk-taking value-laden leadership behaviours that can emerge in seemingly rigid environments. I return to this crucial point in the next part of the chapter.

***Fiona and Donald (England)***: For Fiona and Donald, good school leadership was mainly about mending the fractures (by promoting 1. cohesion through egalitarianism, British values, challenging divisive behaviour, and cultural literacy; 2. networking/collaborating with secondary schools (by focussing on learning, adapting tried and tested knowledge); 3. networking with other primary schools (... and finding the middle ground and, in so doing, they employed a variety of skills and leadership styles that are discussed in the summary analysis below.

Fiona's approach to mending the fractures is consistent with the entities the leader believed to be dysfunctionally disconnected:

*Mending fractures between community groups*: Fiona stressed the need for an egalitarian approach that is reflective of the diversity in urban communities.

... there is an equality here... and I think everyone should be treated in that way and they are really...this is a universal type of school, because we have got a French teacher, a polish teacher, Irish staff, it's immense really... (Fiona)

This sometimes required challenging unfounded perceptions of each other. In reaction to a community member complaining of foreigners taking jobs, Fiona asked:

[I said], actually the Polish parents we've got are electricians and they are really skilled people and to be perfectly honest if nobody is fitting the job why shouldn't they work? I said 'why don't you train to be an electrician?' (Fiona)

Or challenging an immigrant to respect the laws of the land as a way of increased cultural literacy that has the potential to cement community integration:

they come from all sorts of different backgrounds and they look on life a little bit differently and you need to sometimes couch things and you need to sometimes be blatant 'you cannot do this'. Not in this country, because some of my African Parents are not averse to getting a little bit of a tree branch and giving a little bit of a whack on the bottom to their children, eh no, can't do that here. (Fiona)

At other times, both Fiona and Donald created space for healthy relationships to develop within families and bring certain 'disadvantaged' communities to engage more with the life of the school.

We turned certain things on their heads...; for example, I used to have a travellers' morning they didn't like coming to open evenings [for various reasons]. So I used to have a coffee morning where the kids came down into this room, had coffee and some cakes and the kids would bring over their work and explain to them, they ask questions... (Fiona)

Standing between parents torn apart and fighting the custody over their child, Donald also spoke of the need for schools to provide the space for healthy discussions and mend the social fracture.

We facilitated the situation, arranged when the father can come and meet the child at school breaks supervised instead of the parents having to meet at start and end of school days. So we get involved at that low stage before anything escalates and sometimes it does allay those fears and allows a more healthy discussion to take place. (Donald)

*Mending fractures between primary and secondary.* Fiona's approach to mending the fractures between the two types of institutions focused on pupil's emotions and learning but, as shall be shown, it has the potential to extend to various areas. In that comparative mind-set with a specific focus on learning, Fiona visited an outstanding school.

I just decided to go and visit a secondary school that was an outstanding school in Birmingham. When they (pupils) went into year seven, for the children who hadn't reached the national average in primary, they remained in one class with one teacher for 6 months of their first in year 7 and they had a primary curriculum. And it worked. This school, they had things like hired students from university, mathematics students to come in on a Saturday morning and teach small groups of mathematics for three hours. (Fiona)

For an instrumental knowledge-minded school leader, as discussed in the literature review, the tried and tested good practice in one place is often transposed to other places. Such an undemocratic (top-down) approach is reversed by a comparatively skilled school leader, who tries to adjust external best practice to fit local circumstances/dynamics. Fiona showed signs of this approach when she adapted the above tried and tested knowledge from an outstanding school to her local situation, whether this related to personality, budget constraints etc.:

I asked secondary, what do you expect with regard to writing from children who are leaving primary and their answer was quite minimalistic...; So what I ask x, they hate me for it but about two years ago I asked them look 'how about for all the children you are getting, can we give you the last piece of writing English and stick it in the front of their books in September so that you know and the teacher knows, this is what they did in July when they left primary. (Fiona)

To deal with pupils' emotional fractures as they move on to secondary, Fiona recommends an approach she has already embraced in her leadership practice. Her approach is summarised in the following:

Unlike an educational psychologist who comes in to do a tick box exercise, the clinical psychologist I employ allows the staff to observe her so that they can see strategies that work with her and she then gives them advice ...she/he [the child] sees life this way, his/her brain is working this way...She gives them [teachers] information that they can work on over a period of time. I think if you have a professional body that's working in and around that school and it's like on tap, I think that would alleviate many issues that high schools have a lot of difficulty with. (Fiona)

An adaptation of this practice is through embedding it within the curriculum:

I think something like emotional intelligence was a subject at the very beginning in secondary, I think lots of children may not lose that kind of identity. I think something happens with the emotional intelligence when they split from primary to secondary. If it was dealt with in a better way and be part of the curriculum, I think ... (Fiona)

Rather than schools implementing this as individual bodies in a localised context, the full effectiveness of this expertise can be realised in a more comparative environment, reflecting the current direction of the English educational landscape with the existence of academy trusts.

Even if it meant, say within a multi-academy trust, and you employed a full time psychologist. That could really be useful. (Fiona)



Having this comparative overview is essential for succession planning:

Also, in the last three years, three of my staff have become deputy heads. One teaching assistant has become a teacher and then went; and one of my deputies has become head. So great record for leadership, but I have lost my good staff. In a multi-academy trust you could well prepare for that, I can say to the board, that school is definitely requiring a deputy head and you can actually keep good people in a trust and not be in a situation we are in all of the time. (Fiona)

Alternatively, one can outsource (delegate or distribute) aspects of the strategic management of the school, while the head focuses on teaching and learning in the classroom:

We are in a dilemma. People are not stepping forward to be heads. So they are relying on the people they have got but they have to be smarter than that and start thinking about how things are going to be like in so and so years. That's why schools around here are looking at multi-academy trusts so that you have an overarching board of directors who might look at the strategic: say there are 4 or 5 schools in a multi-academy they might look at the strategic view where they will have 4 or 5 representatives from each school into that board, they get on with that instead of, the last two months I have been dealing with pay policy with all these changes, and I just think why do I want to do that, I actually want to be in the classroom and look at teaching and learning. (Fiona)

*Mending fractures between primaries:* Fiona noted a degree of fusion of knowledge and expertise of staff and pupils as inter-school visits, interviews and teaching increased and she worked out how different schools might explore (exploit) each other's strengths.

Children visited each other's school; there were some sporting events we shared together. We went to each other's churches. Lots of things that would never have come about if hadn't gone into federation...; anybody who got employed was employed over both schools, so that I could put them in both if I wanted to. And that way, that brought the two communities together. (Fiona)

In the constantly changing English educational landscape, Fiona noted the recent changes in the way that primary and secondary school children are assessed. These changes triggered what might be termed as collaborative work between schools but I would argue that the collaborative leadership behaviour stems from a leader whose career has been characterised by gaining an inward and outward, here and there, local and non-local perspective, in order to find the best way forward.

The national curriculum has changed so much that the levels do not equate to the demands of the national curriculum now. So we started working on that about two years ago (2014) with D primary, which is an outstanding and very high classed school. And we use Chris Wigley's framework for assessment for learning. And we created measuring milestones in children's skills that we can use throughout the school and we are about 6 or 7 months into it and we introduced it to the Ofsted inspector and all she could say was: wow, this is just fantastic, some schools are not even thinking about it. (Fiona)

There is an apparent movement between the HMI in the late 1980s, that Donald referred to as the head he worked under, who tried to instil a regimented, policy-oriented leadership approach that had to be in line with the hierarchy (the HMI in this case). The above quote from Fiona, however, seems to suggest a certain degree of scope in 2014 (the time of this research) that heads have and from whom school inspectors learn.

*Finding the middle ground:* Having summed up his experience of education leadership practice being about policy-centred or people-centred, Donald's response was to develop a middle ground leadership style that, in some cases, meant involving other stakeholders, especially pupils, teachers and governors, to develop policies:

...letting the children get involved in the behaviour policy and understanding why some things might be acceptable or not... (Donald)

A big success was when the support staff started growing in number and contributing to things like policy and discussion and certainly impact on the children. (Donald)

What is crucial to note in the above citations is Donald's capacity to rise above opposites and find an inclusive way forward. This is made more explicit in the way he talks about the makeup of the governing body:

Our school governing body is made up of members who are varied: we've got some strong church goers, a person who is a strong Muslim active but aware of this being a Catholic school where his children go, aware of the ethos, but it brings a very interesting dimension to the discussions because he is trying to broaden what we are doing without diluting it. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1736-40)

*Summative discussion:* Even without Fiona's experience as a confederation head, both Fiona and Donald give a sense of good or effective school leadership being about inclusivity and networking, which are the unifying themes of mending the

fractures and finding the middle ground. In an effort to operationalise such inclusivity, they exhibit an array of leadership qualities or styles, some of which are similar to those of Bafote and Lokuli in the DRC. In some instances, the bridge building approach took the form of restoring an egalitarian atmosphere in a school, building cohesive staff and communities through challenging misconceptions and integration, people and policy-centred hybrids and fostering collaboration within and across educational institutions, in order to delocalise expertise. In so doing, both Fiona and Donald displayed a range of leadership constructs, such as servant, authentic, collegial, formal, instructional, etc. leadership (Bush, 2011; Northouse, 2013). This is consistent with research on the multi-functional roles of head teachers (Goodwin et al., 2005; Wang, 2016).

The eclecticism or comparative approach is further cemented, in the case of Donald, by an attempt to institutionalise that comparative dimension (see above figure 13 'integrating other views in organisational structures' subtheme) through the broad nature of the school governing body. Alongside *administrative control* of school heads, the *professional control* of the teachers, Leithwood and Menzies (1998) have advanced the concept of *community control*, which gives parents and the community a say in the curriculum, budget and personnel matters, in the hope that schools will reflect their values. England is said to be one of the few European nations in which the wider community is becoming increasingly involved in the running of its schools (Hooge et al., 2012). Although the DRC participants did not discuss this issue, it is, nevertheless, a statutory requirement for schools to have one in line with Loi-Cadre (2014). To my knowledge, there are no published studies on the role of schools' governing bodies in the DRC. However, the Zimbabwean example shows that their role 'has not significantly evolved from their traditional position as funders of schools and builders of infrastructure' (Chikoko, 2008, p.260). In England, Wilkins (2015) has also suggested the existence of 'control of control', where the professionalisation of governors requires them to have specific 'skills', which, in essence, further the dominance of government policies. The view of at least one head teacher here is that the role of parents as governors is vital in 'broadening what the school is doing without diluting it' (Donald). Although working out the point at which such inclusivity and integration is achieved will undoubtedly remain contentious, a wider discussion on these head teachers' terms of reference,

when it comes to the value of 'inclusivity' needs to be had (see section 5.4.3.2 in this chapter).

Another important feature emerging from figure 13 (above), similar to the DRC heads' sense of care within the humanist leadership approach, is that both Fiona and Donald had a sense of the emotional world of staff and pupils that led them to show love, compassion and employ an expert to support pupils emotionally. It goes to show that leadership is not only about the male dominated narrative of rationality and planning but also about emergent priorities that come to the school head with the help of a heightened capacity to connect emotionally and relationally (Crawford, 2007).

In the English context of self-improving schools (Hargreaves, 2014), Fiona, for example, seeks to learn from other educational (leadership) practices in entities outside of her school. This bears some resemblance to Bafote's effort to update his knowledge with practices from elsewhere. Behind these collaborative practices, especially in England, is a growing tendency to embrace system leadership which, among other things, promotes the idea of changing the practice of school leaders in recipient schools (Boylan, 2016). Below is the concern that Hargreaves (2014, pp.701-702) raises, with regard to this specific aspect of system leadership:

The weakness of 'sharing good practice' is particularly marked when the source is a highly successful teacher or school and the target is seen to be badly underperforming. Defensiveness in the target is habitual, especially where the relationship between source and target is felt by the target as one of 'being done to'. Good intentions from the source are insufficient for successful practice transfer. It has A self-improving school system 701 often been reported to me that, where high performing schools have been linked with low performing ones, the staff of the former school get more out of the exercise than do the latter—presumably because the sharing boosts both their self-image and their reflectiveness

Seen from an international perspective with mono-cultural colonial histories, globalising this approach only perpetuates the instrumental domain of school leadership (Ribbins & Gunter, 2002). David Hargreaves coins a concept - *Joint Development Practice* - as a way of offsetting the limitation of system leadership. This, I suggest, can be fully immersed in an untainted way, when conceived of as comparative leadership. A consistent message emerging from this study that, I believe, reverses the 'one-way movement of giver and recipient of leadership

knowledge' of system leadership, is the reciprocity of leadership knowledge. Here, the recipient questions, adapts, debates, and even exports, some of his learning to either the giver or other school leaders. Apart from adapting her acquired knowledge in a Birmingham school, Fiona worked collaboratively with another school on issues of assessment and acted as mentor to a new head to maintain ongoing dialogical exchanges of leadership knowledge.

### **Part III ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: Phase Two**

#### **5.4 Eclectic or comparative leadership: Scratching beneath the surface**

The field of educational leadership is fast moving with many 'turns' from management to leadership (Bush, 2008). Even within leadership, there have been other 'turns' from charismatic through visionary, otherwise termed as transformational, leadership (Hallinger & Heck, 2002), to putting more emphasis on distributed leadership instead of previous heroic models (Hartley, 2010; Muijs & Harris, 2007). Robinson et al.'s (2008) meta-analysis of various published articles even suggests that instructional leadership had more impact on student outcomes compared to transformational leadership; and that the capabilities of relational trust building, integrating educational knowledge and solving complex problems, are what effective instructional leaders display (Robinson, 2010). The head teachers in this study, however, displayed an eclectic style of leadership that draws on a wide range of leadership constructs, albeit with certain limitations, difference and convergence, as I have attempted to demonstrate.

To understand how that came about, this second phase of analysis seeks to identify overlapping patterns in the above thematised analysis and other narratives, in order to establish the underlying principles behind, in this case, eclectic/comparative leadership (Vandermause et al., 2014). As I look back on the evidence-based discussion thus far, I am of the view that these heads' unique approach to leadership has something to do with the concepts of 'scope', leadership metaphors and the leadership values they exhibit. The rest of part III of the chapter explores these three components in more detail, where narratives as themed story lines are connected together in what appears to be a theorised discussion. Such a discussion is developed within the comparative knowledge domain agenda (see section 3.8), which appreciates unique local ideas while examining their wider

implications (Schweisfurth, 2001), challenging accultured limitations and seeing the world afresh (Lumby & Heysek, 2011).

#### 5.4.1 Scope

There is a consistent theme running from pathways to headship, through the framing of leadership challenges to good leadership behaviours. That theme is what I call 'scope'. This concept is too crucial to over-philosophise. 'Scope' is quite simply freedom, autonomy or 'room for manoeuvre' that these sets of heads did or did not have in their respective environments. 'Scope' can also be conceptualised as the manner and extent to which they exercised their leadership agency. The data points to a consistent ontological environment that is either more restrictive (in the case of the DRC) or more open (in the case of England). Restrictive scope is more centralised, top-down and vertical (more objective and less subjective), while open scope is more decentralised and horizontal (less objective and more subjective).

The insight to view scope as vertical and horizontal is drawn from Hooge et al.'s (2012, p.13) identification of primary, internal, vertical and horizontal school stakeholders:

...parents and students are the primary stakeholders. Teachers and other education and non-educational staff are internal stakeholders with a clear interest in the success of the school. At slightly more distance, governments and organisations formally operating on behalf of government (such as inspectorates and municipalities) operate as vertical stakeholders. Finally, all other organisations, groups, or persons in the school's environment with some level of interest are horizontal stakeholders.

The above categories can, in turn, be understood to feed into the idea of vertical and horizontal accountability. Vertical accountability seeks to comply with laws and regulations, while horizontal accountability takes into account the input of students, parents, communities, and various other stakeholders.

Types of school accountabilities	
Vertical accountability (scope?)	Regulatory and school performance accountability
Horizontal accountability (comparative?)	Professional and multiple school accountability

Figure 9: Types of accountabilities - adapted from Hooge et al. (2012)

This interesting conceptualisation can be loosely used here to underscore the comparative (eclectic) leadership actions of the heads in this study. It can initially be

hypothesised (see figure below) that the less rigid/pervasive or more compressed is the vertical accountability (scope), and the more extensive becomes the horizontal accountability (more comparative leadership). In the same vein, the more rigid, expanding and pervasive the vertical accountability (scope), the less comparative the school leadership, even though that was negated here by DRC heads who circumvent the system.

Horizontal (comparative)		Decreased vertical scope	Horizontal (comparative)	
Horizontal Comparative	Increased vertical scope (expanded/rigid)		Horizontal comparative	

Figure 10: Imaging expected effect of increased/decreased vertical scope on horizontal scope

The reason I have dedicated a discussion to ‘scope’, to start with, is to highlight both the neutrality and the contested nature of the concept. When a question is asked about what it is that can be centralised and decentralised, the answer, for me, is ‘scope’, otherwise ‘room for manoeuvre’ or autonomy.

**5.4.1.1 More objective/less subjective scope – more centralised (DRC)**

The evidence here is consistent with research from Greece (Kaparou, 2013; Kaparou & Bush, 2016), West Africa (Bush & Glover, 2016) and Rwanda (Kambanda, 2013), which prompted Bush and Glover (2014, p.565) to suggest that African countries and Eastern and Southern European contexts were more centralised, in the sense that the ‘principal’s role often remains that of implementing external imperatives with little scope for local initiatives’.

The two DRC primary school heads who were part of this study appear to imply that the environment was ontologically objective and, therefore, subjectively restrictive. This can be traced back to the ‘pathways to headship’ section, where the sense of headship was perceived to be innate and seemingly aspiring to maintain an established order. Besides, the framed leadership challenges lent themselves to direct policies that would only perpetuate an existing order rather than change it. Similarly, when discharging their leadership responsibilities, Bafote, for example, operated within two spaces (the religious space to which the school is affiliated and the state space), echoing views that pointed to the existence of objective structures that defined school leadership. His religious space had what he called a ‘disposition’.

However admirable the disposition may be, it was what was expected of him and of all the heads who had worked in that school, as the following comment shows:

They [all head teachers at Baf] came from elsewhere and as soon as they arrive [at Baf] ... they find a certain disposition. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2064-66)

When referring to the state's space, both Bafote and Lokuli used a terminology that was quite revealing. They framed good school leadership as 'consisting of the administration, pedagogy and finance ...' before they listed what they did that was in line with the above requirements (see section 5.3.3). Bafote concluded that line of narrative with the following words:

If you apply these [meaning administration, pedagogy and finance], your school will be the best. Bafote (Appendix 2, line 2455)

It is intriguing that Bafote said 'your school will be the best' instead of 'you will be the best head teacher'. This confirms his apparent oscillation between his school living up to what was required of it to be 'the best' (in administration, pedagogy and finance) in the eyes of inspectors, for example, and his personal version of what it means to be a good head teacher (through humanism that led to eclecticism and comparative approaches). The humanism required, in part, more agency in the way of circumvention and openness to 'knowledge from other lands'.

There are three implications to note here: 1) top-down management thinking can result in hierarchical, tall, highly bureaucratic, mechanistic and autocratic leadership in Africa (Beugré, 1998; Blunt & Jones, 1997; Jones et al., 1996; Kiggundu et al., 1983), 2) 'effective leadership' is, in effect, a metaphor that can hold different meanings depending on either top-down set standards or the head teacher's exercise of agency to circumvent. By circumventing, Bafote, for example, shows that school leadership is a disruptive practice leading to new practices, through interrogation of orthodoxy (Eacott, 2013; Thomson, 2010) to gain more scope. This leads to a further implication: 3) there is tension between the moral integrity claimed by these head teachers and the tendency to circumvent, as shall be discussed in section 5.4.3.3. I elaborate on these implications when the discussion turns to a key emerging metaphor (5.4.2) and leadership values (5.4.3). Before though, let us take a look at Fiona and Donald's experiences of scope.



#### **5.4.1.2 Less objective/more subjective – more decentralised (England)**

Instead of maintaining the status quo, Fiona and Donald expressed their drive to explore and change; they framed their challenges in such a way that overcoming them would require systemic change, which they were able to implement as demonstrated in their 'leadership actions' discussion, based on data from figures 9, 10 and 13. Unlike Bafote, who had to circumvent to be more creative, Fiona, for example, had the power to take various initiatives as she saw fit, as the following extract capturing the experience of being appointed a confederation head shows:

They [the diocese] couldn't tell what it was that they wanted me to do. I said what do you want it to look like in a year's time, three years' time and they couldn't tell me. And I said, are you saying to me that I am to create this federation and strategically manage it and put the layers of staffing in that I think is required? And they said yes. I said and if it goes all wrong, I am to blame? [...] I said, well I like a challenge. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 343-58)

All these elements point to more subjective, decentralised and less rigid scope.

However, it is argued that the educational landscape in England has been subject to constant policy change (Glatter, 2012). A view that is confirmed by Donald in the following extract:

Things are constantly changing and they have never stopped changing.  
Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1748-50)

It may, therefore, be argued that the less rigid and autonomous rhetoric characterising Fiona and Donald's narratives is, in fact, an echo of the autonomy they would assume to implement continuous and constraining government policy change (Glatter, 2012; Hammersley, 2015), especially in aligning public sector bodies, such as schools, to the private sector's principles of choice, accountability etc. (Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2008). Autonomy is used here as a proximate term for 'scope'. Simkins (2003, p.215) problematises the term 'autonomy' and sees in it 'a degree of freedom which few if any organisations in the modern world can achieve'. Although Simkins goes on to explore the subject of 'autonomy', using the term 'accountability', the above citation highlights the need to approach the subject in relative terms of 'increasing or decreasing autonomy (scope)' and explore what professionals, the four researched head teachers in the DRC and England in this case, are/were able to do with it.

It is argued here that, in comparison to the experiences of Bafote and Lokuli, Fiona and Donald voiced a greater degree of scope that points to the educational environment in England being less objective and more subjective (Bush & Glover, 2014; Hooge et al., 2012; Kaparou & Bush, 2016). Using Simkins' (2003) terminology, it could be contended that, while heads in the DRC were only supposed to have operational power, the scope in England provides more criteria power. I will shortly demonstrate this more clearly when discussing a metaphor used in this respect. It is essential that the forgoing discussion about scope is put into perspective in view of other evidence from this study and the wider research findings.

#### ***5.4.1.3 From scope to action: exploring missing links***

Although evidence here suggests contrasting scopes for DRC and English head teachers, the overall story is not as straightforward as it seems. It would, therefore, be inaccurate to suggest that the more conforming leadership practices can only be found in the DRC and that the more subjective and comparative would be found in England. I will refer to two examples from this study to argue that the opposite could also be true and, therefore, refrain from generalising the study's findings.

Donald referred to an extreme leadership practice that was rigid and policy-oriented, where things were done in 'full' compliance with vertical accountability bodies.

...her way was the HMI's way. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1613-17)

This suggests the existence of more objective scope with less comparative leadership approaches, even if the English national environment may suggest otherwise. In such circumstances, Michalak (2012, p.195) found, in her comparative study of English and Polish urban head teachers, that some head teachers in England, just like their DRC counterparts, have attempted to circumvent 'by bending policy and funding mechanisms to local circumstances'. Among some principals in Ontario/Canada, De Angelis et al. (2007) have also noted subversion, strategic action and creative compliance as responses to policy dictates.

Similarly, the fact that Bafote did not have the most up-to-date legal framework, despite working in the urban capital city of Kinshasa, leaves open the possibility for making at least one legitimate inference; that there could be other heads in remote places who are making it up as they go along, as it were, and therefore their scope would arguably be more subjective with less comparison, other than their espoused sense making.

What that means is that ‘scope’ alone is not enough, since, in the grand scheme of things, there could be head teachers in both the DRC and England who: 1) have less scope but circumvent while others abide by vertical constraints and 2) have more scope that enables them to draw on a wide range of leadership practices, while others have to rely on a limited range due to lack of communication infrastructure (or willingness to communicate) in some cases, or that more autonomy and deregulation, in the case of England, can imply more regulation (Ball, 2003; Glatter, 2012; Hammersley, 2015). This is exemplified here by the above extract from Donald.

Since more subjective or objective ‘scope’ does not automatically lead to an eclectic approach to school leadership, it is pertinent to look at how these head teachers made sense of their different scopes to explain their leadership actions further. Whether the system is centralised (see section 5.4.1.1 above) or decentralised (see section 5.4.1.2 above), it is about how and why one (the head and the whole school) responds to the challenge. The previous two sections made reference to the concept of circumvention in the DRC and being proactive, in the case of English heads (see extract below), as the two main responses that led to all four heads displaying a more comparative approach to school leadership.

‘...I said, well I like a challenge’ (Fiona said in response to being appointed a confederation head with no clear guidelines from the Diocese – Appendix 2, line 358)

However, when I further cross-examined the data, I realised that the above responses were part of a much deeper and multi-layered approach that can be summed up by ‘it’s the gospel according to the head teacher’ metaphor and ‘leadership values’ that are discussed next.

#### **5.4.2 Metaphor: 'It's the gospel according to the head teacher'**

Metaphors are used in various aspects of life including, for example, the political world. To break away from the tradition of Americans electing only male presidents, Hillary Clinton used the 'cracks to break the glass ceiling' metaphor (Williams, 2016). A rallying call not to contribute but instead act differently, to alter or, change an existing constraining scope. Educational leadership and organisational theories have a variety of metaphors too (Heck & Hallinger, 2005; Morgan, 2006). The DRC head teachers, in this study, did not explicitly advance any metaphor to make sense of their leadership actions, unlike Donald who summarised his experience as being about:

The gospel according to the head teacher. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1519-30 and 1714-30)

For those conversant in school leadership literature, the above metaphor could be taken to signify the crucial role head teachers play in the success of their schools (Hallinger, 2003; Hallinger & Heck, 1996a; Hargreaves, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1994; Southworth, 2003, see chapter section 3.4 for a nuanced discussion). However, working one's way to effective leadership is presented here as a multi-layered journey that adds further dimensions to the doxa that successful schools are usually led by effective leaders. Dimmock and Walker (2000), for example, have offered a multi-dimensional approach to cultures (national, regional, local community, system level, school boundary and organisational cultures) that head teachers in multicultural settings can engage with. However, it is essential to grasp head teachers' self-styled way of implementing the above metaphor with or without such theoretical analysis at their fingertips. Donald gave the above metaphor a double meaning: the literal and the professional, although, on the basis of their narratives, I propose a third meaning: the comparative, all of which have a wider significance (Schweisfurth, 2001) for both DRC and English heads in this study. The three meanings/layers of the metaphor represent my adaptation of the personal, relational and collective selves of leaders' identity formation (Epitropaki et al., 2017).

*Literal meaning:* According to Donald, the expression was first used by a colleague from a non-denominational school, who wished to point out that, while the denominational head teachers led their schools according to the gospel (biblical text), it was the gospel (school leadership) according to him in his non-

denominational school. If you replace the non-denominational head with a denominational one like Donald, who admitted using gospel texts to inspire his leadership activities, then the metaphor could easily read 'it is the gospel (school leadership) according to the gospel (biblical text)'. Hence, in its literal sense, the above metaphor can draw from personal, historical, cultural and religious convictions. In section 5.3.2, Bafote seems to draw on the conscientiousness of the DRC's Belgian colonial history to counter the lack of moral integrity in the country's social fabric. You can imagine head teachers, both in the DRC and England, making sense of their more or less subjective scope by relying (entirely or not) on their personal, cultural, and religious convictions that have come to shape their personal selves (Epitropaki et al., 2017). While this stock of experiences (based on the gospel and other sources) can arguably be valuable in shaping leadership character (Schuttloffel, 2013) and developing the personal values/vision needed for problem solving, organisational learning, especially at a time of rapid change (Hallinger & Heck, 2002), in the context of today's school leadership (as discussed in the context chapter) is diverse and not only limited to past religious, cultural and political convictions of the school leader that '...may present a serious barrier...' (Reed, 2008, p.221).

*Professional/organisational meaning:* Donald's explanation of the meaning of metaphor at the 'professional' level amounted to describing more or less the crucial role that a head teacher plays in administering or mediating what is called the organisational mission by Hallinger and Heck (2002) or organisational culture by Dimmock and Walker (2000; Walker & Dimmock, 2002), that may or may not correspond with the literal meaning of the above metaphor. Below is Donald's response to the clash of values after a school fight, as reported towards the end of section 5.3.2:

...So this was our first test of the gospel according to me as head teacher, to us as governors. Because the school governors set the strategic boundaries and as a church school, I said we cannot put those things in clearly and give them some sort of a reference and the other element was forgiveness. We do expect children to forgive. I said this is my interpretation of the gospel and I want your backing and it worked well. Gospel messages are quite simple and clear but just very difficult to follow. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1714-30)

The religious and moral case that could be made to support/defend some of these principles in the above extract is not being disputed here. The point, however, is that, in terms of the scope that heads in this study expressed, the established order became the norm. ‘...her way became the HMI’s way’ (see section 5.3.2) and ‘if you apply these (meaning administration, pedagogy and finance), your school will be the best’ (Bafote) are indications of how leadership activities were framed in line with prescriptive organisational goals. Perhaps unknowingly, as already argued, some aspects of ‘humanism’ by Bafote and Lokuli tended to ‘palliate’ hardships and conform to dominant managerial leadership. While top-down leadership has its benefits, such as consistency, as admitted by Donald (see section 5.3.2), in its professional/organisational meaning, Donald’s metaphor also signifies the head teacher’s participation in a more vertical scope with its centralised and constraining control (Glatter, 2012; Gunter & Fitzgerald, 2008; Hammersley, 2015).

*The comparative dimension:* ‘Leaders are expected to ground their activities in clear personal and professional values’ (Bush, 2011, p.6). The foregoing literal and professional meanings of this metaphor are ways in which these four leaders drew inspiration from their personal and professional (cultural) selves that would have been shaped by their personal trajectories and professional affiliations. The comparative self (or dimension of this metaphor) is a subversive self. Although subversion can be negatively interpreted, its value, which will be discussed in the next section, is known to enable head teachers ‘to engage in a certain amount of deviant behaviour and express their desired identities within a role without risking too much role sanction’ (Wang, 2016, p.12).

I would argue here, therefore, that ‘the gospel according to the head teacher’ is not only driven by personal literal and organisational meanings. The researched head teachers pushed the boundaries ‘to seek the good of the pupil’ (Hammersley, 2015) and, in this case, act eclectically/comparatively, as shown in section 5.3.3 of this chapter. That can mean circumventing when one’s scope is more objective and seeking to update one’s knowledge in line with what is being done elsewhere (in the case of DRC heads in this research) or being a little more creative and imaginative when scope is more subjective (see extract below), leading to greater eclecticism in school leadership.

‘We turned certain things on their heads...’ Fiona (Appendix 2, line 281)

The comparative dimension of the metaphor then seems to combine accumulated (local) literal/personal and organisational values/knowledge with the creativity afforded by more subjective scope and circumvention of objective scope, in order to filter the sort of informal knowledge, research knowledge and convergence of leadership practices, such as:

Greater parental power and influence on schooling, more specialisation of school curricula, broader diversification of school types, continuing decentralisation of responsibilities to school-site leaders, increased acknowledgement of teacher professional development and professional learning communities, and of leader preparation and development...  
(Dimmock, 2012, p.202)

Being able to deliver the 'gospel according to the head teacher' in the comparative dimension needed some prerequisites as the following extract shows:

So when I came for my first headship, I said I need a bit of the management side from that head and a lot of that people skills from that head. I could do with the consistency in that ...I had all that in my head to do but what I completely had forgotten to do was the starting point.  
Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1532-35)

This admission from Donald of certain prerequisites needs to be interrogated so that it does not only refer to what one could do (actions) but also be (values), not only at the start but also before, during and after (throughout). When seen in that wider perspective, the convergence in the values that drove the head teachers in this study to act more eclectically and comparatively becomes evident, despite certain differences in terms of emphasis and use of terms.

#### **5.4.3 Leadership values**

The influence of values on leadership actions is well documented (Day et al., 2001; Woods, 2000). That is why discussing values in a separate section to leadership actions, and the preferred scope in this or that environment, is a form of legitimate academic violence levelled at themes that are intrinsically linked. Although it was argued that those new to school headship tend to worry more about the technical aspects of the job, compared to experienced ones (Fiona and Donald, for example), none of them are exempt from issues linked to the purpose of education 'in the sense that administrators [school leaders] make choices among competing values and consider the desirability of alternative courses of action on a daily basis' (Leithwood et al., 1994, p.98). Leading in education then automatically requires of

head teachers to lead with moral purpose, whether they are working in an environment of constant reform (Begley, 2010) that has characterised the English context, or the DRC that, in comparison, is yet to scale up its reform agenda.

Anecdotal as it may seem, terms such as ‘moral – ity’ and ‘values’ have cropped up that require some clarity in relation to another proximate term - ‘ethics’ - to ground the forthcoming discussion, especially when the above terms are understood slightly differently elsewhere (Beets, 2012; Begley, 2010; Brandt & Rose, 2004; Gluchmanova, 2015, p.510). One case suffices to illustrate the diversity in the way these terms are understood. For example, Begley’s (2010, p.35) definition of ethics (not as a formal discipline) as ‘normative social ideas or codes of conduct usually grounded in the cultural experience of particular societies, is what Brandt and Rose (2004) refer to as ‘morals’. While morals are set by the community, they see ethics as a personal, free and critical engagement or direction of one’s behaviour. This prompted Beets (2012) to consider ‘morals’ as being about conformity and ‘ethics’ concerned with choice. It is also reported that:

When students define ethics, they connect the term to specific expectations that society has for professionals in professional settings, such as codes of ethics. When students define morals, the term (or its variant morality) is usually reserved for prescriptive standards of behaviour imposed by some powerful entity. For these students, they consider the latter term to be outdated and dogmatic. (Gluchmanova, 2015, p.510)

With such contrasting and similar but nuanced definitions, having either ‘morals’ or ‘ethics’ as part of the above subheading could send an unintended, and perhaps confused, message, given the fluidity and contradictory connotations of the terms.

Here, morality is conceived as the wrongfulness and rightfulness of something or some (school leadership) action. What is right in one context may not be so in another setting. That is because the ‘value’ principles on which such decisions are based differ. Values can then be seen as the importance or sacredness that actions, symbols, etc. carry, depending on individuals, cultures, organisations, and so on. The transactional price tag we give to the value of something is its ‘worth’ (see ‘value-worth trap’ in chapter section 4.6.5). The discussions around the above concepts (on what ‘ought’ or ‘not ought to be’) then belong to the field/discipline of ‘ethics’. Because of the subjectivity element involved in determining both value and



worth, debates around ethics have brought some theorists to argue for teleological and deontological valuation processes (Northouse, 2013) or sophistication in self and social processes undertaken to analyse what Begley (2000) calls ethical isomorphs. Hence, I retain the word 'values' in the above subheading to underline the basis upon which ethical discussions around the moral purpose of school leadership are built; the subjectivity and the critiqued imperfection of these head teachers' moral approaches.

That said, Donald highlighted the need for the head to be trustworthy, genuine, a good listener, persuasive, patient and honest. Fiona stressed that she is a disciplinarian, a learner, transparent, trustworthy, consistent, inclusive, formal and informal, tolerant, a risk taker, positive, self-disciplined and humble. For their part, Bafote and Lokuli spoke with varying degrees of passion and insistence about the need to be competent, honest, have moral integrity, be intellectually sound, a marketer, and 'disciplinarian'. The values listed above were deemed necessary at different times for different reasons and could also be read from an angle that presupposes an environment that either lacked or needed more of what is being spoken about.

It is plausible to assume that the above list could have expanded, had this research been all about leadership values, used a different methodology, or collected participant observations over a longer period of time, for example. However, the validity of participants' cross-checked data points not only to a common approach to school leadership (the comparative approach) but also to common core values. These core values, I would argue, inspired the head teachers here not only to activate their literal and professional dimensions but also the comparative dimension of 'the gospel according to the head teacher' metaphor, to respond to pre-existent scopes and work more effectively.

Successful school leaders possess certain core values: willingness to take risk, academic optimism, emotional resilience, hope and moral purpose (Day et al., 2011). After re-examining the data and the overall direction in which these head teachers were taking their schools, it is legitimate to advance four broad values that may bear a certain degree of resemblance, but also with slight differences, to Day et al.'s list. Those values that were evident, and on which all the others hinge, are risk

taking, inclusivity, integrity (derived from honesty, transparency, humble learning, trustworthiness and tolerance) and success-mindedness (both academic and human).

#### **5.4.3.1 Risk taking**

In a world described as full of risks (Bauman, 2006), risk avoidance and certainty can become the rule of thumb, as professionals, head teachers in this case, become numb to taking on a challenge whose outcome is unknown or only vaguely known. Contrary to such a narrative, Donald attempted to create the kind of school that was neither this (policy-oriented) nor that (people-oriented) extreme, which only gave him a vague idea of what the future should be like. When faced with the challenge of heading two schools without clear guidelines, Fiona took a leap into the unknown as she began to experiment.

I like a challenge. Fiona (Appendix 2, line 358)

Albeit covertly expressed, risk taking was also at the heart of Bafote and Lokuli's leadership, especially when it came to circumventing official guidelines from timetabling, the use of petty cash destined for purchasing certain resources, paying for cleaning services etc., to lending money to teachers who badly needed the financial support to resolve urgent personal/family health issues (humanism).

Risk cannot be reduced absolutely (Giddens, 2002). Hence, even those less-comparative leaders, who have either to conform to an objectively established order or rely completely on their subjective experience/instinct, can still experience risk and uncertainty. However, what seems unique with the risk-taking of Bafote and Lokuli and Fiona and Donald is the basis on which the risk is taken: inclusivity, which constitutes the second value.

#### **5.4.3.2 Inclusivity**

In a world full of inequalities of a social, political, economic, academic, theoretical order, inclusivity as a form of decolonisation should be attractive to both the DRC and England contexts as framed here (see Chapter One). The term 'inclusivity' often crops up in discussions and features on numerous websites (Nielsen, 2013). Deemed as a preferred value by the general public, it is not surprising that even uttering the word 'inclusive' is a magnet in itself, as this extract shows:

...they want to hear that word inclusive, that we are inclusive. Fiona (Appendix 2, line 670)

However, does the spoken word 'inclusivity' correspond to action? Touted as the basis for future social existence in political discourse, especially in Britain (Gilliat-Ray, 2004), it is essential that the criteria for (terms of) inclusion are analysed to grasp what they also exclude. Various degrees of inclusivity, in terms of leadership styles, have been argued in section 5.3.3. With regard to dealing directly with teachers, pupils and parents, this research does not look at the potential abuses of distribution of leadership (Lumby, 2013), for example. However, the leadership actions of DRC and English heads in this study convey elements of distribution, especially when it came to all the teachers searching the internet and listening to radios in the hope of finding something of use to share with colleagues, in the case of the DRC, and involving pupils and parents in the decision making process.

The four head teachers used inclusivity to refer to physically observable ethnic and racial diversity in their schools (see appendix 1.8). Another notable criterion beyond the physically observable is the clinically diagnosable case of autism. Fiona recounted a story (see appendix 1.9) about a child with autism to highlight the need for inclusivity in terms of ability (academic diversity) that, if not handled correctly, could impact negatively on children and their families.

It is curious that the narrative of provision for children with special educational needs was non-existent in the accounts of Bafote and Lokuli. Availability of resources and political will might play a part here. Methodologically, however, this is evidence that 'leadership conversations' as a research tool need to take account of the 'voice of silence' beyond its main focus on vocalised speech. The term 'silence' in the phrase 'voice of silence' is preferred for its neutrality, which, in this case, encompasses (inadvertent) avoidance of such a topic on the part of participants or the researcher. Through further research and policy initiatives, issues of mixed ability inclusion, gender inclusion, and many others, will undoubtedly throw light on possible related leadership practices in the face of entrenched cultural issues with regard to disability (Eskay et al., 2012), gender inequalities (Freedman, 2011), resentment towards groups with foreign ethnic origin deemed responsible for the Congo wars (Jackson, 2006) and abuses of human rights of gays, albinos etc. (Letseka, 2013) in the DRC and other parts of Africa, and a rise in popularity of the far right in

England/Europe (Cruddas & Lawles, 2008; Green, 2004; Wodak, 2013). Ethnicity and gender issues have also been raised, even with presumably inclusive leadership approaches (Lumby, 2013).

That said, the foregoing discussion treats inclusivity as based on observable ethnic, racial and gendered features for all four head teachers and clinically diagnosable case(s) of autism in England, for example. Such a varying degree of inclusive diversity, however, brings with it certain unobservable values that become observable when they clash with other people's values (loss of moral values in DRC society and schools, age and time of starting school between English and Polish traditions and clash between values of forgiveness and self-defence - as initially discussed towards the end of section 5.3.2). The responses of the heads to the clash of values varied slightly. Bafote, for example, relied on his personal espoused values (from Belgian colonisers and founder of the school – see section 5.3.2). Fiona and Donald expressed a more assimilationist approach, with less emphasis on social justice issues and differences (Gewirtz & Ball, 2000; Goddard & Hart, 2007). Fiona, for example, said:

I don't see their colour; I just see children. Fiona (Appendix 2, line 675)

While this might mean 'not having preferences', it runs the risk of not addressing certain disadvantages and, as argued in other studies, 'equal treatment does not guarantee equitable outcomes' (Aveling, 2007, p.79; Ryan, 2003; Zembylas & Lasonos, 2010).

For his part, Donald's responses stressed the need to stick to the Catholic ethos of forgiveness (see *professional meaning* under 'metaphor' section) and the living out of British values that, according to Donald, 'are core values whether British or not...values we might all have' (see figure 13 in section 5.3.3). Fiona, however, promoted more cultural literacy and social cohesion by learning the dos and don'ts around the law on smacking a child. While these approaches had their legal and practical significance, they fell short in terms of addressing various social inequalities and identity expressions that are manifested through such values as democracy, among others, and the head teacher's role in recognising and respecting social, political and cultural differences (Blackmore, 2006; Theoharis, 2007).

But could some of these issues have been dealt with in another way? If the parents have chosen a (Catholic) school for their child, is Donald not within his right to enforce the (Catholic) ethos of forgiveness over self-defence (see section 5.4.2- *professional meaning* of ‘metaphor’) and seek broader views without diluting the school’s chosen values (see section 5.3.3 sub-theme integrating other views in organisational structures)? In chapter section 2.4 (implication), it is argued that, despite talk of choice in the education sector in England, many parents were in fact making a virtue out of necessity (Reay & Lucey, 2003). I would like to argue here that, in instances of a clash of values, the parental choice of a child’s school can become an implicit vow of submission to the values of a given school that must not be diluted. This, I suspect, is due to the assumption that ‘they made a choice for their child to come to our school in the first place’ (this is not a narrative extract but the researcher questioning accultured assumptions and asking unimagined questions, in keeping with the study’s comparative knowledge domain as a theoretical framework (Lumby & Heystek, 2011; Métais, 2001). This is not to downplay all the efforts made by head (teachers), Donald in this case, to be comparative and respond to the needs of their children. However, subjectivity in the way people view the world will perhaps require a mental attitude from school leaders of ‘they [parents and pupils] have not just chosen us, we have chosen them’ and, in that way, they will engage in some form of dialogue in the valuation process. Begley’s (2000) valuation process of ethical isomorphs is an interesting contribution that acknowledges complexity and diversity. However, Begley’s approach, which departs from head teacher’s individual valuations before placing them in a social context, needs to be enriched. This is an area for researchers and theorists to consider.

#### **5.4.3.3 Integrity**

There was an unstated indirect logic in the narratives to suggest that every risk taker who is inclusive will need to show integrity, not only at the start but also in their dealings with various stakeholders throughout their leadership. Integrity, as a leadership value, is not a new proposition. When reviewing the definitions of integrity, Palanski and Yammarino (2007) have identified various referents, such as wholeness, consistency between words and actions, consistency in adversity, being true to oneself, and morality. There are several narrative extracts that could be used as evidence of the moral/ethical element meant by the four head teachers when they

talked about integrity. They refer in various ways to a delicate combination of honesty, transparency, learning, humility, trustworthiness and tolerance. The data from this research suggests that integrity is not unproblematic. There are apparent inconsistencies or dilemmas where actions do not perhaps match words and 'being true to oneself' needs to be reconceptualised in light of the ongoing discussion here. The two integrity-inspiring values, which some participants claimed to have and still defended what might be seen as their opposites at the same time, are 'tolerance and honesty'.

*Tolerance and revulsion:* The term 'tolerance' is used in its commonest way to refer to one's ability to accommodate other opinions and views that may not be the same as your own. In Hofstede's (1991) contrasting cultures, one either belonged to a culture of tolerance or intolerance (of uncertainty). Here, however, the idea of tolerance does not take away a sense of repugnancy when faced with mediocrity. Bafote, for example, talked of the need to:

Sustain the work of x [founder] who hated mediocrity... Bafote (Appendix 2, line 2031-32)

It is the same sense of revulsion towards cultural enclaves Fiona felt at the start of her career that pushed her to want to change practice. This is stated more clearly when she shows tolerance by striking holiday deals with a particular ethnic group to increase participation/attendance for the rest of the year, while showing zero tolerance when it came to in-school dress code (see appendix 1.12.a and 1.12.b). In as much as tolerance needs to be seen in conjunction with revulsion, one needs to be mindful that it does not lead to the framing of leadership problems that seek only to conform to instead of transform practice, as already discussed.

*Honesty while circumventing:* It is questionable how all the head teachers, especially Bafote and Lokuli, defended transparency and honesty, while at the same time they were circumventing official guidelines on timetabling and the use of petty cash. It is a form of concealed curriculum to avoid mixing it with hidden curriculum (Newbury et al., 2013). I see concealed curriculum as a gap between an expected and delivered curriculum, whereas hidden curriculum usually refers to a gap between the intention and the consequences of a curriculum. In order to understand why the DRC head teacher may have circumvented the expected timetable/curriculum, in

order to deliver their concealed one, the clue might be in the way that Bafote phrased his narrative around the values that guided his work.

You have to be a morally correct ...honest and transparent man, have moral integrity. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2066-7)

There is a slight difference between moral correctness and legal/political correctness. Legal correctness would be associated with the tendency of managers to do things right/correctly while leaders do the right thing (the morally correct) (Slaughter, 2012, p.85). This comes to the fore when Bafote talks about the need to privilege the competence (success) of children looking into the future, as discussed in the next value (success-mindedness). Viewed from another angle, one could problematise the 'you' in the above quote from Bafote and ask 'who is the YOU here?' The clear answer is 'the head teacher'. However, as already discussed 'the head teacher' in the 'gospel according to the head teacher' metaphor is multi-layered: literal, professional and comparative. In the face of the above dilemmas, the head teacher being morally correct could mean remaining true to espoused literal values of one's culture, religion, education etc. It could also mean adopting the institutional ideology, regardless of whether it would benefit the children or not. Integrity achieved and maintained at the comparative level, it would seem, considers all the factors and makes a call that may appear to compromise integrity (being true to oneself at literal or professional levels) but develops and better prepares children for the future. That seems to be the 'disruptive' spirit of circumvention here.

Even though there was an assumed air of acceptance of the circumvention by all players, including teachers at Baf, this research did not go as far as to investigate the process of circumvention. It would, therefore, be presumptuous to suggest that the 'consensus' around circumvention was contrived (Hargreaves, 2003). That said, it begs the question whether such consensus was transactional, meaning expected, in return for the humanism shown by Bafote (see section 5.3.3 subtheme 'attending to others' needs').

While further research may be warranted here, it suffices to connect it to other research findings, which claim that 'best decisions are reached when administrators [head teachers] discuss ethical decisions and their moral perspectives with others (Denning & Quinn, 2001, p.48). Here, one is reminded of Donald's attempt to find the

middle ground by getting pupils, staff, and school governors to develop policies together. The point, however, is that it was (is) morally right for DRC heads to circumvent. Despite the attempt here to portray circumvention as a morally legitimate leadership value, it still raises the question as to what else the DRC head teachers, or anyone else in a similar ontological space, can do. A richer and more rounded conceptualisation of Ubuntu, as argued in section 5.3.3, could offer a nuanced understanding and, therefore, creative approach to school leadership.

#### 5.4.3.4 Success-mindedness

The value of 'success-mindedness' here is closely linked to the idea of having a 'goal' as 'the gap between the current status and a desired future state (Hallinger & Heck, 2002, p.18). Hence, it aligns this core value to the practices of instructional and transformative leadership, which have been known to emphasise direction-setting as one of an effective leader's main actions (Sun & Leithwood, 2015). However, 'without detailing what is understood by educational purpose, and quality, trying to make education fairer *or give it a particular goal* [my italics] becomes meaningless' (Raffo, 2014, p.15). There is an assumption that inspectors have the ultimate power to define what success and excellence look like (Perryman, 2007; 2009). However, there is also the idea that schools are liminal entities that either reflect the social world or transform it (Hargreaves, 2003) economically, socially and personally (Raffo, 2014). Before I discuss the four head teachers' narratives on 'success-mindedness', I want to underline how this value is particularly pertinent to the DRC, whose colonial educational history has been framed as not emancipatory enough (Masandi, 2004; Dunkerley, 2009; Depaepe & Hulstaerk, 2015). Having been shown the DRC's school curriculum, I want to juxtapose it with that of England in 2016 to spark further questioning for future research.

Year	Primary curriculum in the DRC	Primary curriculum in England
2016	Environment, history, geography, drawing, calligraphy, zoology, physical education, handicraft, languages, French, mathematics (source Bafote) (Appendix 2, lines 2377-85)	<b>Core:</b> English Maths, Science, <b>foundation subjects:</b> art and design, citizenship, computing, design and technology, languages, geography, history, music and physical education, <b>statutory subjects:</b> religious education, sex and relationship education? (source: DfE, 2013)

Figure 11 Snapshot of primary curriculum provision (DRC vs. England)



The fact that subjects, such as calligraphy and handicraft, still appear in the DRC's curriculum may be down to a communication issue that could be resolved with a simple update in line with more recent curriculum. In broad terms, curriculum issues of identity, culture, local knowledge, globalisation, fundamental pedagogics, prescription, and social learning, are topical both in England/the Western world and Africa (Edwards, 2015; Horsthemke & Enslin, 2009; Priestley, 2011). However, the need felt by Bafote, for example, to circumvent, portrays a kind of cultural responsiveness that does not trivialise differences but essentialises (cultural) identities in curriculum provision (Aronson & Laughter, 2016; Sleeter, 2012).

To return to the discussion about this particular value, all four head teachers in this study prioritised success as an end-result of their leadership efforts. However, the idea of success, in itself, was variably applied depending on, I would argue, the purpose of education that they picked up at the literal, organisational and comparative levels.

*Organisationally determined success:* Given the potential of education for economic productivity and social mobility or, conversely, the negative impact of academic failure especially for middle-class disadvantaged children at higher education level (Byron & Lightfoot, 2012), it is understandable that the researched heads placed emphasis on the academic success of the pupils. Fiona expressed this when decrying some game-playing that goes on to ensure pupils are making progress academically.

'...with all kinds of Ofsted, the secondary is like the valued added. How far up can we get the children but let's get them back a little bit before; it's all to do with statistics and data. And I just think, they are some very bright children from our primaries going to secondary schools. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 850-53)

Depending on the focus of inspection systems, as national bodies (vertical stakeholders) that ensure quality (see chapter section 2.5.3), if it is not the apparent obsession with statistical academic data, in the case of England as the above extract suggests, success can be defined as a school's ability to conform to prescribed legislation. Bafote brought that to life when discussing his leadership practices of administration, pedagogy and finance and concluding with the following words:

If you do this [the above three strands of management], your school will be successful. Bafote (Appendix 2, line 2455)

Bafote also stressed the social impact of an academically well-trained pupil:

And the student that I have formed, one day he will come to me as a *cadre* in the Congolese society. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2116-7)

There were, however, some notable differences when it came to emphasis on academic progress. For Fiona and Donald, academic success was a much more complex concept that involved a clear idea of pupils' range of needs and making sure that they meet their (predicted/aspirational) potential, which is measured against national data (see reference to Raise online – in section 5.3.2, Fiona on 'intra-institution' fractures). While success here is personalised, triangulated and seeks to close gaps, it has a downside in that it becomes target and data driven. In the DRC, however, Bafote and Lokuli spoke of pupils' academic success in more generalised terms:

'We got 100% pass rate' (Appendix 2, line 2638)

I can also confirm, using my knowledge of the country, that the catch phrase '100%' is often used by many schools to boast about their academic success. In reality, however, the majority of the cohort could be scoring an average of between 50-60%.

*Comparatively determined success:* I would argue that conceiving of success at this level was the result of a combination of all the societal, organisational and personal experiences brought together to work out a way forward that is 'for the good of the pupil' (Hammersley, 2015) to meet the economic, social, personal and many other purposes of education (Raffo, 2014). It is consistent with what Bafote had to say to justify his decision to overlook the government determined timetable:

We have to think of the competence of our children and provide and teach them information technology and life skills. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2171-73 and 2640-1)

It also meant, in the case of Fiona, doing more than is required academically:

A few years ago, when I first came here, the teachers taught to the test. Now, that's just a facet of learning in year 6 today, it's not all of it... some children don't like non-chronological writing. Some children love poetry, some children love imaginative writing, and others don't. So, I ask secondary, what do you expect with regard to writing from children who

are leaving primary and their answer was quite minimalistic: that they are reasonable spellers, that they can write in paragraphs and that they can do a page and half of writing. So what I said was, we will make sure that they fall in line with what the secondary are wanting but we will do a lot more. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 807-19)

Although the following measures of success could be associated with the heads' personal convictions and organisational values, they were expressed by all of them as a necessary component of education in today's world.

[We] train the student to make him a complete man/person moral, spiritual, physical, and even aesthetic because we must see the good in the man you formed in his actions and in his being. Bafote (Appendix 2, lines 2032-35)

*Indeterminacy of success:* If these heads were going to contribute to the human, intellectual and economic development of their pupils, nations and the world, the urgency to produce results, especially for a relatively poor country like the DRC [see context chapter], cannot be stressed enough here. Keen to perhaps make a case for the need for endurance [not indifference and jadedness], Donald, in particular, highlighted a significant aspect of success: its indeterminacy.

It's [the purpose of my work is about] setting some solid foundation; I'd like to think of them [pupils] as roots because they are flexible, they are purposeful and they could go anywhere they want. Although, sometimes that's a dangerous thought because you look at where they live, the company they keep, the parents keep and sometimes that's a bit of a dilemma because if we're teaching them certain characteristics, is that going to help them in the life that they might have? But I think we have to be strong and say certain things are right and allow them to make those decisions in later life. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1973-79)

Success then is both what has been and is yet to be achieved. It is, therefore, life-long. This then brings to mind the necessity for skills-based education and cultural celebrations of success that reinforce those aspects.

*Final remarks:* The above four core values are, in themselves, categories built around converging moral practices of the four head teachers. However, on 'the assumption that category activation is an (un)avoidable aspect of the person perception process' (Macrae & Bodenhausen, 2000, p.96), it is still human nature to want to operate further ordering on the above values in terms of their importance, for example. Hence, there is need to provide a concluding commentary to underline what I believe to be the interlinked nature of the above values. The value of 'inclusivity', for

example, is important, given the overall research findings suggesting an eclectic or comparative approach to school leadership of the four head teachers here. However, even inclusivity depends on its terms of reference and the putting of such words/value principle into action, which is the realm of 'integrity'. Integrity is important as a fundamental construct of authentic leadership, as discussed in Chapter Three. Success-mindedness is hugely important, especially when you think of education, leadership actions and values not only as a means to an end but an end full stop. Begley (2010) has highlighted this as a source of confusion leading to the dogmatisation of means to an end, without articulating the end purpose of education (its success criteria). Hence, the values of risk-taking, inclusivity and integrity could be regarded as a means to an end that can only make sense if the leader is success-minded – having a picture of the future state of the school (organisation) to which they get others to commit.

## **Part IV CHAPTER THEORISED SUMMARY**

### **5.5: Developing a comparative leadership framework**

#### **5.5.1 The challenge of developing a framework for diverse contexts**

Having discussed the above findings in a manner that is hopefully exhaustive, critical and informed by other research findings, it is important, at this juncture, to reflect on the value of the overall research within the field of comparative school leadership and within multi-culturally diverse 'urban' settings with various inequalities.

Comparative studies are not a straightforward enterprise, given the multiplicity of contexts, competing approaches in resolving unique challenges (Bush, 2011), and conceptual and methodological issues in cross-cultural research (Brooks & Gaetena, 2015; Heck, 1996), leading some scholars to argue against attempts to advance over-arching theoretical or conceptual frameworks (Harris, 2003).

Although the internationalising and globalising of policy and practice is not value-free, Walker and Dimmock (2000) highlight some advantages to which I would add the emergence of a comparative framework in educational leadership. An overarching framework does not necessarily have to eliminate the multiplicity of theories and approaches. Instead, it should seek to articulate diversity in continually changing cultures (Collard, 2007), by attempting to develop a framework that

recognises, to some extent, what I would call a 'homogenous multiplicity' of school leaders-based approaches, which do not necessarily have to fall into the 'hegemonic trap' of neoliberalist managerialism (Ward et al., 2015). With 'homogenous multiplicity', I aim to recognise unity over multiplicity; while I take 'hegemonic trap' to imply the dominance of managerialist approaches over multiple other perspectives.

The central argument I wish to make is that the success of the four head teachers is due to them acting comparatively. Based on the analysis/discussion undertaken here, a comparative school leader can be defined as a value-led agent whose awareness to circumvent or not, depending on the scope, draws from and emits diverse leadership actions/behaviours that are based on an array of knowledge domains spanning beyond his/her locality, in order to face local challenges and transform his/her school as well as others. This research-based conclusion is further developed in the following cross-case theorised summary.

#### **5.5.2 The comparative leadership framework: a summative cross-case analysis**

The previous sections of this chapter have both presented the data and comparatively discussed them in an attempt to highlight the convergence and divergence between the narratives within and across contexts, as well as challenging accultured limitations (Lumby & Heystek, 2011). This section puts forward a cross-case summative analysis in an effort to theorise the findings.

While it is necessary, as a researcher, to be clear about the research question, which in this case was open-minded with the intent to capture specific areas of professionals' experiences, I cannot fail to recognise that the researcher can only be successful if the participants are willing to candidly and honestly share (and in some cases reflect upon) their experiences in an uncontained way. This unrestricted approach allowed me to capture stories of actions relating to participants' leadership pathways, challenges and actions. The thematic abstraction of these stories of actions are analysed further here using IPA (Vandermause et al., 2014), in order to determine theories of contexts (Goodson, 2013).

When recognising the learning acquired from the heads under whom he had worked, Bafote hinted at the need to nurture leadership proficiency, while every other account was dominated by references to a natural in-built disposition for teaching and school leadership. Although a trait approach does not prepare one for every

situation (Northouse, 2013), the self-motivating confidence it generates, as was visible with the DRC heads in this study, is essential in an environment where, as suggested by Bafote, effective nurturing depends largely on being lucky enough to work under one of the reportedly few effective heads. This scarcity could be attributable to underinvestment in education, despite the DRC being in a capacity building era, as suggested in the context chapter (section 2.4.1). What is remarkable is that despite political turbulence, underinvestment and state abandonment, the culture of submission to central or hierarchical directives from lower to highest levels still persists, leading Bafote, for example, to view his on-the-job training as doing what he was told and then replicating it as head himself.

The English heads paint a starkly different picture. The natural trait of the DRC heads, which is supposedly rehearsed repeatedly in training to then be replicated in the future, is contrasted with the view in England that places the head as the agent of change (not simply a continuation of the status quo). While the motives for becoming a teacher include personal economic security, the agency that would have energised these heads to overcome personal, economic, social and academic barriers of their own as they were growing up is noted during their professional journey to headship. An initial exploration of one's skills as a teacher in a given context ignited in these heads an appetite for change, to set a course for a new direction. At this stage of the narratives, one might conclude that the personal pathways of the DRC heads were configured to enact management functions of consistency and order, while the English heads were prone to leadership functions that sought to produce change and movement (Northouse, 2013 citing Kotter, 1990).

However different the leadership challenges framed by these two sets of heads were, they appear to reinforce the management and leadership contrast discussed above. The challenges presented in chapter section 5.3.2 show a consistent story of an underqualified workforce, working in poor conditions (Bush and Oduro, 2006; Mokonzi, 2010; Zame et al., 2008), the financial cost of education on already poor pupils in the DRC heads teachers' experiences, compared to their English counterparts who drew attention to other concerns, such as the dysfunctionality of fractured social, cross-institutional and intra-institutional entities as well as the functionality of extreme practices among others. Findings from previous research (Jha, 2007) have revealed patterns between challenges framed by

experienced versus new heads and internal versus external educational challenges in both settings. One significant issue of interest is that these challenges are framed in such a way that in the DRC direct policy solutions would perpetuate the narrative of management without a change of direction, while they would set the English school leadership experience on a different course.

The expectation as a reader, as was mine as the researcher/analyst, is to see the foregoing narrative of management versus leadership being replicated in the leadership actions that formed the third part of these leaders' stories of actions. Admittedly, heads in both contexts focused on management. For example, both Bafote and Lokuli listed a series of forms of record keeping that must be done by any head. In the same vein, Fiona pointed to the poor management of resources and both Fiona and Donald spoke of reviewing pay structures of staff, which are all part of the economy of management approaches. What is significant about these heads, however, is their ability to draw from a range of leadership constructs, prompting the view here that the heads in this study acted eclectically or, rather, comparatively. The DRC heads emphasised management, which had strands such as financial, administrative and pedagogical management, and humanism, which had a cultural African tone (Ubuntu) but also similarities to constructs such as servant and authentic leadership. The English heads' central focus was on mending the fractures and finding the middle ground. To achieve this, they also displayed an array of leadership constructs ranging from egalitarianism, social cohesion and justice, through challenging divisive behaviours; collaborative, servant, authentic, collegial, formal and instructional, among others. In contrast with Goldring et al. (2008), who argue that eclectic school leaders' actions are fragmented and link them to elementary schools with a less disadvantaged student population, these comparative/eclectic leaders' coordinated leadership actions take place in schools with diverse populations and varying degrees of deprivation and challenges.

It is not only pertinent from a narrative point of view to understand the theories of context underpinning the above thematised stories of actions (Goodson, 2013), it is also essential that we grasp how both sets of urban head teachers managed to combine various leadership approaches (Reed and Swaminathan, 2015). This is achieved through IPA (Vandermause et al., 2014).

When contrasting the need to maintain order in management practices in the DRC against the aspiration and apparent ability to change (leadership) in England, it was concluded that the ontological educational scope in the DRC was more objective, while the English leadership landscape was more subjective. What that means is that the DRC urban head teacher's actions are largely guided by the top-down centralised directives, while his/her English counterpart had more freedom to make major decisions related to the direction of his/her school. While the former has only operational powers, the latter has both operational and criteria powers (Simkins, 2003). This cannot be generalised for all heads in England, as Donald referred to an extreme leadership practice that was rigid and policy-oriented, where things were done in 'full' compliance with vertical accountability bodies.

...her way was the HMI's way. Donald (Appendix 2, lines 1613-17)

Similarly, the fact that Bafote did not have the most up-to-date legal framework, despite working in the urban capital city of Kinshasa, allows the possibility of making at least one legitimate inference; that there could be other heads in remote places (or not) who are making it up as they go along, as it were, and, therefore, their scope would arguably be more subjective with less comparison. It is, therefore, important to view these more objective versus more subjective scopes as dynamic pre-existing structures or patterns of leadership behaviours that can be reinforced or altered by the responses of the agents (school leaders) over a historical period of time. The reinforcements and alterations can amount to an educational era.

The theoretical framework 'comparative knowledge domain' developed here (see section 3.8) invites researchers to reflect on the comparative wider significance of values, practices, concepts and, in this case, metaphors (Schweisfurth, 2001). When applying 'the gospel according to the head teacher' metaphor, three meanings of head teachers' identities or selves emerged. Informed by the suggestion that leaders can develop personal, relational and collective selves (Epitropaki et al., 2017) or base their actions on personal and professional values (Bush, 2011). The data behind the above metaphor has led me to delineate three levels of self: the personal or literal, the professional or organisational and the comparative. The fact that all four head teachers displayed elements of the three meanings of the metaphor does not mean that they were effective in the same way. For example, the



DRC heads showed humanism among other leadership constructs that demonstrated their comparative approach. However, such humanism presented some potential limitations in terms of palliating the status quo. In keeping with the study's theoretical framework to '...challenge accultured limitations...' (Lumby & Heystek, 2011), other theoretical insights were introduced in the hope of developing a more effective practice of humanism (Ubuntu). The same can be said of the values called upon by these heads, in order to support their comparative leadership activities.

Before I do so, a comment is warranted on how the three layers of the metaphor or self-identity relate to cultural analysis. When seeking to work out how head teachers can do their work within an environment of multiple cultures (Goffee & Jones, 1998; Handy, 1978; Hofstede, 1983; 1991; Harrison, 1979; Martin, 2002), Dimmock and Walker (2000) proposed a multi-level framework for international comparative school leadership, centred around their four assumed essential areas of school leadership (organisational structure, leadership and management, teaching and learning, and curriculum) against six cultural dimensions (national, regional, local community, system level, school boundary and organisational cultures). Their approach is helpful in that it draws attention to numerous factors that must be considered, negotiated and navigated through. The head teachers in this study did not use technical words, such as national, regional, local community, system level, school boundary and organisational, to speak about cultures. However, in their dissimilar contexts, the above multiple layers of culture were deployed through their literal, organisational and comparative understandings of 'the gospel according to the head teacher' metaphor.

The emergence of a comparative self was mediated by the core value principles of risk taking, inclusivity, integrity and success-mindedness. Although they display some limitations and imperfections, when these values were put into action they amounted to an eclectic display of school leadership behaviours, with the potential to draw on an array of knowledge domains.

As already argued, these findings cannot be generalised and there could be less comparative head teachers in both contexts responding differently to their more objective or more subjective scopes, determined by their national, religious, cultural

etc., contexts. The unproven hypothesis warranting further research is that such experiences are based on literal and/or organisational meanings of the 'gospel according to the head teacher metaphor' and, possibly, on revelatory epistemology (Luyaluka, 2016), not necessarily because such spirituality is unhealthy for school leadership. On the contrary, grounding leadership on a spiritual construct has been deemed helpful (Preece, 2003) and might be essential in character building (virtue ethics) to connect with reasoning/knowledge (Cranston et al., 2003) that is presumably a trait of an information/knowledge society, which the heads, in a more subjective and less comparative situation, might not have readily available. Saying more on this, in the absence of further empirical studies, would be straying further into the speculative realm.

On its own, figure (12) below offers a visual summary of the above cross-case discussion, which is put forward here as a framework to aid comparative school leadership and management nationally and internationally in its 'four main blocks: policy, research, practice and theory' (Bush, 2010, p.266).

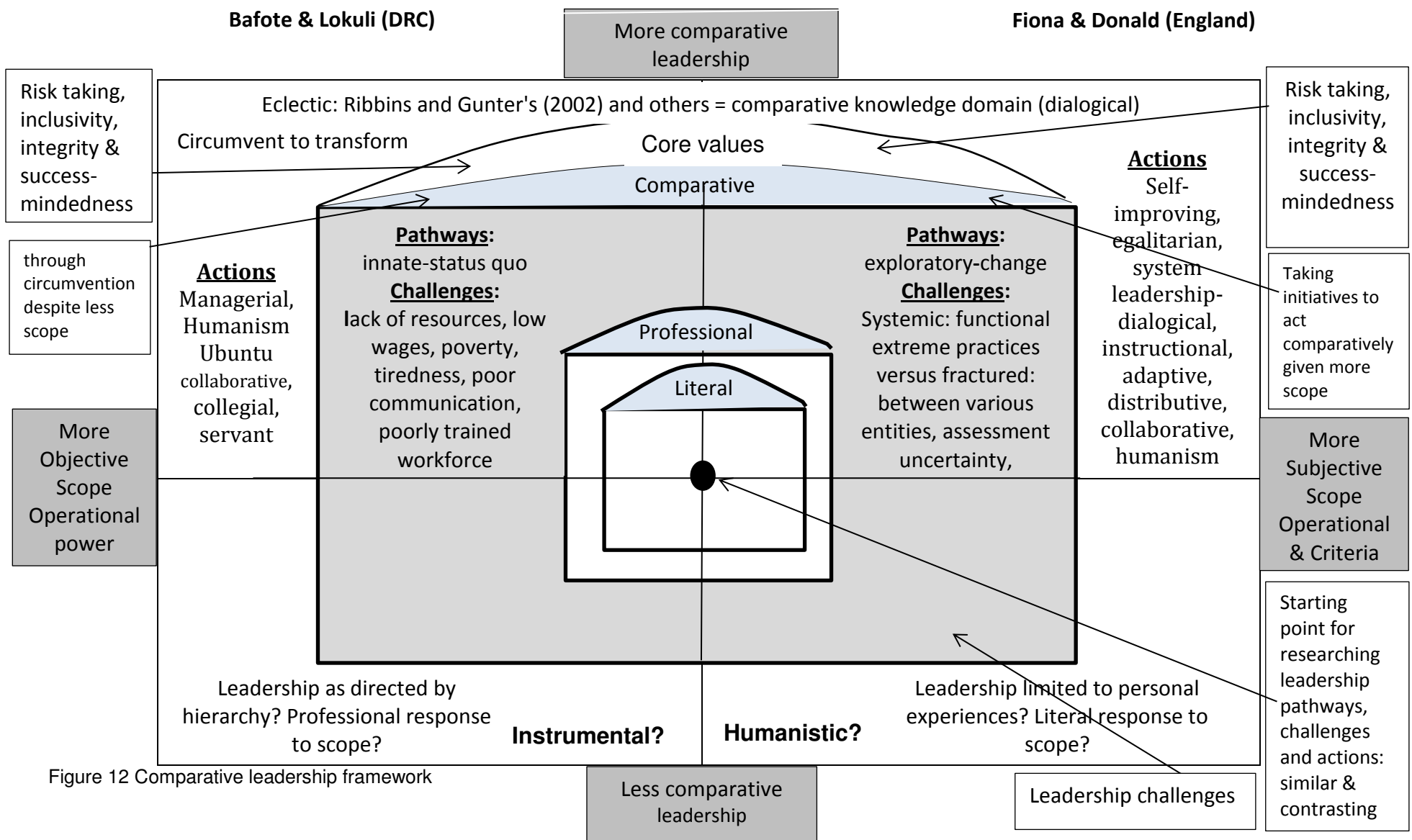


Figure 12 Comparative leadership framework

## **CHAPTER 6 Concluding Remarks:** Research limitations, personal reflection, recommendations and, research summary and knowledge claims

This concluding chapter is essentially an attempt to reflect back and look forward. Retrospectively, it assesses the pertinence of the overall case about comparative leadership being made here. Prospectively, it explores further possibilities in the areas of practice, policy, research and theory development, based on how discussions around contexts, literature, methodology and research findings have been framed. To do that, the chapter is divided into four parts. The first part puts into context the challenges encountered, some of which are a question of perspective, while others could be overcome by possible ongoing and future research and practice. The second part is a personal reflection on learning, which could have wider implications for comparative school leaders' approaches during job interviews and in the hiring of new staff. The third part makes some recommendations for policy, research, theory and practice of school leadership in the DRC, England and other contexts with similar features. Although the discussion on challenges/limitations has more to do with contextual specificity, rather than being an attempt to diminish the validity of this work, it is still necessary to end this chapter, hence this work, by underlining the pertinence of what has been accomplished here. The final section of this chapter, therefore, justifies the relevance of the different stages/chapters that feature in this report.

### **6.1 Limitations**

There are six main limitations that could be associated with this research.

*Limited published studies and statistical data:* The first limitation concerns the lack of extensive published literature on DRC's education systems. Although a combination of several studies on the DRC and literatures reporting on education and leadership practices in Ghana, Kenya, Rwanda, Uganda, Zimbabwe but mainly South Africa have enabled me to move the argument forward, more work needs to be done to build a research base on educational leadership practices in the DRC and Africa in general (Asunga et al., 2016). Part of this study's originality is an attempt to overcome this limitation. Linked to the above issue is the lack of statistical data, which is a general problem across Africa and the DRC (AfriMAP, 2009; Montjourides, 2013), which made it difficult to make like-for-like comparisons in the

area of pupil attendance, for example, since such records were not being kept at Baf and Lok. This simply highlights the need for improved administrative standards that are, in turn, linked to investment.

*Translation:* The second limitation is possibly more of a concern for the reader, in that the essence of the DRC data may have been lost in translation from French to English (see appendix 1.4 for translation sample). Although translating texts from one language to another is subject to human error, along with the consideration that a different methodological approach and analysis could have led to different results, the fact that I have made my best effort in undertaking the translation, added to the analytical transparency of this work lend validity and confidence to the knowledge claims made.

*Sample size:* The third limitation relates to the sample size of this research which could imply that its findings only represent an exception to the norm. It is essential to remember that I never set out to establish objectively generalisable truths about school leadership in England and the DRC. The reader must bear in mind that the experiences of four people cannot necessarily be confined to four corporeal bodies (see double role of individuals in section 4.6.1). At the same time, a bigger sample size cannot speak for the entire bodies of professionals in a timeless manner. That said, what the findings of this research do is use the four head teachers' experiences to gain an insight into school leadership practices, producing a typology that can be testable and potentially modifiable rather than generalisable (Dimmock & Lam, 2012). A more ambitious and well-funded research project can still be undertaken by employing some of the strategies I suggest in the recommendations section (see 6.3).

*Self-reporting data:* Translation, sample size and self-reporting data limitations are related in that they all raise concerns about the validity of the research claims. The fourth self-reporting data limitation, in particular, is an admission on my part that the research conclusions are based on participants' reports of their own practice without triangulation in that sense of involving more participants (teachers, pupils, parents etc.) within a given setting (Bush, 2012). However, as already pointed out in section 4.6.7, the narrative/life history approach of this study meant that some narratives span far back in time and space that it would 'impossible' to triangulate in

that way. Nevertheless, the validity of this research claims lies in the transparent processes of the research that adhered to strict ethical code and under the conditions that participants feel free to speak candidly. The consecutive leadership conversations and email/phone call follow ups also ensure that stories are consistent. Most of all, the (multi-site) complementarity of narratives (Floyd, 2012) plays a validating role that triangulation would have played in other forms of studies.

*Incomplete framework:* The fifth limitation is more of a paradox in that, although the research has met the objectives, the comparative leadership framework that has emerged out of this research (see 5.5) is still 'incomplete'. We are none the wiser about the nature of school leadership in more objective-less comparative-more subjective quadrants (see figure 18). This is one of the reasons why further research is required (see 6.3).

*Impact on pupils' outcomes:* The sixth limitation is the inability to say, for certain, that comparative leadership has a positive impact on students' outcomes. This could be due to the disparity in what constitutes success in different settings and the contested nature of 'success' as a concept, even when it comes to judgements made about this or that school by inspection bodies (see 2.5.3 and 5.4.3.4). It is also important to note that the concept of comparative leadership, as argued here, is new and its originality owes to the comparative domain agenda, which challenges accultured limitations and seeks to see the world, school leadership practice in this case, in a new light (Lumby & Heystek, 2011). So, there are questions, including impact on students' outcomes, which can only be answered when the substantial body of ideas discussed here are fully implemented, according to the specificity of a given context. That said, the results of this study have not been imagined. They are based on empirical study with a strong resonance with the leadership practices that are reported to have emerged on the back of more autonomy afforded to professionals in Finland (Kupiainen et al., 2009). It is, therefore, not over optimistic to assume that comparative leadership, as argued here, could positively impact on students' outcomes. It is also important to remember that the popularity of distributed leadership over transformational leadership, for example, is more practical than it is based on conclusive links with students' outcomes (Hartley, 2010). There are strong ethical (egalitarian, inclusive, non-colonial), emancipatory (overcoming oppressive

scopes) and dialogically self-improving reasons that should be the basis on which to mediate pupils/students' learning achievements.

## **6.2 Personal Reflection:** learning from the research

My competencies as a researcher, knowledge of theories in the (related) field of (school) leadership, and ability to theorise, have developed as the research progressed. Alongside the academic gains, the research has made me aware of (or helped me acquire) a whole host of skills, including adaptability, research structuring, identification of (related) relevant material, self-confidence gained through patience, persistence and immersion in the data, time management and using the findings to enhance my practical professional sense-making.

*Research and the researcher's life, a reciprocal relationship:* After embarking on this doctoral journey, I soon realised that a research project conducted between two countries in two continents was going to impact on some life choices. Although I knew that school leadership in the DRC had to be part of my research, I took for granted the resultant travel, financial, family, and job-related decisions that were associated with me leaving England and spending a few months in Kinshasa/DRC. Conversely, these various factors of life also impacted on the direction of the research that led to envisaging the possibility of engaging in a comparative study. Through the advice of my supervisors, I have learnt to adapt my research to emerging circumstances.

*Underreported versus over reported worlds:* While the lack of DRC-based published literature was frustrating, the huge amount of published literature in England was also overwhelming. Here, I have learnt both to identify and structure the main aspects to develop a literature-based picture of both contexts and what the literature on school leadership said was happening in those and/or similar contexts.

*Collecting and analysing data:* Although this process ultimately resulted in developing self-confidence as a researcher, it was frustrating at times when potential participants were unwilling to take part in research for financial or work-related reasons (see chapter 4.6.3); worrisome, when contemplating whether the questions asked enabled or inhibited the flow of narratives or whether an abstracted theme is reflective of the intended meaning. Persistence balanced with patience going over

the recordings straight after the conversations, going over the data for at least a year has all contributed to my confidence as a researcher.

*Time management:* In keeping with the theme developed earlier of life factors affecting the research, this is felt all the more deeply when the doctoral project has to be completed alongside fulltime work and family commitments. Although a few deadlines were missed, the importance of putting some time aside within an overall timeframe proved vital in moving forward with what is essentially a process that should produce the best revised text possible, that turns a table of contents into a coherent argument.

*How research informed my professional practice: a retrospective reflection:* I have used some (key) findings from this research (extensively outlined in chapter section 5.5.3 and briefly summarised in section 6.4) to inform my own practice, both within and outside a leadership position, both in the DRC and in England. The following two personal experiences relate to the recruitment of new staff, both at primary and secondary level in the DRC and England respectively. I use two extracts from two head teachers outside of this study. The use of this new material is justified as a way of demonstrating my personal professional learning, although the reflection may resonate further afield.

Although corporate organisations and head teachers can easily get tips on interview questions and what to look for in a prospective candidate, such help reveals more than what is expected of the interviewees but also the values and leadership of the (school) leader (Brinkman & Mallett, 2000; Messmer, 2004; Pawlas, 1995). It is, therefore, essential that pertinent issues are reflected upon.

While carrying out field-work research in the DRC, I became engaged in a separate project, one part of which meant setting up a private primary school. The whole project had to be terminated for varying reasons, although the brief period it took to set up it revealed that what could be termed the 'myth' created by professionals themselves is very much alive. When I was recruiting primary teaching staff, I was repeatedly given the following advice, even by serving primary head teachers:



If you want your school to do well, you are better off employing teachers who have only got the secondary school qualification (D6). And even within that category, you could do with those who got their qualifications like twenty years or so ago, they know what they are doing, (anonymous DRC primary head teacher)

It has been argued that a transformative leader, *and indeed any leader* [my italics], 'must engage with (connect) the myths, stories, and proverbs that bind people together' (Preece, 2003, p.254). Myths, too, can inhabit a societal, organisational and even individual consciousness in a constraining way that circumvention or process of unfreezing - 'overcoming those forces that resist change' - (Danowitz & Hanappi-Egger, 2012, p.142 citing Allen & Montgomery, 2001) becomes necessary if change is to happen. The above advice contradicts the inclusivity of approaches and continuous learning as fundamental aspects of a comparative leader, like Bafote, who asserted the importance of continuous learning when expressing his concern about lack of resources (see figure 8) and stating the need to update knowledge (see figure 12). Likewise, Fiona's trip to a Birmingham school (see figure 13) was an approach to continuous learning that was also expected of her teaching staff (see appendix 1.13).

In reality, I would argue, the myth reveals DRC head teachers' entrenched lack of confidence in quantitative acquisition of university qualifications that are devoid of the qualitative competencies (knowledge and skills) needed to carry out the professional job of teaching. The other side of the coin of this myth, as a widespread organisational culture (Dimmock & Walker, 2000), is that, while it recognises teaching and headship as forms of specialisations requiring an acquisition of formal knowledge (Freidson, 2001), as in 'they know what they are doing', it imposes a qualification cap (limit) that effectively constrains the scope. As the older generation of teachers continue to age, the need to self-improve through (head) teacher-led action research increases to meet the complex needs of multicultural settings. The DRC needs the sort of head teacher who believes and is committed to developing the professional portfolios of their staff as well as their own.

In comparison to the DRC, the English teaching and headship body is at the well-trained end of the spectrum. However, it still presents its own version of organisational culture that equally constrains scope and raises questions for a comparative school leader. In this English setting, I share personal feedback I

received after attending a secondary teaching post interview. The feedback, presumably sanctioned by the head teacher, listed the following as one of the reasons I was not successful for the post:

You expressed your passion for citizenship and what you wanted to do in our school, but we would expect to see what we can do for you, get you to know what we do first and in two or three years' time you can suggest and we work on what you think could be of benefit to us (anonymous English secondary head teacher)

Despite the need for school leaders to develop staff (Day et al., 2011; Dimmock, 2012), the fact that none of the interview questions were framed to explore what else the candidate could bring to the school confirms the nature of the above feedback, which portrays knowledge as closed, practice as based only on already established routines and effectively constraining scope. I want to argue that, in some cases, 'self-improving' school status is being taken for self-improved, which contradicts the nature of comparative school leader (of limitless possibilities), as argued here and further illustrated by Fiona's final comment of the conversations (see appendix 1.14).

### **6.3 Wider implication and recommendations:**

As already argued, there is a strong case to make with regard to the similarity between the head teachers in this study and the Finnish professionals, who have even more autonomy that allowing them to combine local knowledge with international wisdom (Kupiainen et al., 2009). Whether this study's participants' tendency to be eclectic amounts to the English and the DRC education systems looking beyond the third way, as suggested by Hargreaves (2009), and capacity building as framed in the context chapter, may seem too premature a proposition. However, it remains a pertinent consideration, not least, because of the limitations of various leadership models, including system leadership, as discussed in Chapters 3 and section 5.3.3. In any case, large scale research with a more extensive sample size is required to make a bolder and more generalisable claim about a practice-based shift towards comparative leadership. Whether large or small scale, there is a case to make about the need for further research to implement and develop the agenda that this study has initiated.

*Research:* My recommendation in the area of research for both the DRC and England has been grounded by the discussion on comparative research as a

methodological concept (see chapter section 4.6). There are many possibilities, inter alia, of mixed methods studies that initially use surveys (qualitative approach – see sample in appendix 1.15 - stage 1) to establish the objectivity or subjectivity of scope, followed by opened-end or structured leadership conversations (qualitative approach see appendices 1.3 and 1.15 - stage 2) to explore experiences further. These methods can be decoupled and implemented individually. If change is going to come from within, meaning from teachers and head teachers who are at the forefront of practice, then action research becomes an empowering cyclical tool to reflect on comparative leadership informed practice, using a combination of a sequence of activities and emergent concerns/knowledges that an action researcher must face (Brundrett & Rhodes, 2014). This will, hopefully, enrich the framework (see figure 18) and provide a rounded understanding of how school leadership is performed, especially in those underexplored quadrants (more objective scope vs less comparative vs more subjective scope – see figure 12).

With 96.6% of primary and over 50% of secondary teaching staff having achieved only a secondary school qualification (CTSE, 2015), and hence unskilled to carry out high order research, the DRC is in a more uncertain position to guarantee the implementation of the research proposal. A policy recommendation that would make it feasible is warranted and I return to this issue later on in this section. It was also of interest that Bafote (see chapter section 5.4.2) relied on personal histories e.g. colonial past, to bring a literal meaning to his sense of being head teacher. As Gunter and Thomson (2010) have done in the case of England, there is the need for further time travel research or reflections in England and DRC to ensure that the vibrancy and values of past eras (see chapter section 2.4) are not lost, and that what needs to be reformed in the way of curriculum (see chapter section 5.4.3.4), for example, takes effect in the ongoing narrative on school leadership.

*Theory:* That said, it is projected that the intensification of comparative research on school leadership will not only generate theories and improve our understanding of local school leadership practices, but also has the potential to root out stagnancy and enhance quality of both what is being done (school leadership) and why we are doing it (success-mindedness – see chapter section 5.4.3.4).

*Policy:* A policy initiative inspired by the case being made here about comparative leadership will depend on the state of education systems and their leadership. In the current English educational landscape that promotes the self-improvement of schools, system leadership has been adopted as a viable research-based leadership policy initiative. However, given the perception some schools have of 'being done to', which prompted Hargreaves (2014) to propose *Joint Development Practice*, I recommend comparative leadership as a viable alternative. This is as much a home policy as it is an English/UK international policy recommendation. The UK government's interest in global education is not only limited to the expansion of its school leadership literature (Bush, 1999); it has also been expressed in its desire to engage in the international school partnerships (ISPs) initiative (DfES, 2004). Surveys of 694 primary and secondary students in 66 schools across 12 Sub-Saharan countries have reported positive impact on 'students' global learning, social interactions and local and international world views, despite little empirical evidence of the influence of such initiatives on students, teachers and school leaders (Edge & Khamsi, 2012, p.467). At home, school partnerships have been both beneficial, in terms of concerted efforts of aggregate actors, and challenging, in its realignment outlook (Lumby, 2009). To avoid transferring existing challenges of such partnerships and system leadership talk of 'being done to' and resuscitating colonial memories, comparative leadership provides an egalitarian and reciprocal partnership in an atmosphere of limitless learning possibilities, without the oppression of some tried and tested knowledge. Without being overly prescriptive, the comparative framework advanced here, or some parts of it, can become themes for discussion in ongoing leadership conversations.

When the framing of leadership challenges of the experienced English participants in this research is compared to those new to headship (Earley & Bubb, 2013; Hobson et al., 2003; Holligan et al., 2006), there is grounds to recommend training policies that engage candidates in headship to identify challenges of a systemic nature. The comparative framework emerging out of this research is a viable option to generate reflections.

The study has added to overwhelming evidence about the lack of formal professional training for head teachers and teachers in various parts of Africa (Bush & Oduro, 2006; Kitavi & Van der Westhuizen, 2002; Zame et al., 2008), in general,

and the DRC (CTSE, 2015; Mokonzi, 2010), in particular. The extent of policy reforms will depend on a combination of a number of factors, including resources and the political will to face reality. However, as policy makers in the DRC (and other contexts with similar issues) develop manifestos relating to the professional development of school leadership, this research has brought to light the pertinence of encouraging more comparative/eclectic school leadership practice. Before I elaborate further on practice-based recommendations, I wish to highlight here that policy should not be thought of simply as a set of offshoot suggestions on the behalf of practitioners. A commitment to comparative leadership should raise questions about policy environment assumptions that design those policies in the first place. Such an examination may seem irrelevant to some, given the fact that no matter the nature of an educational reform environment, scopes can always be circumvented, as did the DRC heads in this research and their English and Canadian counterparts (De Angelis et al., 2007; Michalak, 2012). However, the situation could be helped if policy makers reflected more on which assumptions (managerialist, democratic, loosely coupled and complex system etc.) about their policy environments (Goldspink, 2007; Whitty, 2008) were likely to enable or hinder the development of comparative school leaders.

*Practice:* As part of their recommendations after carrying out a study of ‘urban’ school leaders in the US, Reed and Swaminathan (2015, p.1120) argue that more should be done to support practitioner-led ‘context analysis’. To fulfil, also, one of my goals to help improve practice, I will, therefore, attempt to simplify the model (see figure 12) into a series of iterative steps that a (school) leader can consider when undertaking context analysis. While there is a risk of the over simplification of an otherwise unique framework, I will endeavour to stay as close to the above model as possible.

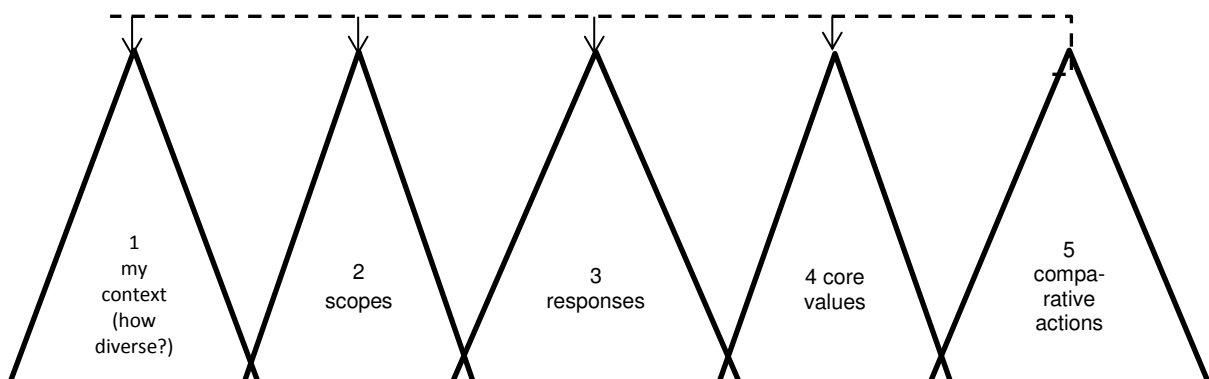


Figure 13 Comparative framework: simplified practitioner's guide

Step 1 Leaders can place themselves and their schools within the past, present and future local and global context and engage in a genuine diagnosis of where the organisation was, is and will (want to) be. Personal human stories, an understanding of professional pathways, strengths and weaknesses/challenges, organisational habits, curriculum, structures, myths, differences, diversity, and aspirations etc. will form part of this self-assessment.

Step 2 This can become the phase for further analysis of the nature of the accounts generated at step 1, where the leader begins to form ideas about how objective and subjective his/her scope is and how empowering or disempowering it is.

Step 3 Whether scope is more objective or not 'it's the gospel according to the head teacher' and responses might vary from literal and institutional to comparative interpretations of the above metaphor. The first two are recommendable if they serve the needs of all those concerned. There will also be clashes of interpretation that require a comparative explanation privileging the good of the pupils (Hammersley, 2015), which cannot be achieved unless a leader is driven by a set of core values.

Step 4 The four core values of risk-taking, inclusiveness, integrity and success-mindedness are essential in consensually bringing all the stakeholders to commit to a series of actions. The nature of risk, the extent of inclusivity, the apparent contradictions of integrity and different measures of success depend not only on the willingness to be comparative/eclectic but also on the degree of analysis, which underscores the need for formal programmes for development of such skills.

Step 5 Depending on how well the previous steps have been undertaken, this action stage draws on a variety of knowledge domains and styles of leadership. It is the lived-out theatre that mirrors the face of what a comparatively led and contextually responsive (school) organisation looks like. Eclecticism is a dynamic concept that has to adapt to new situations and depends on how successful a comparative leader is in meeting previous efforts. That means the process can still be reviewed and reconsider the evolving context(s).

#### **6.4 Research summary and claims to knowledge**

Implementing the above recommendations is subject to various factors, including availability of resources, political will, academic shift in thinking, timescale envisaged etc. That, however, does not take away from several issues for reflection and claims to knowledge that this unique DRC-England comparative work has raised. For example, the parallel framing of general socio-economic trends, historical context of education and management/leadership trends in both DRC and England since the mid-1900s (Chapter 2), is a unique exercise that could be the basis for further reflections, at least for educational historians.

While encouraging the development of more single models of school leadership and provinces of knowledge, Chapter 3 leads the call for a new direction: the comparative knowledge domain, focussing on educational leadership similarities and differences, questions accultured assumptions and assesses the wider impact of theories and practice (Lumby & Heystek, 2011; Schweisfurth, 2001; Zembylas & Lasono, 2010; Zoogah & Nkomo, 2013). Chapter section 4.6 defends an equally consistent multi-perspective methodological approach (comparative research) that uses narratives drawn from leadership conversations, although some suggestions are provided on how to approach comparative research differently through the use of surveys, observation and action research, which are methodological routes with wider resonance.

There is a variety of topics here that could draw the attention of a reader interested in a certain aspect of the report. However, as opposed to the English educational landscape that is admittedly well researched in comparison to the DRC, this study offers a rich contribution to school leadership in the DRC.

Another important component of this study that cannot be ignored is the relationship between Catholicism and leadership. As pointed out in the summative section 5.2, the state has entrusted the Catholic Church with provision and leadership of a significant number of schools in both countries (Grace, 2001; Titeca & De Herdt, 2011). That relationship has been marked by cooperation at times and tension/erosion at others (Arthur, 2013; Titeca et al., 2013). The Catholic led schools in this study still see themselves as playing a role in the 'cultural crisis' in the modern world (Depaepa & Hulstaerk, 2015, p. 17). As well as engaging with government

initiatives such as 'British Values', their practices have offered concepts emerging from 'the gospel according to the head teacher' metaphor discussed in this study that is relevant in the practice of school leadership across the board. This does not mean that the tensions between state and Catholic-led school institutions will disappear. However, what I would like to highlight here is the creative tension that these heads' leadership creates within a given religious organisation, Catholicism in this case, and what it might mean for the world the world at large. Let me explain. Sometimes organisational values of the school as a Catholic institution came to the fore while, at other times, these heads privileged whatever it takes 'for the good of the child' leading to subversive behaviours. I contend that creatively managing that tension is crucial in creating school institutions that are adaptive, inclusive, forward thinking and comparative. I would tentatively suggest that in the context of cultural, religious and ethical rigidity that can result into orthodox (religiously affiliated) institutions with fundamentalist views and possibly devastating effects on the world safety and security, these head teachers' comparative approach stands as a viable and promising alternative (this is somehow captured in the opening two quotes in chapter 1 and the final quote that ends this section/chapter/work).

That said, the overall work can be summarised under four propositions. As a theorised argument spanning across so many chapters, it runs as follows:

*Proposition 1:* The contexts of this research (individual schools, cities and countries), let alone the fact of comparing them, are diverse and aspire to bridge various binaries (Chapter 2),

*Proposition 2:* Yet the literature that is supposed to support the leadership of schools in those diverse contexts remains fragmented with partial models and knowledge domains (Chapter 3, part I),

*Proposition 3:* We do not only need a new direction in terms of comparative knowledge domain as a theoretical framework (Chapter 3, part II) but also a consistent comparative research methodological concept to conceptualise and research school leadership practice (Chapter 4),

*Proposition 4:* Applying the above conceptual framework and methodology (proposition 3) to research the above contexts (proposition 1) has not only



contributed to knowledge on pathways, challenges and leadership actions in the above contexts, it has also generated a theoretical model of leadership for comparative research and school leadership practice (Chapter 5).

The findings and lines of discussion in Chapter 5 have shone light on a number of issues (to be outlined below) that, I believe, fulfil my overall dual interest in increasing knowledge and improving practice in the DRC, England and similar contexts and more importantly answer the research questions which I summarise below.

*Pathways to leadership:* in response to the research question ‘how are journeys/pathways to school leadership described?’, school leadership, which depends on one’s years of experience as a teacher, is perceived by the DRC research participants as a natural and innate quality to reproduce the status quo, while their English counterparts underline their pragmatic and explorative journey accompanying their desire to bring about change.

*School leadership challenges:* in addressing the research question ‘what are the leadership challenges that DRC/England head teachers face as they go about their work?’, some of the challenges the DRC heads are confronted with relate to societal moral breakdown, which they argue is slipping into schools, as evinced by corrupt practices. The lack of resources is raising concerns for pupils’ outcomes, especially in literacy. The low wages and devaluing of their services are interpreted as a sign of stakeholders’ ungratefulness. In England, however, leadership challenges are framed systemically. They include the functional extreme styles of policy-centred and people-centred on the one hand and the dysfunctionality of fractured social, cultural and educational entities on the other hand.

*Comparative/eclectic leadership:* with regard to ‘how do they go about responding to those challenges? and/or ‘what defines good leadership?, both sets of head teachers displayed an eclectic/comparative style of leadership, which uncovered the following concepts upon further analysis. *Underlying pattern:* the DRC heads worked within an objective scope (centralised system), which they circumvented, while the English heads had a more subjective scope (decentralised) in which they behaved proactively. *Metaphor:* When responding to their (pre-existent) scopes, they lived out the metaphor of ‘it’s the gospel according to the head teacher’ in three dimensions:

the literal, which includes all the social, economic, religious convictions linked to personal historical circumstances; the professional or organisational, which places the head teacher as the mediator of organisational beliefs; and the comparative dimension, which begins to look beyond personal and organisational spheres for the good of the pupils. All these layers can be used to enrich our understanding of head teachers' agency and identity formation in the field of educational leadership. The suggestion from the following citation "leaders are expected to ground their activities in clear personal and professional values (Bush 2011, p.6)" is that head teachers' agency or formation of 'self' identity is driven by either personal and/or organisational values. The theoretical framework for social identity formation for leaders, however, offers other useful constructs: the personal (driven by self-interest), the relational (that emerges as a result of relational interactions with significant others) and the collective self (as the result of group membership) (Epitropaki et al., 2017). The modified version of the above constructs emerging from this study could be called: the personal/literal self, the professional/organisational self and the comparative self of head teachers. It is this last one that this study focuses on by outlining the related values of such comparative head teachers.

*Leadership values:* the comparative dimension of the above action-inspiring metaphor owes to the critiqued core values of risk-taking, inclusivity, integrity and success-mindedness that the researched head teachers displayed.

*Comparative leadership framework:* This answers the central research question which is 'what can comparing *urban DRC and English primary head teachers' experiences offer in terms of deepening our understanding and practice of school leadership?* When brought together and analysed in the light of the proposed comparative knowledge domain theoretical approach, the above findings offer an empirically-based comparative (school) leadership framework that can inform practice and be enriched by further research.

In short, the narrative about sets of practices of effective school leaders in most contexts (Day et al., 2011; Hallinger, 2003; Leithwood et al., 1994 and Southworth 2003), not only needed grounding in the (behind-the-scene) processes involved but also on a critical combination, not just a celebration (Day & Gurr, 2014), of both Northern and Southern hemispheres' research. The same can be said of Khalifa et al.'s (2016, p.1) examination of literature on school leaders' cultural responsiveness that led them to, among other things, summarise leaders' behaviours as consisting of

'inclusion, equity, advocacy, and social justice in schools'. The theory-based cultural analysis framework for comparative school leadership that Dimmock and Walker (2000) suggest needed an empirical version based on head teachers' practice. This work, I believe, addresses the above concerns in a way that looks 'comprehensively across leadership frameworks *or contexts* [my italics] to learn how leaders implement a combination of leadership approaches in urban schools' (Reed & Swaminathan, 2015, p.1120) with diverse cultural and ontological etc., foundations. Hence, when wondering which way to go between binaries in school leadership, otherwise captured by Friedrich Nietzsche and Martin Luther King Jr's comments (see chapter 1 – opening lines of the introduction), it is worth recalling the words attributed to singer Tim McGraw:

'We take different paths but no matter where we go, we take a little of each other everywhere' (Morton, 2005, p.39)

The comparative framework developed here can be considered as a cross context/culture-fit template/model that allows head teachers (DRC-English researched head teachers primarily) to set out on individual school leadership paths with eclecticism that enables them to think and act both locally and globally (Townsend, 2010) to benefit pupils and all others involved.

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## APPENDICES 1

### 1.1 Leadership conversation consent letter

Jean Pierre Elonga

Address

Date:

Ref: Leadership conversation consent letter



Dear Mr/Mrs/Miss....,

As part of my research programme with Sheffield Hallam University, I have elected to carry out a comparative study of some primary head teachers' experiences both in the urban cities of Sheffield/UK and Kinshasa/ Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). I would therefore be grateful if you could agree to my invitation to take part in the study.

Even though your potential voluntary participation in this study is more to help me to learn more about my topic of interest (school leadership) which I am grateful for, I am hoping that your articulating of personal experiences would add to the clarity of your ideas, enrich the overall debate about school leadership, contribute to your understanding and the development of other professionals in the UK, Kinshasa and possibly other places.

Face to face leadership conversations will constitute the main approach to gather your experiences. However, I am also interested in documents, memos and diaries that support your school leadership experiences. The first round of one hour interview is expected to touch on what you deem essential aspects of your school leadership experiences. Since I anticipate that you may have other stories to add or I may have certain points on which to seek clarification, the second and possibly third estimated one hour conversation therefore will provide the opportunity for further dialogue. The data will be recorded and an audio file be saved in a password protected USB stick. Unless you indicate otherwise, all documents and voice data will be kept confidential and any reporting emerging from this study will only bear reference to you in an anonymous way. You can withdraw from the study at any stage up to a month after you have received the full conversation transcript and confirmed that the transcripts are as close to your views as possible.

If you are willing to take part in this project, I would be grateful if you could complete the consent letter and send it back to me at the earliest opportunity at the above address. I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your support and look forward to sharing in you unique experiences of school leadership.

Sincerely yours, Jean Pierre Elonga

**Sheffield Hallam University contact person:** Dr. Gill Adams (programme leader).  
Phone : 0114 225 6015, E-mail : [G.Adams@shu.ac.uk](mailto:G.Adams@shu.ac.uk)

## 1.2 Consent reply letter



Date \_\_\_\_\_

Ref: Consent Reply letter

Dear Jean Pierre

I understand that this study is about my leadership experiences and what they might represent within your comparative approach.

- I consent to taking part in the leadership conversations: Yes/No
- I understand that participation is voluntary and that I can withdraw from the study at any stage up until a month after I have received the interview transcript: Yes/No
- I consent to the session being digitally-recorded: Yes/No
- I want to be debriefed of the study results Yes/No
- If you answered (Yes) to the previous question, how do you want to be debriefed:
  - Via e-mail: Yes/No
  - Face to face Yes/No
- I would be available for the first interview session on \_\_\_\_\_
- I would like the interview to take place in \_\_\_\_\_ \*\*  
at (time) \_\_\_\_\_
- I want my views to be anonymised Yes/No
- I understand that the interview transcript will be translated by the researcher from French into English and I trust his/her translations even though I do not understand English: Yes/No
- The report emerging from this study may be published and I still want my views to be represented Yes/No

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_ (PLEASE PRINT)

\* delete as appropriate.

\*\* indicate location preference/choice (not the researcher's home).

### 1.3 Proposed interview schedule for this research:

- Session format explained: **5 minutes**  
Concluded by the following: 'I am here to learn from you. You are the expert in your own practice and only you can explain what you do, how, when and why you do this and/or that'
- Open and episodic narrative interview: **50 minutes**

#### **Possible story-trigger questions:** open

3 options:

1. How did it (education/leadership) all start for you?
2. How did your career pathway unfold?
3. What was the journey that led to your education/leadership career pathway?

#### **Possible further questions:** episodic

Order and relevance of questions depend on the flow of narratives

1. What set you apart from everyone else?
  2. Was it important to be good at your job? (research objective one about what makes a good leader)
    - In hind sight, what is it about your job that you would now say: that's me being good at it?
    - Why was it important to be good at your job? (responses could be about values they hold)
    - How did you come to realise that it was important to be good at you're your job? (formative experience)
    - 
    - Was it always easy to be good at your job? (looks to understand leadership problems-not the main focus of the pilot but it keeps narratives going)
    - How did you deal with it? (looks at how they responded to challenging situations, research objective 3)
    - Can you say a little a bit more about that incident?
- Conclude session by asking: 'Is there anything you would like to add?' followed by
  - Thanking participant: **5 minutes**

## 1.4 Sample translation from French to English

Translation example of DRC data	
French	English
<p>j'avais un faible pour l'enseignement, j'aimais beaucoup mes enseignants qui au départ parlaient très bien. Ce sont eux qui m'ont entraîné à aimer ce métier. Alors petit à petit j'ai fait mes études en pédagogie appliquée, j'ai été engagé juste après mes études. Je suis arrivé ici entant qu'enseignant, directement il a plu à mes autorités de l'élever au niveau de sous-directeur jusqu'au directeur.</p>	<p>I had a weakness for teaching; I loved my teachers who initially spoke very well. It is they who have led me to love this job. Then gradually I did my studies in applied education, I was hired right after my studies. I first arrived here as teacher, (directly) it pleased my authorities to raise the level of deputy director to director</p>

## 1.5 subthemes and themes coding example

response: 30 years in total (10 as teacher, 5 deputy and 15 as head teacher of which 6 in this school).

**Theme!** Me: quite a lot of years before you became head?

**Pathway Teacher** Response: when I became a teacher, I didn't think I'm going to become a head teacher. I wanted to see what this world of teaching was going to be like really. Then you begin to think maybe I could do better, I could give more and I can only give more if I'm in a higher position. You always have a vision but actually you vision grows with you. And the more you get hungrier the more that vision grows.

**Leadership challenges?** Me: anything in particular that made you hungrier?

**The spark to change practice beyond self-** Response: I saw some teachers who were quite restricting in the way they taught and not so good in the way the taught or treated children. And looking at the panoramic vision that you can have a head teacher, those are the things that you can actually change instead of a child having to go through year on with a teacher who is possibly disillusioned and does not like teaching. Or maybe if there was an insertion of a certain aspects to improve their teaching, they would be a different person. Or maybe they have been treated badly by a senior leader

**Exploring**

**Subthemes?** } exploratory } exercising agency } depended on political leadership

spark to change: \* changes within school

Teaching and treatment of pupils in school

5

## **1.6 Participant's double role (my experience is the same as other people's experiences)**

My school is **Congo in miniature**; I fell into the right hands, **I make quite an exception...**; you will go into **some state schools** and when a teacher arrives, he puts a basket in front and the students give what they can... (Bafote); **I had these two extremes** and I said somewhere in the middle is the school for me (Donald). Appendix 2, lines 2308-09; ...)

## **1.7 Email about joke (Fiona)**

I would like to see the completed document and ensure it flows. Elements like the 'Coventry' quote was an 'off the cuff' remark does not need to be mentioned.

Thanks

## **1.8 Ethnic and racial diversity in four schools**

There is a massive cultural mix here... it's just a natural environment out on that yard to have black, white, and yellow whatever playing together. And as I say to the parents, if I have room for children who are from Eritrea, Zimbabwe...I don't see their colour, I just see children. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 341, 672-5)),

We have children and staff from different backgrounds and with the introduction of the British values which as re values we've always had, we are making a statement that we are a broad Church...I'm really proud of how the children gel (Donald)

I welcome anyone...there are Ivorians, Zambians, Chinese, and Congolese... (Bafote)

My pupils are mainly Congolese based in Kinshasa whose parents may have come from anywhere in the country but I'm open to anyone (Lokuli).

## **1.9 Fiona talking about an autistic child**

... as much as schools can do a lot to help, some schools can do a lot of damage I had a couple of parents (Guyana and Polish) have a child described by a previous school as having very severe autism. These parents were trying hard to understand that. The file about her, which we received a day before she started with us had a lot of detailed minutes of care meetings ...but still couldn't find out about what are they actually saying about the child has got or is she on a spectrum...The parents said was that she wasn't talking very much and the school had asked them not to speak in their mother tongue at home. And I said, alright: you know when she comes for the first day tomorrow, can you just forget about all of that. I said all our children are bilingual, it doesn't matter. The fact that they are speaking words whether it is in English or other and their brain is working, you can translation later, but speak as you would normally speak.

And they almost breathed a sigh of relief. But you just don't get schools who say that to parents. I understand them because some of our Iraqi parents, the mothers won't speak in English at all. Now if we had both parents doing that, who refused to speak

in English, then we would say look, at breakfast time 'can you, would you like cornflakes...' we put phrases in there...we introduce phrases like that. But for them to say, 'don't speak in your mother tongue' is just utter insult and they don't have the right to say that either. Sometimes you hear stories like that and the child came in, I think there are elements of autistic spectrum but I think most people are on the autistic spectrum to be perfectly honest with you. But this child is wonderful and the parents can't believe it's a different child here than in the previous place. Fiona( Appendix 2, lines 688-713).

#### **1.10 Appeals due to oversubscription**

As soon as we deliver those 40 places, there is very few that actually pull out. So, what's happened over the last few years is that, we have offered 40 places and I have a nightmare summer term because I have to go to all the appeals. I mean, you can't take too much for granted but it leaves the school in a very comfortable position and the growth of Black Ethnic Minority, English as an Additional Language and ethnicity within the school is exploding really. So a lot of our children, I would say, may be 90% of the children we get will be practising in some faith whether that's world faith or not because the 6<sup>th</sup> category in our admission policy is world faith. And the Christian faiths, the Pentecostal...a lot of them are Africans. Our admission's meeting with the governors usually takes about 4 hours. Because you have to go through each application and make sure you place them in the correct category. But as through school, we don't have much movement. Last year was the largest, like 1-2% movement across the school and that was largely due to employment purposes otherwise they usually stay put. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 520-32).

#### **1.11 Transportation and lateness**

It's like I spoke to a parent (A Jamaican father) this morning, and with the changes with bus routes in Sheffield which are horrific for some of our families it means that it takes him about 1h15 minutes to actually get to school. That's just for one bus ride and for part of that journey, they have to walk about 1 mile to get to the bus stop. What he was saying is that, I do have a school near to me (x) and it's not a pleasant school, it's a tough school. So he said 'I just don't want my child going in there'. So, I think Sheffield have known what they have done in cutting some of the bus routes. In doing so, it redirect some families in filling up some schools that are not being filled up. But for families who want a Christian upbringing, they will go a hundred miles but the authorities don't get that (and I'm so glad they don't). I think they have done it because so many of our parents apologise for being 10 or 15minutes late that is basically the buses', it's not the fact that they haven't got up on time. And we are just accepting that now, that I can't change the bus routes, we just accept that they will 10 or so minutes late because we know it's true. But it's the school they want to go to and they are not going to change it. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 533-547)

#### **1.12 (a) Zero tolerance**

I struck a deal with them actually, because every year the travellers go to Applebee which is a massive that millions of travellers go to in Cumbria. They used to stay there for months and I had to deal with attendance which was poor. So I made a deal with them that if I let them go for two/three weeks to Applebee, then they must attend school all year round. I thought I was going to get clogged on the face for saying that



but actually they fell in line. They spent their time there and then they made their kids go to school for the rest of the year. But it was other things as well, you treated them with respect, and they recognised that really. Sometimes they come on and they swear and I say no, zero tolerance, you dare not swear on my site. Ok! They would be cursing and cursing and up to the gate and then they stop. It really, sometimes, it's about saying, this is who I am and I would respect you expect for the fact that I have got a job to do and I can't have certain things happening. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 282-94).

### 1.12 (b) **Zero tolerance**

One mum brought Brendan who was a rogue at 5 and she brought him into breakfast club. And some people wearing pyjamas, and they go shopping, and I have never seen I thought it was terrible, I still do. And this traveller mum came with Brendan in the morning and she had a dressing gown on and her pyjamas. She just stepped into the car, took him and I said 'come here, you can't wear your pyjamas in school, it's just not on!' 'Oh Jesus Christ...does that mean I have to get dressed every morning?' 'Yes'. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 327-33).

### 1.13

I like to see the qualification, knowledge but I also like to see that someone and some of my teachers do it, they would go and meet with a group and just have a good conversation about education. Some of my staff are part of leadership in mathematics with some universities, they find out, do a little bit of their research and try and bring it to school and say look, let's try this and see how it works. I want people who are flexible, who are free thinking and have a go. Say he [referring to a teacher at Fi] was working in an outstanding school in Birmingham and he was on the verge of leaving teaching because it was so regimental, at this time of the day, you will be teaching this, whereas now...I have quite a rigid regime but I allow for staff creativity. So that empowers them, to almost demand more of themselves. X thinks, it's not as rigorous as it was but he believes he is a better teacher now than he ever was. Yes, you could have things happening every half hour and lesson changing but to get the quality that you want, sometimes the half hour lesson is not sufficient. So our timetable can be flexible depending on whether the teacher thinks I need to continue with this or I'm going to cut it short and have a rethink tomorrow. That thinking is allowed. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 1183-98).

### 1.14 **Limitless possibilities of learning for comparative/eclectic leader**

I think Saturday morning classes could, like we asked two of our male parents, they teach Malalam classes on a Friday morning because we can't teach it, so they come in and do that. A lot of our Indian and African parents love maths, if there is one thing they are going to push their children in is mathematics and some of them are far better mathematicians than we ever would be. So it's trying to utilise the strength, there are lawyers, solicitors and chemists, I'm sure there is talent out there that we could use in a much more productive way and it would also help their kids really. Fiona (Appendix 2, lines 1205-12).

### 1.15 **Possibilities for further research**

Stage 1: Possible survey questions (quantitative approach)



No.	Statement/Question	Yes or No	Always, sometimes or never	Any example?	What you are looking for	Reflection
1	We have educational leadership practices that are known				Knowledge of procedures, if there are any	Are they working from a known system?
2	The leadership practices are mainly top down				Nature of pre-existent scope	Is scope centralised or decentralised?
3	What I do as a head is expected of me by the hierarchy				Their response to scope	How are they responding to given scope?

Stage 2, option 1: Possible follow up structured or semi-structured interviews depending on what it is that you want to follow up on (qualitative approach)

#### Suggested questions

1. What is your story up to becoming a head teacher?
2. What are your leadership challenges?
3. How have faced those challenges? What are good leadership behaviours in general?
4. What does it take to face the challenges in the way that you did? Or explicitly ask how important are the values of risk-taking, inclusivity, integrity and success-mindedness do they consider important in their leadership actions? And why? Any examples?

Stage 2, option 2: conduct open-ended leadership conversations in the same way of this research

### **1.16 parents taking head to court (Appendix 2, lines 2291-98)**

In that world, there is also what we call ingratitude. There are some parents to whom you do good but they forget and they can even take you to court. I recently appeared at Supreme court near the national bank. I was accused of selling uniform. The school has never sold them. It was a private workshop that was selling them and parents of the students that I know very well did this. They were even going to put me in jail because I had allegedly not obeyed the governor's instructions that uniform would be free. But it is free in public schools; here it is a private school.

## APPENDICES 2 – DATA SETS

All data sets are not anonymised and cannot be made available for reasons mentioned in appendix 1.1. On request, this can be made available to examiners' cross-referencing only.